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Contact: Todd Miller
Phone: 252.393.8185
Email: toddm@nccoast.org

Groins Should Require Local Vote

Ocean – Property owners in communities considering building a jetty, called a groin, to control beach erosion should be allowed to vote on the project or on any increases in local taxes that will be used to pay for the structure.

The N.C. Coastal Federation, the state's major coastal environmental group, and the John Locke Foundation, the most influential conservative think tank in North Carolina, are urging the N.C. House of Representatives to add the requirement of a local referendum to a groin bill it's considering. The bill would allow jetty-like groins to be built at inlets to control erosion and to protect private property. Such structures are currently illegal in North Carolina because they increase erosion elsewhere along the beach.

"This is a bad bill," said Todd Miller, the executive director of the federation. "But if the legislature wants to allow these destructive piles of rock to be placed on our beaches, local taxpayers should get a say in whether they want to pay for them."

These small jetties can cost as much as \$10.8 million to build, according to a state study, and as much as \$2.25 million to maintain each year.

"The best way to protect local taxpayers is to maintain the current ban on terminal groins," said John Hood, president of the John Locke Foundation. "Short of that, local taxpayers should be allowed to vote on the issue before their community builds a terminal groin. Without a vote, taxpayers will have no voice and no choice but to pay a bill they don't want and can't afford for years to come."

The N.C. Senate, concerned about the possible cost to state taxpayers, amended the bill it eventually passed and sent to the House to include a requirement that the N.C. General

Assembly must approve any appropriation for a groin, rather than allow the money to hidden in the state budget.

“The legislature gave some protection to state taxpayers by requiring a direct vote on any state appropriation,” Miller said. “Local taxpayers need to same sort of protection.”

The House is expected to take up the bill in the next few weeks.