

Coastal Connection

Published by Marlowe & Company, LLC
Washington, DC

June 19, 2006
Volume 4, Issue 13



Current Issues in Washington

The Senate Appropriations Committee is expected to consider the FY07 Agriculture and FY07 Legislative Branch appropriations bills this week. The Committee will also approve subcommittee allocations during Thursday's meeting.

The House of Representatives will consider legislation providing the President "line-item veto" authority for spending bills. A related measure will be considered on Tuesday by the Senate Budget Committee.

If you have questions or need additional information,
please contact:
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The Coastal Connection is published weekly when Congress is in session, or as events warrant.
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Priorities Announced for Ocean Policy Reform

Last week, the Joint Oceans Commission issued a new report entitled, "From Sea to Shining Sea: Priorities for Ocean Policy Reform."

At the request of 10 senators, the Commission developed the report to serve as a national ocean policy plan for Congress.

The plan includes ten steps Congress should take to protect, restore, and maintain our marine ecosystems.

Among the highest priorities identified by the Commission are the following three items:

- 1) Establishing a strengthened National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in law and working with the Bush Administration to improve federal agency coordination on ocean and coastal issues.
- 2) Enacting legislation to create incentives for ecosystem-based management that builds upon existing and emerging regional efforts to involve federal, state, tribal, and local governments, as well as the private sector, nongovernmental organizations, and academic institutions.
- 3) Reauthorizing an improved Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conser-

vation and Management Act that relies more strongly on science to guide management actions to ensure the long-term sustainability of U.S. fisheries.

"Three years ago the Pew Oceans Commission and the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy sounded the alarm on the state of our oceans. While we did a good job helping everyone understand that oceans and coasts are in serious trouble, we have been unable to transform that insight into any sustained momentum to develop and implement a new framework for ocean policy," said Leon Panetta, co-chair of the Joint Commission.

"I asked for this report to give us a framework for future action – things we can accomplish today and tomorrow," stated Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD).

Mikulski also pledged to increase funding for oceans programs through her seat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, where she serves as the Ranking Member of the Commerce, Justice, and Science Subcommittee.

The Joint Commission was formed last year by members of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission.

Beach Resolution Introduced in Senate

Last week, Senator Mel Martinez (R-FL) introduced S. Res. 510, designating the week of June 28-July 5 as National Clean Beaches Week and recognizing the “considerable value and role of beaches in the culture of the United States.”

A companion resolution (H. Res. 760) was introduced in the House of Representatives several weeks ago by Congressman Frank Pallone (D-NJ). The House resolution currently has 51 co-sponsors.

As of last Friday, the Senate version has seven co-sponsors: Senators Lautenberg (D-NJ), Menendez (D-NJ), Carper (D-DE), Dole (R-NC), Lott (R-MS), Snowe (R-ME), and Stabenow (D-MI).



In his introductory remarks, Martinez stated that this resolution, “will support a national effort to recognize the importance of keeping our beaches clean and vibrant, to continue to support our Nation’s ecological treasures for future generations to enjoy, and to encourage Americans of all ages and

backgrounds to marvel at their splendor.”

The text of the resolution notes that coastal areas produce 85 percent of all coastal tourism in the United States and that beaches are the leading tourist destination in the country, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

In addition, the resolution states that Americans and international visitors make an estimated 2 billion trips each year to the country’s beaches.

Furthermore, it urges the federal government to develop science-based policies to support beaches and coastal resources.

Dept. of Homeland Security Issues Nationwide Plan Review

Last week, under President Bush’s order, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) presented Congress with the findings of its review of state and city emergency plans. Unfortunately, DHS found that most American cities and states remain unprepared for catastrophic events.

In spite of the overall negative findings, the review did draw attention to the fact that preparedness in states along the hurricane belt is higher than the rest of the country. Nevertheless, DHS did warn that being prepared for a hurricane does not mean that these states and cities are as well-prepared for other catastrophic events.

The report notes that the high population density in hurricane-

prone areas “is a further impetus to develop and maintain emergency plans that can help warn, evacuate, shelter, and provide care for large numbers of people.” The average number of people per square mile in Hurricane Belt states is 711, compared to 94 people per square mile in other states.



A local official in Jackson, Missouri surveys tornado damage earlier this year. Photo credit: FEMA/Patsy Lynch.

