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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**ASBPA Briefs Congress on Water Infrastructure Needs**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA), in conjunction with the Water Resources Coalition, the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterways Association, the Boat Owners Association of the United States, the National Marine Manufacturers Association and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, briefed Members of Congress and their staffs in Washington, Jan. 24 about the urgent need for water infrastructure funding.

ASBPA President Harry Simmons (Caswell Beach, North Carolina), along with ASBPA Treasurer Brad Pickel (Beaufort, South Carolina) and John Lee (Dickinson, Texas), spoke on behalf of the ASBPA.

One of ASBPA's missions is to advocate for the support of the federal government for storm damage protection projects along America's shorelines.

"Congress made great strides last year in addressing the water infrastructure needs of this nation by passing the Water Resources Development Act," Simmons said. "But it is now time for Senators and Representatives to stand behind last year's authorizing legislation by fully funding all water infrastructure projects in the upcoming fiscal year 2009 appropriations bills."

Pickel emphasized the need for continued support for shoreline protection projects. "Beach protection projects are for much more than just recreation. They create jobs, protect the environment, provide local, state, and federal tax revenues, and protect communities from natural disasters," he said. "With more than 53 percent of Americans living in coastal counties, Congress must recognize the critical importance of funding all shore protection projects."

Lee, who is the mitigation coordinator for Galveston County in Texas said, "Local governments must have the technical and funding support of the federal government to protect our nation against future hurricanes."

The following are other highlights from the briefing:

- America's water infrastructure is in bad shape. The American Society of Civil Engineers 2005 Report Card for America's Infrastructure indicates the following grades:
  - D- for Navigable Waterways
  - D for Dams
  - C- for Public Parks & Recreation, which includes a subcategory for Beaches

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- By 2015, the population of coastal counties is expected to reach 165 million residents, with an average of 3,600 people per day moving to coastal areas.
- An estimated \$706 billion in damages have been prevented through flood damage reduction projects – more within the past 25 years – representing a six-to-one return on the Federal investment.
- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers studies indicate beaches contribute over \$250 billion annually to the national economy – in addition to the billions of dollars in damages prevented.
- The tax revenue our Federal government receives each year from beach related spending is more than 180 times the amount it spends on beach replenishment annually.
- While the US spends about \$100 million at the federal level and perhaps another \$75 million at the state and local levels to repair our coastline, Europe spends more than \$3 billion annually.
- According to a federal study, only 35 percent of a shore protection project's benefits accrue locally, while 65 percent of the benefits accrue to taxpayers who reside elsewhere.
- The American taxpayer pays about \$5.93 annually to fight forest fires, versus the 41 cents we pay to maintain our beaches to help prevent damage from a storm surge.

**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](http://www.asbpa.org).

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