

May 11, 2007

**TO: Coastal Senators**

**FROM: Mayor Harry Simmons, ASBPA President**

**RE: Coburn WRDA Amendment to Delay Authorization for San Diego/Imperial Beach Project**

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Senator Tom Coburn has announced that he intends to offer an amendment that would delay funding for the beach nourishment project located in the City of Imperial Beach, California until “Sacramento residents are provided adequate funding.” Dr. Coburn says his amendment is about “setting priorities” and that “critical needs” should be met before federal dollars are spent on “other less essential projects.”

The decision as to which water resource projects get funded and what amounts are provided is within the jurisdiction of the Appropriations Committee through the Energy and Water Appropriations Bill, not WRDA.

The photo Dr. Coburn has circulated showing homes being flooded could well be a photo taken at many locations along America’s coasts. There are only two statutory purposes for Congress to authorize beach nourishment projects. The one that is most often used and that applies to the Imperial Beach project is storm damage reduction. The other is environmental restoration. In the case of Imperial Beach, the Corps of Engineers has determined that every dollar spent avoiding storm damages through beach nourishment will save taxpayers close to two dollars.

Most coastal erosion in the U.S. is caused by federal dams and navigation projects that interrupt the natural flow of sand. That is the case with Imperial Beach. Even the Office of Management and Budget supports beach nourishment projects that repair damages caused by the federal government.

Senator Coburn also has attacked the City of Imperial Beach for holding a sand castle competition on its coastline. Beaches provide recreation for tens of millions of Americans and foreign tourists. They are America’s #1 tourist destination, making beaches a major element of

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our American Economy. ASBPA compiled data from four communities in coastal North Carolina and Texas and found that 67 percent of the congressional districts in Oklahoma have residents who own property in those coastal communities and 80 percent have residents who visit these communities annually. The fact is that a good number of Senator Coburn's constituents go to coastal beaches – perhaps even Imperial Beach. The sand castle competition makes good fodder for Dr. Coburn's press releases but it has nothing whatsoever to do with the purpose of the project that is before the Senate for authorization.

The City of Imperial Beach has spent millions of dollars in local cost-sharing over the past decade to get a Chief's Report that fully supports this beach nourishment project. They have waited since 2003 for Congress to pass a WRDA bill so they could subsequently request funding for the construction of their beach project. Each year they have waited, their shoreline has eroded another 6 feet.

The American Shore and Beach Preservation Association believes that all water resource projects that promote human safety and reduce damages to homes, businesses, and public infrastructure are essential. We urge Senators to oppose Dr. Coburn's amendment regarding Imperial Beach and any amendment that would strike or delay a beach nourishment project in the manager's amendment to the Senate WRDA bill. In addition, ASBPA commends the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee for bringing this bill to the floor and urges Senators to vote "aye" on final passage.