

BEACH NEWS

American Shore & Beach Preservation Association

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Congress: Beaches are a \$600 to \$1 investment

FORT MYERS, FL - Attention, Members of Congress. Want to know a great way to stimulate the economy? Consider the return on investment for beach restoration projects -- \$600 to \$1. Yes, you read that right. For every \$1 the federal government spends on beach restoration projects, \$600 is pumped back into the economy.

The problem is the U.S. has more than 20,000 miles of eroding shoreline that poses numerous issues for our nation:

- Economic - wide, healthy beaches are the best barrier to storm-induced waves.
- Environmental - various species breed only in sandy coastal environments.
- Recreational - revenue from beach visitations, surfing, fishing, boating, etc. are a major component for coastal economies.

"From both a scientific and engineering standpoint, it is abundantly clear that beaches are a proven commodity," says Aram Terchunian, a coastal geologist with First Coastal Corporation in Long Island, N.Y. "Beach restoration projects mean tax dollars and economic activity. Dollar for dollar, beach restoration is a tremendous economic rejuvenator."

How is this large of a return possible? Terchunian explained that 53 percent of Americans live within 50 miles of a coast - and they patronize businesses along their route to the beach by, say, stopping at the deli to grab sandwiches for lunch, filling up their tanks with gas, maybe even purchasing a souvenir or two.

"Let's think about that in terms of numbers. Jones Beach State Park in New York gets 10 million visitors per year. That's 10 million people buying things along their way to that one beach," he said. "Now consider that 180 million Americans make 2 billion visits to our nation's beaches each year, and you can see that beaches actually give people a place and a reason to spend their money."

Take, for example, the Village of West Hampton Dunes, N.Y. Terchunian says the collective value of the 2-mile stretch of beach and 300 homes that stood on it was \$50,000 in 1992. Today, after a \$25 million beach restoration project and \$15 million worth of maintenance on the beach over the past 15 years, the community is now valued at \$900 million. "The local school and property taxes on that amount to \$5.4 million per year, and the economic impact on the region is \$63

million per year," he said. "This is exactly the type of economic stimulus package America needs right now."

Terchunian noted that this major economic stimulus goes straight to the local economy -- the places where people and businesses need more spending now. Of course, beach restoration projects are also major public-works efforts, which stimulates both local or regional governments (who coordinate and manage these projects) and major contractors and engineering interests (who design and built them).

Terchunian says there are plenty of "shovel-ready" projects that can be implemented immediately if the funds are made available. "These projects already have designs and permits and contractors ready to do the work - all we need is the authorization of Congress," he said. "It's an economic stimulus package that's ready to go."

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ABOUT ASBPA: Founded in 1926, the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) represents the scientific, technical and political interests along the coast in an effort to shape national research and policy concerning shore and beach management and restoration. ASBPA strives to engage in a factual debate on coastal issues and economics that will foster sound, far-sighted and economical development and preservation of our beaches; thereby aiding in placing their beliefs within the reach of the largest possible number of people in accordance with the ideals of a democratic nation. For additional information about ASBPA, please visit www.asbpa.org.

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