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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Experts Outline Action Agenda To Save North Carolina's Beaches

Ocean, N.C. – Twenty-eight of North Carolina's renowned scientific and public policy beach experts spent two days together in March working to develop a plan to save NC beaches. 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.

Summit participants released today a set of findings and recommendations. They are calling upon local, state and federal leaders to move forward together with consistent actions to better protect North Carolina's oceanfront beaches—one of our most treasured natural assets.

The North Carolina Coastal Federation and the UNC Center for the Study of Natural Hazards and Disasters, with help from the North Carolina Beach, Inlet & Waterway Association, convened a Beach Management Summit in Beaufort, North Carolina on March 11 and 12, 2009. The summit discussed emerging threats to the public recreational beach and evaluated existing oceanfront policies, programs, and regulations. Participants represented many diverse policy and scientific disciplines and viewpoints.

"We challenged participants to suggest actions they could all agree upon to ensure North Carolina is prepared to address rapid coastal development, coastal storms and sea-level rise along our oceanfront," said Todd Miller, executive director of the federation. "The goal of the meeting was to identify a coherent set of broadly supported management actions that will protect our beaches."

“In organizing the Summit, we asked everyone to look beyond their current disagreements over whether to maintain the state’s ban on groins,” said Gavin Smith, executive director of the UNC center. “The findings and recommendations released today represent areas of agreement, not disagreement. This diverse group of experts agreed that there are many inconsistencies in our current beach management policies and programs, and that as long as these exist the quality of our beaches will continue to deteriorate.”

“This effort is rekindling a more constructive dialogue about our beaches similar to what occurred 30 years ago when our current policies and rules were put in place,” said Miller.

The report released today includes six major findings and twenty-one recommendations on how to improve the protection of our beaches. The findings outline threats to our beaches such as inconsistencies in state and federal beach programs that work at cross purposes to one another. Summit participants stress that protection of the public recreational beach must remain the clear purpose and outcome of all management decisions along North Carolina’s oceanfront.

The recommendations are presented in two groups. One set identifies actions that are needed to help communities more effectively protect their beaches and existing oceanfront development by improving access to needed management tools and funds. The second group of actions aim to enable landowners and local, state and federal agencies to adapt to sea-level rise and storms that will result in the need to remove or relocate buildings and infrastructure. These same factors, over time, will result in significant adjustments to land use patterns along the oceanfront to protect public recreational beaches.

It is essential these two sets of recommendations made by summit participants be acted upon quickly and concurrently to provide comprehensive oceanfront management programs that protect the public recreational beach. Summit participants warn that piecemeal application of these ideas will increase the likelihood that management efforts will work at cross-purposes, and undermine the goal of protecting the beach. The management programs resulting from these recommendations must work in concert to address changing beach conditions responding to sea level rise, storms and the daily ebb and flow of the ocean.

Summit participants believe the effective protection of the public recreational beach can only occur 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 which results in decisions that satisfy no one.

“Adopting a business as usual approach is not an option if future generations are to continue to benefit from North Carolina’s wonderful beaches,” said Miller.

The entire text of the report can be viewed on-line at 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 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