Among the many conclusions of the Nationwide Plan Review, DHS stressed the need for a clearly defined command structure and a strongly defined and detailed evacuation plan at the state and local levels.

“Dedicated officials across the country have, for the most part, done very well in planning for and responding to disasters of the scope and scale most common in the United States” said George Foresman, DHS Under Secretary for Preparedness. “However, the findings of the Nationwide Plan Review unequivocally support the need to modernize planning processes, products, and tools, and to move our national emergency planning efforts to the next level needed for catastrophic events.”

Coastal Group Requests Committee Action on BEACH Act

The American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, prompt consideration of the BEACH Act reauthorization bill, HR 1721.

The American Shore & Beach Preservation Association
Protecting our coastal economy and ecology for 80 years



June 9, 2006

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman, Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James Jeffords
Ranking Member, Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member Jeffords:

The American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) supports the goals of H.R. 1721, the reauthorization of the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act of 2000 (BEACH Act). This legislation was approved by the House of Representatives last year and has been referred to your Committee for consideration. The ASBPA respectfully requests that you schedule consideration of this important legislation as soon as possible.

Along the nation's coasts, polluted water has forced beach closures and increased health risks to the public. In order to adequately address these problems, efforts must be made to improve the ability of coastal states and communities to monitor water quality, as well as to increase the overall investment in our country's water infrastructure.

ASBPA has supported legislative and regulatory actions over the past few years which have strengthened federal and state standards for beach water quality. As part of the BEACH Act, coastal states and territories have been awarded grants to implement and develop water quality monitoring and public notification programs. These grants have allowed state and local officials to safeguard the public's health with improved monitoring and testing methods. It is critical that these BEACH Act grants be reauthorized by Congress.

Thank you for your leadership and steadfast support of America's coastal communities and public beaches.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Harry Simmons", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Mayor Harry Simmons
President, ASBPA

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Analysis: Property Ownership in Bogue Banks, North Carolina

Using data provided by the five communities on the island of Bogue Banks, North Carolina (Atlantic Beach, Pine Knoll Shores, Indian Beach, Salter Path, and Emerald Isle), Marlowe & Company staff determined that individuals from across the nation own property on this 30-mile long barrier island in Carteret County, North Carolina.

The red areas on the map below show the primary residence areas for individuals who own property on Bogue Banks. The areas are

broken down by Congressional District.

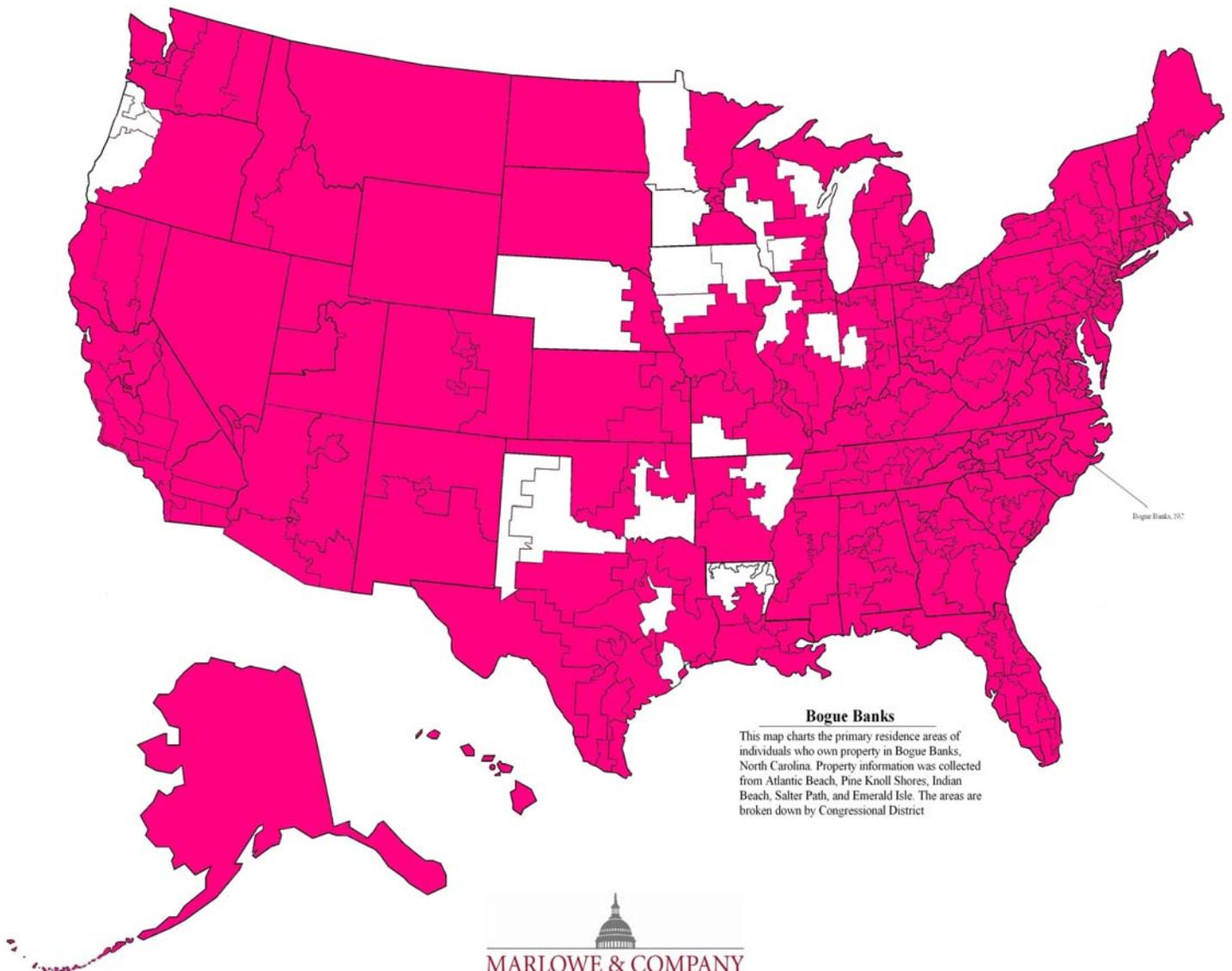
Once again, the results of our analysis emphasize the national attraction that Americans have to the coastal areas of the country. Similar reports have been published in recent editions of the *Coastal Connection* for other beach areas in North Carolina.

