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Environmental Group Applauds McCrory's Opposition to Jetty Bill

OCEAN—Gov. Pat McCrory should be applauded for his opposition to a bill that passed the N.C. Senate and would open up the state's beaches to potentially damaging walls of rock and sheet metal, said Todd Miller, executive director of the N.C. Coastal Federation.

"The governor recognizes that these so-called terminal groins can harm public beaches and become a financial burden on local and state taxpayers," Miller said. "We welcome his opposition to this reckless piece of legislation."

The federation's online news service, *Coastal Review Online*, reported today on its web site, www.nccoast.org, that McCrory and the state Department of Environment and Natural Resources are opposed to Senate Bill 151.

Supported by coastal senators, the bill passed the state Senate in mid-May. It would undo legislation passed in 2011 that allowed for four terminal groins and included environmental safeguards and restrictions on how they can be financed. That law also spelled out the liability of local governments for any damage the structures might cause.

The new bill lifts the cap on the number of groins, relaxes rules on financial responsibility, drops a requirement that financing for the projects be approved by local referendum and guts provisions to protect public beaches.

“Essentially, we feel the original legislation should be allowed to stand,” Michelle Walker, a spokeswoman for the environmental agency, said in the *Coastal Review Online* story.

The four projects — Ocean Isle Beach, Figure Eight Island, Bald Head Island and Holden Beach — are still not close to being permitted, she said. They are currently undergoing the required federal environmental review and none has applied for state permits.

“We want to see how those work out before opening up the rest of the coast,” Walker said. Ryan Tronovitch, a McCrory spokesman, confirmed to *Coastal Review Online* that the changes do not have the governor’s support.

“The office is opposed to it,” he said and supports DENR’s position to stick with the plans laid out in the 2011 compromise.

Opposition from the governor and the state’s main environmental agency would seem to diminish the bill’s chances of passage in its current form in the N.C. House. Legislative leaders did not respond to *Coastal Review Online’s* requests for comments.

The prospects for passage in the House may have gotten tougher after two more prominent voices joined the opposition this week. Former Rep. Carolyn Justice, a Republican from Pender County, and John Hood, John Locke Foundation president, penned an [op-ed](#) for the Wilmington *Star-News* opposing the new bill and supporting the 2011 compromise. Justice was the chief House negotiator on the compromise, working with legislative leaders to hammer out an agreement with Gov. Bev Perdue. The Locke Foundation is the most influential conservative think-tank in the state.

“The 2011 bill included many safeguards to ensure that these jetties were limited in number and that the planning for them was done carefully,” they wrote. “Most of those safeguards are swept away by the 2013 bill. Even more disturbing is the way the 2013 bill wipes out most of the taxpayer protections in the 2011 law.”

Having McCrory as an opponent as well should give House members pause, Miller said. "Our hope is that this irresponsible bill dies in the House," he said. "At the very least, House members should reinstate the provisions that protect taxpayers and our beaches."