



The Town of Sunset Beach

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The great majority of coastal communities were established because of, and economically remain dependent on, the bounty and beauty of their natural resources. However, our coastal towns are constantly at the mercy of the forces of nature, including severe weather (hurricanes, water spouts, El Niño, etc.), global warming, ocean acidification, algae bloom, fish kills, and erosion, to name a few. Any of the aforementioned events could have a catastrophic impact on local property values, tourism and other industries which depend on the natural resources of the area.

Although local governments allocate budgetary resources to preserve and protect the water and beach front they rely on for prosperity, there is no unified state or national commitment to protect these resources. This results in an inherent risk from activities that our neighbors permit or prohibit because the tidal action is not contained by a state's borders. For example, if a state allows discharge of storm water or other pollutants into the ocean, all neighboring states are adversely impacted by that activity.

Now the Federal government is looking to lease a small concentrated geographic area off the east coast for oil exploration (using seismic testing) and possible future drilling along with the development of wind farms. This is our same government that protects and preserves huge land areas as National Parks and land-based wildlife refuges in sparsely populated areas of our great nation. Why isn't the ocean regarded as a natural treasure to be preserved and protected? If drilling for oil is offensive and dangerous to the environment and wildlife in Alaska and the western states, why is this and other invasive projects safe off our coastlines where containment in the event of a disaster is near impossible? If transporting oil via a pipeline across a known geographic footprint to refineries is offensive and dangerous to the environment and wildlife in the Midwest, why is it acceptable to permit this in a highly populated yet unpredictable coastal area of our country. This would seem to raise the risk of a high cost disaster and recovery for both our coastal communities and the country far above the potential returns from such projects.

We believe that our federal government should adopt a more conservative and protective attitude when considering coastal resources. While we cannot control the actions of the rest of the world, we do ask that our own governments undertake a thorough and unbiased evaluation of all the invasive activities being proposed for any specific geographical area whenever natural resources, wildlife and local communities are at potential risk. The current studies and arguments for allowing exploration with unproven technologies and unknown impacts by special interest groups are unacceptable. Further we believe that the federal government should take the lead in working with the coastal states to create a uniform set of standards so that we are all addressing the preservation, safety, stability and security of this irreplaceable resource the same way.

We ask that you establish a task force to create standards and help address the competing projects and potential harm that we currently face. We urge that this be done as soon as possible - the potential risks to our coast are enormous and immediate.