Out of the 435 Congressional Districts in the country, 401 have someone who owns property on Bogue Banks.

This analysis did not include any information about visitors to the island.

This area has a rich history, beginning as a group of small fishing villages. During the 1840's, Robert E. Lee helped design the area's first jetty and shore protection structures. More details at www.protectthebeach.com.

If your community is interested in a similar analysis, please contact beaches@marloweco.com for more information.



Catastrophic Disaster Risk and Insurance Commission Proposed

Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL), along with Senators Mary Landrieu (D-LA), Trent Lott (R-MS), and Thad Cochran (R-MS), have introduced legislation (S. 3114) that would establish a national commission to recommend the best way to keep insurance available and affordable. The commission would be required to analyze specific proposals, including creating a national disaster fund and tax-free home-repair accounts for consumers.

Representative Kendrick Meek (D-FL) has introduced companion legislation in the House (H.R. 5587)

"We need a comprehensive approach that will make sure the United States is truly prepared for

the financial fallout from natural disasters. We need a property and casualty insurance system that is not forced to spend valuable taxpayer dollars after a catastrophe strikes. We need a system that protects consumers and small businesses from losing their insurance policies or being forced to pay exorbitant insurance rates. We need ways to encourage responsible construction and mitigation techniques. And we need a system that helps insurance companies use their resources in cost-effective ways so that they will not go insolvent after major disasters," said Nelson.

Some insurance companies are pulling out of coastal markets completely, while others are charging such high premiums that it is be-

coming an insurmountable burden for homeowners. Skyrocketing premiums are also facing inland homeowners as insurance companies distribute rising costs across all of their policies.

Nelson emphasized that this is not an issue that just affects Hurricane-Belt states. He stated, "Let me be clear: these issues will not just affect Florida or the coastal States. Natural catastrophes can strike anywhere in our country...In the past few decades, major disasters have been declared in almost every state."

This legislation is modeled after a similar commission formed by the State of Florida in the 1990's in response to the devastation of Hurricane Andrew.

Coastal News Briefs

- Congressman Richard Pombo (R-CA) introduced the Coral Reef Legacy Act of 2006 (H.R. 5622) last week. The bill would reauthorize the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 and also codify the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force.
- President Bush established the Northwest Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument. These 140,000 square miles will be the largest single area dedicated to conservation in the country and will be the largest protected marine area in the world. It is larger than 46 states.



Kure Beach, North Carolina