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OBAMA URGED TO DEVELOP COMPREHENSIVE COASTAL POLICY

Saying the U.S. has no national coastal policy, the American Shore & Beach Preservation Association has called on President-elect Obama to take swift action to end what it calls “a policy of coastal neglect.” The group says that more than 20,000 miles of coastline are eroding, exposing people and structures to unnecessary danger from storms. It is calling for a rational, comprehensive coastal policy that will protect lives, reduce property damage, enhance the environment and produce economic benefits for America.

“In too many locations our beaches are being unintentionally starved of sand by ports, navigation channels, upstream dams and other man-made structures as well as by natural processes,” said the group’s president, Mayor Harry Simmons of Caswell Beach, NC. “The resulting battered beaches and withered wetlands cannot provide the effective defense we need from wave surges that accompany strong storms.”

“America’s beaches are the primary economic engines that drive coastal America,” declared Mayor Simmons. “Each year, 180 million Americans make 2 billion visits to our nation’s beaches, twice the number of visits made to all of the properties managed by the National Park Service combined. America’s largest industry and employer – travel and tourism -- employs nearly 1 of every 10 Americans. These are jobs that are unlikely to move offshore, unless we drive them away by our inattention to the increasing threats posed by erosion.”

The group’s letter to the President-elect also focused on the critical economic role played by America’s coastal ports as well as the Atlantic and Gulf Intracoastal Waterways while also mentioning the importance of healthy coastal areas to the commercial and recreational fishing and boating industries.

Added Simmons, “There is no national coastal policy based on leadership from the White House and full participation from coastal states, localities, universities, and stakeholder groups. No Cabinet-level agency coordinates federal water resource policies and programs. Instead, we plan and fund our responses to erosion, dredging and other coastal issues on a project-by-project basis. The unacceptable end result is illustrated by the kind of devastation caused by recent mega-storms such as Katrina and Ike. Less evident is the cost of doing nothing, for there has already been a steep price paid as a result of our national failure to adequately address our coastal needs, risks and resources.”

For a copy of the group’s letter to President-elect Obama, email beaches@asbpa.org

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. The group strives to engage 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 benefits within the reach of the largest possible number of people in accordance with the ideals of a democratic nation. For more information on the ASBPA, go to www.asbpa.org.

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