



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 18, 2011

Contact: Todd Miller
Phone: 252.241.0191
Email: toddm@nccoast.org

New Hanover Poll Finds Little Support for Groin Bill

OCEAN – Less than a third of the registered voters in New Hanover County support bills now reaching their final stages in the N.C. General Assembly that would allow small jetties, called groins, to be built on the state’s beaches to protect private property, according to a new poll released today.

The poll also found that almost half of the bills’ supporters want the number of groins limited to no more than three to allow time to determine whether they will work without harming the beach.

Public Policy Polling of Raleigh conducted the random telephone poll of 600 registered New Hanover voters on May 16-17. 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.

“Like a similar statewide poll we did on the subject several weeks ago, this one finds little support in New Hanover County for armoring our beaches with groins,” said Todd Miller, the federation’s executive director. “Even those who support the idea want to see the number limited. We hope that key members of the legislative committee that will decide the issue take note of those facts.”

Different bills that would modify a 25-year-old ban on groins, jetties and other types of hard structures on our beaches passed both chambers of the N.C. General Assembly earlier this spring. The version that the N.C. Senate approved would allow as many as two groins at every inlet in the state. The N.C. House version limits the number of groins to three. A committee of legislators has been appointed to work out the differences. Its first meeting is scheduled for tonight. Sen. Thom Goolsby, a Republican from New Hanover County, is a key member of the committee.

Less than a third of Goolsby’s constituents – 32 percent – support the bills, according to the poll, while 42 percent oppose them. Opposition to the bills was highest among independent voters (45 percent) and registered Democrats (43 percent). Republicans were split nearly evenly with 39 percent supporting the bills and 37 percent opposing them.

The debate among the legislators on the committee will likely center on how many groins to allow. Forty-eight percent of the bills' supporters wanted the number of groins limited to 1-3 test projects, the poll showed. A quarter of the supporters thought the final bill should allow 4-6 groins, while 17 percent supported an unlimited number. Those numbers hold along party lines. Forty-nine percent of independents and Democrats who support the bills favor allowing the least number of groins, while 46 percent of Republicans chose that option.

"Sen. Goolsby is a surfer who cares about the environment," Miller said. "I hope this poll will help him understand that voters will back him up if he will stand up for our coast and support limiting groins on our beaches."

The poll also found that 63 percent of registered voters in New Hanover favor doing nothing to control erosion or pumping sand on eroding beaches. Only 30 percent of those polled favored building structures like groins.

Whatever's done to try and control beachfront erosion, most voters in New Hanover don't want to pay for it. Forty-eight percent of those polled didn't want their tax dollars spent on erosion-control measures, while 37 percent did.

Full poll results are available on the federation website at www.nccoast.org.

--30--

About the North Carolina Coastal Federation

"Citizens Working Together for a Healthy Coast"

The N.C. Coastal Federation 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. The federation's headquarters are at 3609 N.C 24 in Ocean between Morehead City and Swansboro and are open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. The federation also operates offices in Wilmington and Manteo.

For more information call 252-393-8185 or check out its website at www.nccoast.org