

Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

Ms. Randall Marine Science
Coastal Processes Lab Activity

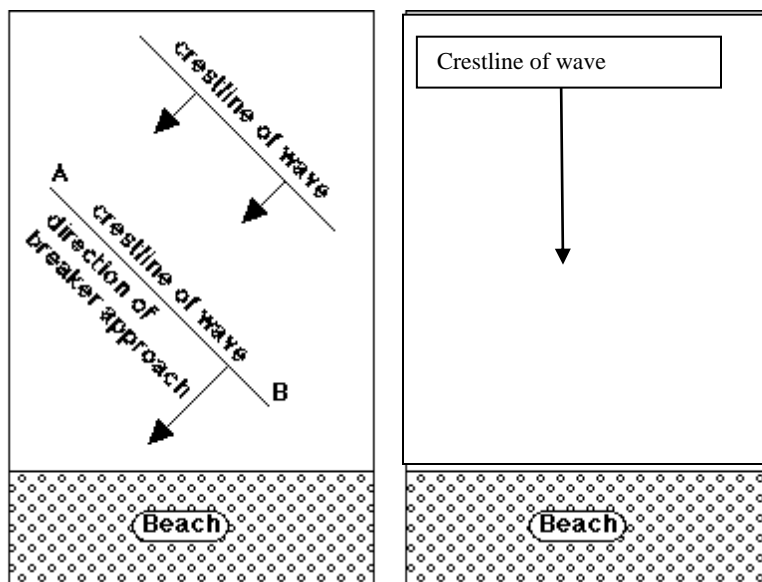
Introduction: Sand and other materials are moved along the shorelines by waves and currents. This occurs seasonally as well as during storms. Coastlines are not as stable as many people believe, but change their shape due to natural forces and the interference of people. As the percentage of the United States population living along the coastlines increases, so does the need for strategies and facilities to combat the potential threat due to future catastrophic storms and resulting flooding and coastal erosion. Erosion is comprised of natural, physical, and chemical processes by which the earth's rocks and soil are continuously worn down. Running water is also a major cause of erosion. Stones carried with a river's current scour and abrade the banks and beds. Ocean waves and currents erode rocky cliffs and sandy beaches, especially during storms. When an area receives more water than the ground can absorb, the excess flows to the lowest level, carrying loose soil with it. Erosion causes constant changes in land.

Objective: To identify and draw shoreline features and the forces and conditions that produce them. You will also consider how humans use these features.

Activity 1: Longshore Currents

Longshore currents are maintained by the **wave energy component travelling parallel** to the shoreline, which causes part of the water mass to be transported along the shoreline as well. The figure below shows that waves approaching from the right generate a longshore current that runs to the left. This is because there is a component of wave velocity to the left. If breakers are approaching *perpendicular* to the shoreline, longshore currents will *not* form because there is no horizontal component of wave energy parallel to the shoreline. Longshore transport of sand is caused by the longshore current in combination with the stirring up of sand by wave action.

- a. Circle the diagram in which you could observe a long shore current.
- b. Use a colored pencil to draw the direction of the longshore current.



Activity 2: Deltas

A delta develops when sediments pile up at the end of a river. The sediments can block the river, causing it to split into smaller rivers called “distributaries.” The distributaries spread out, each finding their own way through the sediments and down into the sea, sometimes giving the delta a triangular-shape. (The Greek letter “delta” has the shape of a triangle.) If enough sediment blocks the river, the river can actually shift its course.

1. What famous river feeds the delta in Egypt? _____

When you think of Egypt, you probably think of pyramids and a barren place covered by sand, but the delta is a green place with lush vegetation. The great ancient civilizations (e.g., Egypt, Mesopotamia, China, India) started in deltas because of the rich farmland.

2. Many people still live in deltas, but unlike ancient peoples, we have the technology to keep the delta from changing. For example, we dredge the river and distributaries (removing sediments from the bottom) and build levees (big piles of sediment).

Why do we carry out these activities? What is the purpose or goal?

Dredging the River: _____

Building Levees: _____

Hint:

Levees control the river and its distributaries.

What do they keep neighboring wetlands from getting?

3. Building levees can harm the nearby wetlands. How?

Natural deltas are places where land is growing along a shoreline. New Orleans is built on a delta, but it is slowly sinking: new mud is no longer being added and the weight of the buildings is slowly squeezing out the water beneath it and compressing the mud. New Orleans is now about 8 feet below sea level, on average. The levees are the only thing keeping the Mississippi river and the ocean out.

