

Nomination of Ralph R. Clark P.E. P.L.S. for the Morrrough P. O'Brien Award

By Paden E. Woodruff, Bureau of Beaches and Coastal Systems

Ralph Clark has worked for the State of Florida for 37 years, specifically in the Bureau of Beaches and Coastal Systems. Of course the Bureau has been under different names but the mission has remained basically the same, which is to preserve and protect the coastal system. Ralph's career of dedication to the beaches of the State of Florida has allowed all of us, including citizens, consultants and local, state and federal governments to benefit from his expertise as a coastal engineer. His knowledge of the State's shoreline and storm impacts is unprecedented. I don't know of anyone in the history of the program that has more knowledge of the historical impacts of development and coastal engineering projects or who have contributed more to the preservation of Florida's most valuable resource, it's beaches. Ralph's career with the State of Florida began in 1973 when he was hired as a Coastal Engineer with the Bureau of Beaches and Shores.

During his career Mr. Clark has provided superior coastal engineering review and analysis for the regulatory programs and beach management program within the Bureau. He has been responsible for developing recommendations to identify critically eroded shoreline segments and for also developing management strategies to address critically eroded shoreline. Beginning back in 1988 Ralph began documenting and developing Florida's comprehensive inventory of critically eroded shoreline areas known as the Critical Erosion Report. This document has been updated by Ralph on an annual basis through his review of shoreline condition surveys, onsite inspections, meteorological data, geological data, wave data, and hydrographic surveys. This information is essential for the Department of Environmental Protection to make recommendations for beach and inlet management planning and design. He has worked with local governments, other state agencies and the federal government to develop inlet management planning strategies to mitigate the adverse impacts associated with the navigation improvements at our inlets. Mr. Clark has been responsible for the Department's review of beach erosion control projects including the review and analysis of engineering data, plans and specifications, and cost estimates. Mr. Clark has provided technical coastal engineering assistance to dozens of local governments and thousands of private property owners during his tenure with the Department. From 1988 to 1996 he was the State's study project manager for the Coast of Florida Study, a cooperative state and federal study of Florida's beach erosion control problem areas. Ralph also served as the state representative on the now inactive Coastal Erosion Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Program.

Following storm events Ralph is the first responder to conduct detailed coastal storm impact analysis of structural failures and impacts to the coastal system with recommendations for structural improvements and for recovery projects. Hurricane Wilma in October, 2005, which made landfall on the southwest coast of Florida, was the 41st hurricane impact Ralph evaluated along the coast, as well as documenting and studying another 40-plus tropical storms and extra-tropical storms during his career.

Between 2000 and 2006 Ralph was a consultant to the government of Mexico assisting with the initiation of a coastal erosion study of the coast of Yucatan as well as providing hurricane damage and erosion control advice. He also continues to provide technical guidance for the restoration of the beaches of Cancun and Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo, and has served on a technical advisory committee for the Mexican government. He often provides coastal engineering consultation to other coastal states and countries, such as Texas, Georgia, Puerto Rico, Spain, the Bahamas, Cuba, the Cayman Islands, the Virgin Islands, and St. Barthelemy, and has spent considerable time studying beach processes and hurricane impacts throughout the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean Sea, plus the Pacific coast of Mexico. Ralph has also visited and studied beach conditions in Brazil, China, South Africa, Namibia, Ivory Coast, Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Canada, and Turkey.

From 1982 to 1988 Ralph was the Bureau Chief of the Florida Department of Natural Resources, Bureau of Coastal Engineering and Regulation. This position developed and administered the State's Coastal

Construction Control Line Program. During this time he supervised a staff of seventeen engineers with multidisciplinary expertise in civil, construction, and coastal engineering to review approximately 1,000 coastal projects annually. Many of these applications were reviewed and approved by the Governor and Cabinet acting as the head of the Department of Natural Resources. Mr. Clark developed the policies and administrative code rules for the coastal construction control line program (Chapter 16B-33, Florida Administrative Code) and the standards for the State's coastal building code (Part III, Chapter 161, Florida Statutes). During this time period Mr. Clark also published three documents on coastal storm damage and erosion, and administered the State's engineering review of all beach erosion control projects and coastal inlet dredging projects.

Prior to his duty as Bureau Chief, Ralph was a Professional Engineer for the Bureau of Beaches and Shores, and served as a Hydrographic Engineer for the old Department of Environmental Regulation. Ralph wrote three technical memorandums setting agency standards for hydrographic research studies of coastal canals conducted by the University of Florida, Department of Civil Engineering and funded by the Sea Grant Program.

Ralph has delivered dozens of presentations at state, regional, national and international conferences and forums, drawing from his extensive knowledge and experience. He has authored or co-authored 76 publications on the subjects of coastal engineering, tides, tidal inlet dynamics, hydraulics, structural design, building codes, hurricane and storm impacts, beach erosion, and coastal zone management.

Ralph Clark's record of unprecedented achievements reflects the objectives and ideals of the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association and if Morrrough P. O'Brien is smiling down upon us, I am sure he would approve of this most worthy recipient.