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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ONWASA Pays Lobbyists \$42,000 to Push Bad Environmental Bill

Ocean, N.C. – The Onslow Water and Sewer Authority (ONWASA) paid two lobbyists more than \$42,000 over the last three years, according to state filings. Much of the money went to push for an ill-conceived scheme to dump treated sewage into pristine coastal aquifers.

Kevin G. Leonard registered as ONWASA's second lobbyist on April 9, according to the N.C. Secretary of State's office. He briefly represented ONWASA in 2007. Leonard joins Alexander "Sandy" Sands III as ONWASA lobbyists. Both are contract lobbyists for Womble, Carlyle, Sandbridge and Rice, PLLC, the largest law firm in the state. Over the past two years, ONWASA has paid Sands and Leonard \$42,881.50.

No other water and sewer authority in North Carolina retains a lobbyist.

"As an ONWASA customer, I have to question why ONWASA would spend money on a pair of high-priced lobbyists at a time when they are contemplating raising customer rates for water and sewer by 10 to 30 percent," said Frank Tursi, the Cape Lookout Coastkeeper® for the N.C. Coastal Federation and a Swansboro resident. "As a conservationist, I have to question why ONWASA would promote this unsound environmental legislation that would risk the contamination of people's wells by injecting treated sewage into the groundwater."

House Bill 643 would allow the injection of treated sewage into the state's aquifers. The practice was banned in North Carolina after the Hercules Chemical plant contaminated groundwater in Wilmington. Hercules built an injection well in 1968 to dispose of organic waste used in making synthetic fiber. By 1972, the waste showed up in monitoring wells, had migrated to another aquifer and had contaminated the groundwater. The failed project was abandoned,

and the practice of injecting waste into groundwater banned. The bill ONWASA is promoting would overturn that ban.

Sands was the third-highest paid lobbyist in 2007 according to a recent report issued by Democracy South. He had 33 clients and reported \$325,055 in contracts in 2007. Sands first registered as a lobbyist for ONWASA on April 4, 2007, according to state records. To view the entire Democracy South list, see <http://www.democracy-nc.org/PDFs/lobbcomp07.pdf>.

ONWASA paid Sands and Leonard more than \$10,000 in 2007, almost \$21,000 last year and about \$12,000 so far this year. To view the reported payments by quarter, see <http://www.secretary.state.nc.us/lobbyists/Principal.aspx?Pid=8185814>

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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 headquarters include NCCF's main offices, the Cape Lookout Coastkeeper office, a gift shop, Nature Library, Weber Seashell Exhibit, ShoreKeeper Learning Center, and adjoining nature trail. 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