

## **AMENDMENT 814: TO REDUCE FEDERAL SUBSIDIES FOR ONGOING BEACH RENOURISHMENT**

Beach nourishment is the practice of adding sand to a beach to maintain a sandy shoreline. Under current law, the cost share for beach nourishment projects is 65 percent federal and 35 percent non-federal for the initial nourishment, and 50 percent federal and 50 percent non-federal for ongoing renourishment over the next 50 years.

This amendment would maintain the current cost-share for the initial nourishment of beaches, but would increase the non-federal cost-share for ongoing renourishment from 50 to 65 percent. The new cost share for ongoing renourishment would therefore be 65 percent non-federal and 35 percent federal. This will help prioritize federal resources to essential needs. This proposal aligns with the recommendations of the Clinton Administration, Bush Administration, and President Obama's Fiscal Commission, all of which have called for scaling back federal involvement in these projects.

At a time when Medicare and Social Security will soon be unable to fully pay benefits, critical needs throughout the country are underfunded, and the national debt continues to rise \$32,000 a second, this is a prudent step to decrease federal involvement in an area that is a low priority for the federal government.

### **Beach nourishment primarily benefits local interests**

Most of the benefit of beach nourishment projects goes to local communities. The CBO noted this criticism when it included elimination of federal funding for beach nourishment as a budget option: "Proponents of halting federal spending for beach

replenishment argue that its benefits accrue largely to the states and localities in which the projects occur and that the cost should therefore be borne entirely at the state and local level.”<sup>1</sup>

The 2007 Water Resources Development Act, however, made beach nourishment a national concern, stating “[I]t is the policy of the United States to promote beach nourishment...including beach restoration and periodic beach renourishment for a period of 50 years....”<sup>2</sup> These projects have little relevance to national priorities, however. Congress should act now to scale back its involvement in these costly long-term commitments that primarily benefit local communities.

### **The past two administrations, as well as President Obama’s Fiscal Commission, recommended reducing federal involvement in beach nourishment**

President George W. Bush and President Bill Clinton have both recommended decreasing the federal cost-share of beach renourishment projects to more accurately reflect their parochial nature.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>“Budget Options,” Congressional Budget Office, February 2007, p. 64  
<http://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/cbofiles/ftpdocs/78xx/doc7821/02-23-budgetoptions.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Water Resources Development Act of 2007, H.R. 1495, Government Printing Office, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-110hr1495enr/pdf/BILLS-110hr1495enr.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Bill Adair & Amy Wimmer, “You bought this beach: Some of America's richest towns need sand - and you're paying,” St. Petersburg Times, May 12, 2002, [http://www.sptimes.com/2002/05/12/Worldandnation/You\\_bought\\_this\\_beach.shtml](http://www.sptimes.com/2002/05/12/Worldandnation/You_bought_this_beach.shtml)

In 1998, the head of the Corps of Engineers under President Clinton testified about the administration's proposal to decrease the federal cost-share from 50 to 35 percent:

Under our proposal, the cost sharing for the initial construction of shore protection projects will remain the same (generally a 65 percent Federal share). However, the cost sharing for periodic nourishment of shore protection projects would change. Our recommendation is that when the project protects a developed area with shores under public control, the cost sharing of periodic nourishment would generally be 35 percent Federal and 65 percent non-Federal. When the project protects undeveloped private property, the cost sharing of periodic renourishment would remain at 100 percent non-Federal; and when the project protects Federal property, the cost sharing of periodic renourishment would remain at 100 percent Federal.<sup>4</sup>

In 2001, the head of the Corps of Engineers under President Bush likewise testified that the administration supported a 35 percent cost-share:

However, ongoing shore protection projects that involve periodic renourishment and that are otherwise consistent with established policies are supported in the FY 2002 budget, no matter when these projects were started, provided that non-Federal interests agree to pay 65 percent of the costs of renourishment work funded in FY 2002 or thereafter. This increased non-Federal cost share reflects the substantial economic benefits that these projects provide to state and local economies and ensures that the Federal Government's long-term nourishment obligations do not crowd out other important funding needs. The existing cost sharing

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<sup>4</sup> Statement of Dr. Joseph W. Westphal, Assistant Secretary Of The Army (Civil Works), before the Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the Committee on Environment and Public Works, United States Senate, June 23, 1998, <https://bulk.resource.org/gpo.gov/hearings/105s/49519.txt>

for initial sand nourishment, which is 65 percent Federal and 35 percent non-Federal in most cases, is not affected by the new policy.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, the CoChair's Proposal of President Obama's National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform recommended terminating low-priority Corps of Engineers program. The proposal discusses beach nourishment programs as candidates for elimination.

