

March 18, 2010

VIA E-Mail

Dear NBC Nightly News:

Founded in 1926, the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) promotes the integration of science, policies and actions that maintain protect and enhance the coasts of America. We were pleased that two of our officers were interviewed by "NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams" on the subject of beach nourishment. We were impressed by the thoroughness and professionalism of Andrew Gross, the reporter for the story. The interviews with Tony Pratt and me provided "NBC Nightly News" with ample material for a balanced piece.

Although we knew Orrin Pilkey was going to be interviewed, we were flabbergasted at the final piece that showcased a fringe coastal mentality that is no more accepted in coastal scientific circles than climate naysayers in climate science circles. It is clear there was an agenda to focus on a small group who has decided retreat from our shoreline is the only answer -- when that is not an answer at all, but merely avoidance of the issue. We understand that in a two-minute segment, any issue will not be discussed in detail. But with over 50% of Americans living and working in coastal areas (within 50 miles of the coast), and the fact that more Americans visit beaches than all our state and national parks combined, it is irresponsible to not show the national benefits of beach restoration.

It is disingenuous for the idea of retreat to wrap itself in the mantle of climate change when only a small portion of erosion is a result of sea level rise, and that is already taken into consideration in the design of beach nourishment projects. It is also disingenuous to include a positive story on sandbagging the Red River in North Dakota while not opposing federal funding to solve their problems. While you are considering retreat from natural disasters, maybe we should include those who are affected by wildfire, mudslides, avalanches, tornados, tsunamis, earthquakes and other catastrophic phenomenon. Of course, that is absurd -- all areas of the country face natural disasters. We cannot single out one problem for exclusion.

Instead, we view America's beaches as a national economic, environmental and recreational treasure. We have been looking at the costs and benefits of protecting our beaches for decades. A few of them are listed below:

- Beaches offer a good return on the federal investment: Every federal dollar spent on beaches brings in more than \$300; every dollar spent on a restored beach brings \$4-\$5 back to taxpayers at all levels of government.

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- A healthy beach protects the #1 U.S. industry ...tourism. If U.S. beaches aren't maintained, visitors (and the jobs they bring) will go elsewhere.
- A wide beach provides protection for homes, habitat and infrastructure. Money spent to maintain beaches should significantly reduce the federal money necessary to help communities recover after most coastal storms.
- 50% of our population lives within 50 miles of the coast. That's where people want to be and that's where the people's money needs to be invested.
- Beaches are part of a larger and interdependent coastal environment. Loss of a sandy beach has a ripple effect through the entire coastal ecosystem.
- Coastal management is a crucial part of coastal commerce:
 - The navigation that brings in goods.
 - The recreation that brings in visitors.
 - The habitation that makes communities thrive.
- Beaches attract twice as many visitors as our national parks, yet they receive a fraction of the federal funding spent annually on those parks.

Finally, members of our organization would be happy to develop a field trip to nourished beaches for your reporting and editorial staff. Since there are over 300 in the U.S., one is available near you. Tony Pratt already offered a tour of the Delaware beaches. We would also be willing to meet with you to provide you with background coastal information, including facts on the economic and environmental value of healthy beaches and coastal systems. We have held similar very productive meetings with The Weather Channel and CNN, among others.

We look forward to helping you have a better understanding of America's coasts.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Harry Simmons', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Harry Simmons
President