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## **New Poll Finds Little Support for Groins, Gutting Environmental Rules**

As North Carolinians flock to the state's beaches for the busy Easter weekend, new poll results released today show that half of the state's registered voters oppose spending tax dollars to control erosion on those beaches. More than half of those polled also opposed building groins or other types of hard structures along the beach in an attempt to control erosion.

The poll also found little support for efforts underway in the N.C. General Assembly to weaken environmental agencies and do away with rules that protect the environment. Only 21 percent of those polled thought those rules are too stringent. More people – almost a third of those polled – thought the rules are too weak. Thirty-eight percent thought they are adequate.

Public Policy Polling of Raleigh conducted the random telephone poll of 686 registered voters on April 21-22. It has a margin of error of 3.8 percent. The N.C. Coastal Federation, the largest coastal conservation group in the state, paid for the poll.

"The poll doesn't show a great deal of popular support for spending taxpayer money to build groins on our beaches," said Todd Miller, the federation's executive director. "Neither does it show any support for gutting agencies and rules that protect our environment. Our legislators should take note."

A bill that would modify a 25-year-old ban on groins, jetties and other types of hard structures on our beaches has already passed the N.C. Senate. It would allow small jetties called groins to be built at inlets along the beach in order to protect private property. The N.C. House is expected to vote on the measure Tuesday.

Only about third of those polled support building groins on the beach. More than half – 53 percent -- favor doing nothing or pumping sand onto eroded beaches. The rest aren't sure. The results don't vary substantially with party affiliation. Only 31 percent of registered Republicans and unaffiliated voters support groins, while 39 percent of Democrats do.

Whatever is done to deal with erosion on the state's beaches, voters don't want to pay for it. Half of those polled don't support using tax dollars to pay to control beachfront erosion. Thirty-one percent did and 19 percent were unsure.

The poll found that opposition to the use of tax dollars is strongest among independents (60 percent) and Republicans (54 percent). Democrats, on the other hand, are evenly split. Thirty-nine percent support using tax dollars, while 38 percent don't.

An amendment to the groin bill in the N.C. House would protect taxpayers in beach communities by requiring, in most cases, a referendum before a groin could be built.

The House's proposed budget contains draconian cuts to the state's major environmental-protection agency – 22 percent over two years – that would require firing hundreds of inspectors and closing regional office. The Republican-controlled legislature has put a one-year moratorium on most new rules and has appointed a commission to look for existing rules to modify or kill.

Seventy percent of those polled, however, think the state's environmental rules and laws are adequate or too weak. More than three-quarters of the Democrats polled and the great majority of Republicans (68 percent) and independents (64 percent) think the rules are just right or too lax. Only 14 percent of Democrats think the rules are too strong and thus presumably in need of reform. That number is 23 percent for Republicans and 24 percent for Independents.

"The poll shows that most voters, including the vast majority of Republicans, don't think that the rules we have in place to protect our environment are so onerous that they need to be killed or weakened," Miller said. "Those in the legislature who support gutting our environmental safeguards need to get out and talk to their constituents and not just to special interests that profit from weak regulations."

Full poll results are available on the federation website at [www.nccoast.org](http://www.nccoast.org).