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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Report Features New Plan to Save N.C. Beaches

Ocean, N.C. – There is little debate in North Carolina that our oceanfront beaches are very special, and their quality and uses should never be degraded. For the past 30 years North Carolina leaders have embraced this priority, and forestalled many threats to beaches.

But our beaches are caught in a tightening vise grip between the sea and development. Renewed and aggressive leadership is now needed to better align local, state, and federal beach management programs.

Limiting high-rise buildings on the oceanfront, promoting family beaches, and helping property owners self-finance their relocation out of harms way, are among the sweeping recommendations that make up a new plan to save North Carolina's beaches.

The plan, devised by more than two dozen experts on beach development, is featured in the N.C. Coastal Federation's annual *State of the Coast Report*, which was released today.

The publication focuses on the state's oceanfront. It describes the causes of the erosion that is eating away at North Carolina's beaches and outlines the rules and regulations that have evolved to protect those beaches and the public's right to use them.

The report is dedicated to Jim Stephenson, the federation's policy director and legislative lobbyist who died in May of a heart attack.

Erosion, the report notes, will only get worse as the sea rises more quickly this century in response to global warming.

A new plan to save the state's beaches was clearly needed, said Todd Miller, the federation's executive director.

"We have some of the most beautiful beaches in the county because protecting the public beach has always been the guiding principle behind our rules on oceanfront development," he said. "If we are to continue to meet that worthy goal in an era of dramatically increased erosion, then it's clear that we will have to change some of the state and federal policies on managing oceanfront growth."

The report features the findings and recommendations of 28 of the scientists and policy experts who spent two days together in March to develop a new plan. They concluded that it will take energetic leadership pursuing a highly coordinated set of management actions to safeguard our public-trust recreational beaches for future generations.

The panel came up with two sets of recommendations. One is aimed at buying time for coastal communities by allowing them to effectively protect their beaches and existing oceanfront development without compromising the public beach in the process.

Those recommendations include:

- Asking the N.C. General Assembly to enact a Family Beach Act that places limits on high-rise buildings and other forms of high-density development on the oceanfront, patterned after the height limits adopted by most beach communities. This would prevent beach nourishment projects from encouraging increased building densities along the oceanfront, and give longer term adaptation and relocation strategies more chance to succeed.
- Asking Congress to direct the National Flood Insurance Program to pay for the relocation of threatened structures before they are claimed by the ocean.
- Asking the legislature to enact a program that funds and assigns responsibility for removing buildings from the publicly owned beach.
- Ask Congress to change funding formulas for beach re-nourishment projects so that they place an equal or greater value on environmental, recreational and public access benefits versus the current emphasis concerning storm damage reduction for structures, which favors higher building densities.

The other set of recommendations would help beach communities better adapt to sea-level rise and storms that will inevitably lead to removing or relocating buildings and infrastructure and, over time, will trigger significant adjustments to land use patterns along the oceanfront in order to protect public beaches. Those recommendations include:

- Asking the legislature to mandate and fund operational programs that remove or relocate buildings and infrastructure.
- Asking Congress to direct the flood insurance program to develop erosion insurance that would help landowners self-finance to protect themselves against financial losses associated with coastal erosion.
- Asking the legislature to establish public policy that limits the use of public funds to rebuild or improve substantially damaged public infrastructure and critical facilities located in the oceanfront flood zones following disasters.
- Asking the N.C. Coastal Resources Commission to identify counterproductive federal or state programs that encourage intense development along the oceanfront.

All the experts stressed that protection of the public beach must remain the clear purpose and outcome of all management decisions along the state's oceanfront, Miller noted. They also agreed that the effective protection of the public beach can only happen by getting out in front of issues and threats and not waiting until the beaches are in crisis.

"North Carolina's beaches are simply too valuable to leave their fate to a reactionary management approach that results in decisions that satisfy no one," Miller said. "Adopting a business as usual approach is not an option if future generations are to continue to benefit from North Carolina's wonderful beaches."

The entire *State of the Coast Report* is on the federation website: www.nccoast.org.

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***About the North Carolina Coastal Federation:
"Citizens Working Together for a Healthy Coast"***

The North Carolina Coastal Federation (NCCF) is the state's only non-profit organization focused exclusively on protecting and restoring the coast of North Carolina through education, advocacy and habitat restoration

and preservation. NCCF headquarters are located at 3609 Highway 24 in Ocean between Morehead City and Swansboro and are open Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 5 pm. The NCCF also operates field offices in Wilmington and Manteo. For more information call 252-393-8185 or check out NCCF's website at www.nccoast.org