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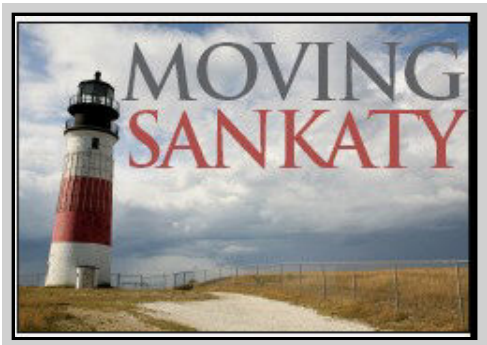
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ALMOST THERE

Sankaty resting comfortably above new foundation

At 11 a.m. yesterday morning, after 'Sconset Trust President Bob Felch pushed it the final three inches, Sankaty Head Lighthouse completed its 405-foot crawl to its new, safer inland location.



"It's exhilaration, it's excitement and it's relief," said Felch early yesterday afternoon after Expert House Movers of Sharpstown, Md. completed the move of the lighthouse. "It's out of danger, it did go smoothly, there were some minor mechanical issues, but they were worked out."

The move to more solid ground, 280 feet west of its former imperiled site 75 feet from the edge of the bluff, took seven and a half days of pushing and lowering by Expert House Movers and a cast of hundreds of island workers and volunteers. During the last week, the movers encountered dips in the terrain totaling 12 feet that slowed the move.

To overcome the descents in elevation, Expert House Movers President Jerry Matyiko and his crew had to stop at drops in the path, build up oak cribbing logs level with the path's elevation, lay down roller beams, move on to the next dip and repeat the process. The lowering process continued through Monday, Felch said.

"They did some lowering [on Friday] and it took a little bit longer Saturday and on Sunday they went fishing," said Felch. "Yesterday [Monday], they continued the lowering process, and today it was prepped for pushing and they pushed it 50 feet to the new foundation."

Now sitting roughly six feet above a five-foot thick octagonal concrete foundation and waiting to be lowered, Sankaty is about three weeks away from being re-lit. But first it needs to be planted firmly on a four-foot-thick, two-foot-tall concrete sub-foundation that will adhere the lighthouse to its new foundation. Local contractor Gerald Minihan will begin piecing together forms for that connector at the end of this week and pump in concrete from the inside out, said Felch.

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"Once they pour it, we will have to allow about five to seven days for it to cure," he said. "After that they won't be putting the weight of the lighthouse down on the pad for two or three weeks."

The final step, after Expert House Movers determines the sub-foundation is strong enough to support the lighthouse, will be to pull out the lighthouse's support beams from their holes in the structure and brick in the holes, said Felch.

"The light will be put on at the end of the month through a coordination between National Grid, the Coast Guard and the 'Sconset Trust," he said. "The Coast Guard needs a week's notice so they can put out a notice to mariners."

For the very latest on the move,

see Independent photographer Rob Benchley's photo essay at:

www.sankatytrust.org.





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