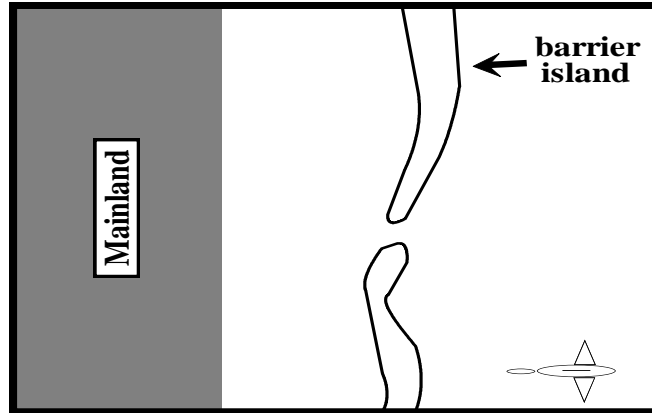
Activity 3: Barrier Islands, Bars, Spits, and Tombolos

Examine the picture to the right

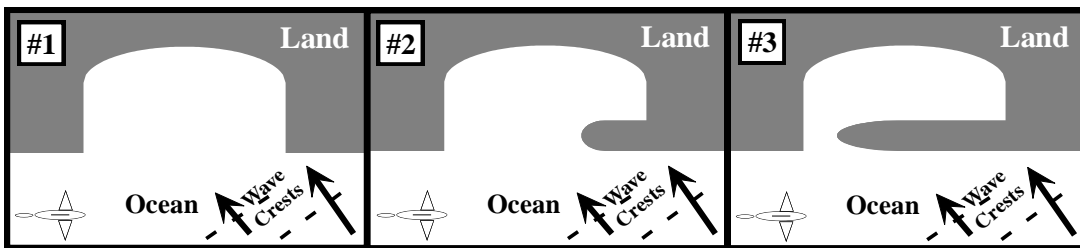
1. Are barrier islands made out of solid rock or sand? _____

2. In the map view (bird's-eye view) on right, label the:

- ocean
- lagoon (estuary)
- sandy beach

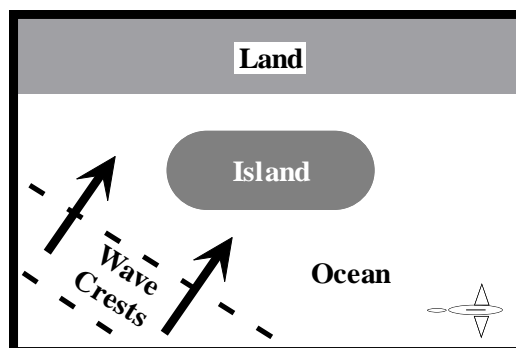


3. Examine the picture of Rodeo Lagoon.



The sketches below show how a “barrier bar” can develop. **In your own words, describe how a barrier bar forms across the mouth of a bay or cove. As part of your answer, identify what pushes sand along the coast.**

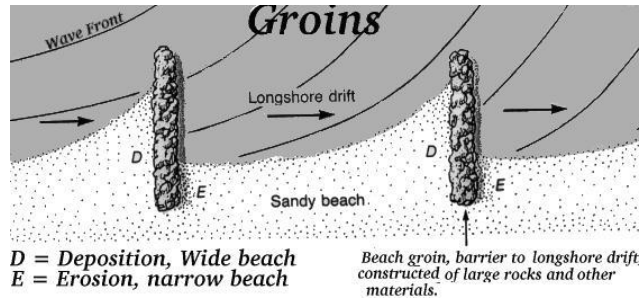
4. Sometimes sand will pile up between an island or sea stack and the shore, connecting island to the land (this is called a “tombolo”). **Why does the sand pile up between the island and the shore?**



