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Maps realign flood zones

Relocation of resource areas could affect flood insurance

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BETHANY BEACH -- For more than two decades, some residents in the oceanfront community of Bayberry Dunes, north of Bethany Beach, didn't qualify for federal flood insurance.

Like dozens of other homeowners in North Bethany, their houses were built in an area deemed by federal officials as so ecologically fragile and so vulnerable to coastal storms that it was designated a Coastal Barrier Resource Area.

But Tuesday, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service released a series of new high-tech maps that are part of a pilot project designed to better identify places within the Coastal Barrier.

It appears that Bayberry Dunes may no longer be a part of the resource area. For years, the northernmost street and a small section of a side street in the development were part of the coastal resource area. The new southern boundary for the North Bethany resource area known as HO1 was adjusted to follow the northern boundary of the Bayberry Dunes subdivision -- the southernmost reach of the designated area.

In addition, the new maps alter the northern boundary of HO1 to follow the southern boundary of the Cotton Patch Hills subdivision, a change that may impact a few property owners there. In all, 5.2 acres were removed from the unit and 4.2 acres -- much of it aquatic habitat -- were added.

Anthony P. Pratt, the state shoreline and waterway administrator, said he needed to review the new maps with his staff to see if and how they would affect federal flood insurance eligibility.

The new maps are part of a pilot project designed to take old paper maps and digitize them. The pilot project mapped 70 units in five states: Delaware, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida and Louisiana.

Public comments will be taken on the pilot program maps through July 6.

The ultimate goal is to revamp and digitize all 3.1 million acres within Coastal Barrier Resource areas. In Delaware, those areas include land along the Delaware Bay, in addition to the area around North Bethany. Only the North Bethany area was mapped as part of the pilot program.

The total cost of remapping will be \$17 million.