The Corps also conducts various operations designed to counter beach erosion, typically by dredging offshore sand and pumping it onshore to rebuild eroded areas. The Corps funds a portion of such activities, and state and local governments pay the rest. The operations have two primary goals: mitigating damage (replenishment helps beaches act as barriers to waves and protects coastal property from severe weather) and enhancing recreation. However, proponents of eliminating the program, which would save about \$90 million annually, argue that the cost of beach replenishment should be borne by those who benefit from it: states, localities, and private landowners.<sup>6</sup>

### **Beach nourishment is an expensive, temporary fix**

Beach nourishment is a costly, temporary solution to beach erosion. According to the CBO, "Beach erosion is a natural process, and replenishment projects serve only to temporarily

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<sup>5</sup> Statement of Claudia L. Tornblom, Deputy Assistant Secretary Of The Army (Management And Budget) before the Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the Committee on Environment and Public Works, United States Senate, April 26, 2001, [http://www.epw.senate.gov/107th/tor\\_0426.htm](http://www.epw.senate.gov/107th/tor_0426.htm)

<sup>6</sup> "CoChair's Proposal," National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, November 10, 2010, [http://www.fiscalcommission.gov/sites/fiscalcommission.gov/files/documents/illustrative\\_List\\_11.10.2010.pdf](http://www.fiscalcommission.gov/sites/fiscalcommission.gov/files/documents/illustrative_List_11.10.2010.pdf)

delay the inevitable natural shifting of beaches.”<sup>7</sup> This makes these projects a significant long-term liability for taxpayers. In 2000, a NOAA report stated that projects typically last for only three to ten years.<sup>8</sup>

From 1987 to 2007, the Corps of Engineers spent a total of \$1.4 billion on beach nourishment.<sup>9</sup> In 2009, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that eliminating federal funding for these projects would reduce federal spending by \$702 million over a ten-year period.<sup>10</sup>

### **Beach nourishment encourages risky coastal construction**

Coastal geologist Orrin Pilkey notes, “The density of development behind an artificially rebuilt beach often increases dramatically. High rises, hotels and condos replace beach cottages, leaving more buildings than ever dangerously positioned when the next big flood or storm comes.”<sup>11</sup>

This risky construction can also drive up costs for the taxpayer through higher flood disaster assistance costs. According to a NOAA report, “Beach nourishment could induce development in

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<sup>7</sup> “Budget Options,” Congressional Budget Office, February 2007, p. 64  
<http://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/cbofiles/ftpdocs/78xx/doc7821/02-23-budgetoptions.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Casey Hedrick, “State, Territory, and Commonwealth Beach Nourishment Programs,” March 2000, NOAA,  
<http://coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/resources/docs/finalbeach.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Correspondence to the office of Senator Coburn, Corps Office of Congressional Relations, April 11, 2008

<sup>10</sup> “Budget Options Volume 2,” Congressional Budget Office, August 2009, pg. 60,  
<http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/102xx/doc10294/08-06-BudgetOptions.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Orrin H. Pilkey, “Army Engineers Hit the Beaches,” *Washington Post*, June 17, 2001

high hazard areas by giving landowners and local officials a false sense of security and protection from storm waves and wind. Beach nourishment may also spur efforts to redevelop storm damaged or low density urban shorelines at higher densities. Such redevelopment may temporarily benefit the local landowners, businesses and governments, but it may also alter the ability of the public to access and use the beach. Taxpayers may also be exposed to greater liability in the form of disaster assistance when responding to storm damage.”<sup>12</sup>

### **Beach nourishment has adverse environmental impacts**

In 2000, NOAA states:

Beach nourishment projects can have serious long and short-term environmental effects at: the beach where the nourishment takes place; the borrow site; and, nearby areas of the water column and the water bottom. Potential negative effects include: disturbance of species’ feeding patterns; disturbance of species’ nesting and breeding habitats; elevated turbidity levels [a key test in water quality measuring the cloudiness of fluid caused by individual particles that are generally invisible to the naked eye]; changes in near shore bathymetry [the measurement of ocean depth] and associated changes in wave action; burial of intertidal and bottom plants and animals and their habitats in the surf zone; and, increased sedimentation in areas seaward of the surf zone as the fill material redistributes to a more stable profile (National Research Council, 1995). Of particular concern are the impacts to endangered species such as sea turtles and shorebirds which use the beach as nesting areas.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Casey Hedrick, “State, Territory, and Commonwealth Beach Nourishment Programs,” March 2000, NOAA,  
<http://coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/resources/docs/finalbeach.pdf>

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