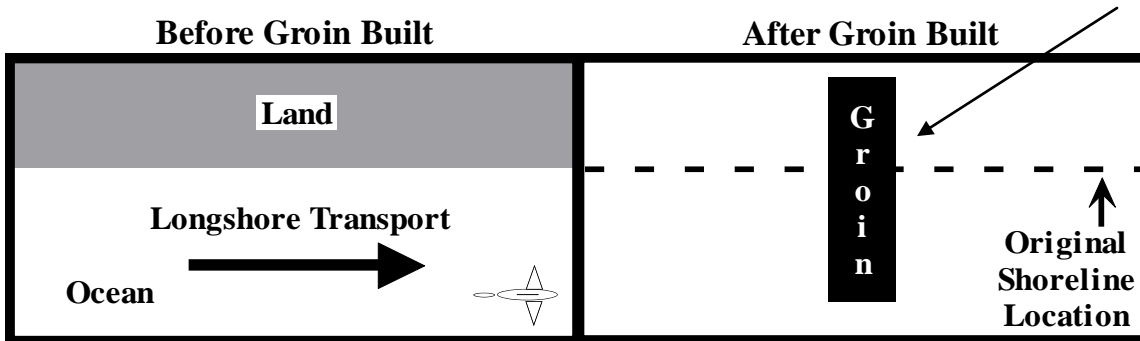
Activity 4: Groin

The shoreline is not stable; waves erode the shoreline and shift sediments, removing them from some places and depositing them in other places. However, when someone buys a piece of property, they don't like it to change. Humans often build structures called "hard stabilization" along the shoreline to prevent changes from occurring.

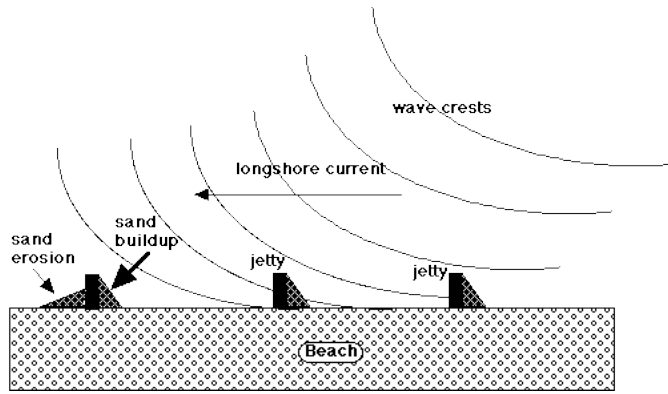
One common example of hard stabilization is a groin (see the "Hard Stabilization" pictures), a barrier than extends out into the ocean. Typically, groins are built to hold sand on a beach.



- Using the above picture as reference, sketch a map view (bird's-eye view) of how building a groin will affect the shoreline into the "After Groin Built" map on the right below. Label the land and the ocean.



- Write "sand deposited" in *green* and "sand erodes" in *red* in appropriate places in your sketch above. Why does sand pile up on one side of the groin? Why is sand being removed from the other side?



Jetties are similar to groins. Typically, jetties are longer than groins and come in pairs on either side of the opening of a harbor.

3. Jetties are built for the harbor, not to hold onto a beach.

**How do the jetties benefit people who use the harbor?
Give 2 examples.**

(a) _____

(b) _____

Hints: (a) Think about riding in a boat and how jetties will affect the waves in the harbor (b) why boats would not be able to get in and out of the harbor *eventually* if there were no jetties.

Which is the primary purpose of the jetties? _____

Activity 5: Rocky Coastline

On rocky coasts, coastal erosion results in dramatic rock formations in areas where the coastline contains rock layers or fracture zones with different resistances to erosion. Softer areas become eroded much faster than harder ones, which typically result in landforms such as tunnels, bridges, columns, and pillars.

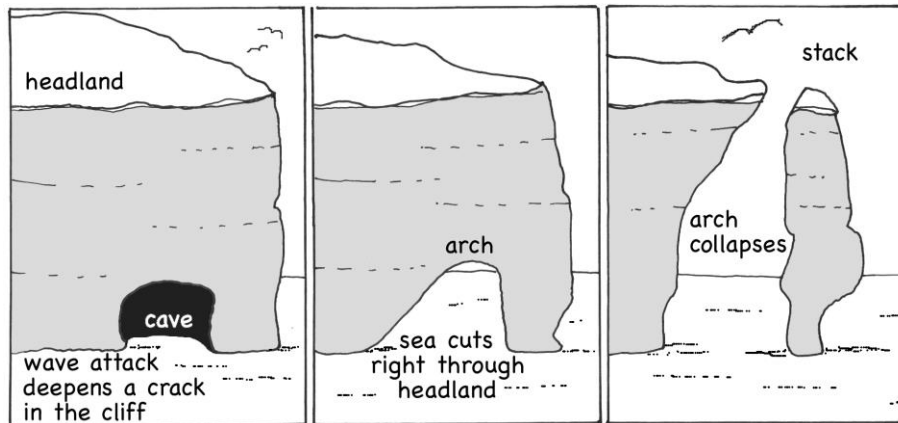


1. Caves, stacks, arches, and stumps-

Diagram 1

Diagram 2

Diagram 3



Describe how water can create the features shown:
