

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2011

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HOUSE BILL 819  
Committee Substitute Favorable 4/21/11  
Senate Agriculture/Environment/Natural Resources Committee Substitute Adopted  
6/11/12  
Fourth Edition Engrossed 6/12/12

Short Title: Coastal Management Policies. (Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

April 7, 2011

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
2 AN ACT TO STUDY AND MODIFY CERTAIN COASTAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES.  
3 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

4 **SECTION 1.** G.S. 113A-103(2) reads as rewritten:

5 "(2) "Coastal area" means the counties that (in whole or in part) are adjacent to,  
6 adjoining, intersected by or bounded by the Atlantic Ocean (extending  
7 offshore to the limits of State jurisdiction, as may be identified by rule of the  
8 Commission for purposes of this Article, but in no event less than three  
9 geographical miles offshore) or any coastal sound. The Governor, in  
10 accordance with the standards set forth in this subdivision and in subdivision  
11 (3) of this section, shall designate the counties that constitute the "coastal  
12 area," as defined by this section, and his designation shall be final and  
13 conclusive. On or before May 1, 1974, the Governor shall file copies of a list  
14 of said coastal-area counties with the chairmen of the boards of  
15 commissioners of each county in the coastal area, with the mayors of each  
16 incorporated city within the coastal area (as so defined) having a population  
17 of 2,000 or more and of each incorporated city having a population of less  
18 than 2,000 whose corporate boundaries are contiguous with the Atlantic  
19 Ocean, and with the Secretary of State. By way of illustration, the counties  
20 designated as coastal-area counties under this subdivision as of July 1, 2012,  
21 are: Beaufort, Bertie, Brunswick, Camden, Carteret, Chowan, Craven,  
22 Currituck, Dare, Gates, Hertford, Hyde, New Hanover, Onslow, Pamlico,  
23 Pasquotank, Pender, Perquimans, Tyrrell, and Washington. The said  
24 coastal-area counties and cities shall thereafter transmit nominations to the  
25 Governor of members of the Coastal Resources Commission as provided in  
26 G.S. 113A-104(d)."

27 **SECTION 2.** Article 7 of Chapter 113A of the General Statutes is amended by  
28 adding the following new section:

29 **"§ 113A-107.1. Sea-level policy restrictions; calculation of rate of sea-level rise.**

30 (a) No rule, ordinance, policy, or planning guideline that defines sea level or a rate of  
31 sea-level rise within a coastal-area county shall be adopted except as provided by this section.

32 (b) The General Assembly does not intend to mandate the development of sea-level rise  
33 policy or rates of sea-level rise. The Coastal Resources Commission, in conjunction with the



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1 Division of Coastal Management, shall have the authority to define sea-level rise and develop  
2 rates of sea-level rise for the State.

3 (c) The Coastal Resources Commission shall be the only State agency authorized to  
4 define rates of sea-level rise for regulatory purposes and, if developed, shall do so in  
5 conjunction with the Division of Coastal Management. The Commission and the Division of  
6 Coastal Management may collaborate with other State agencies, boards, commissions, other  
7 public entities, or institutions when defining sea-level rise or developing rates of sea-level rise.  
8 These rates shall be determined using statistically significant, peer-reviewed historical data  
9 generated using generally accepted scientific and statistical techniques. Historic rates of  
10 sea-level rise may be extrapolated to estimate future rates of rise but shall not include scenarios  
11 of accelerated rates of sea-level rise unless such rates are from statistically significant,  
12 peer-reviewed data and are consistent with historic trends. Rates of sea-level rise shall not be  
13 one rate for the entire coast, but rather the Commission shall consider separately oceanfront and  
14 estuarine shorelines. For oceanfront shorelines, the Commission shall use no fewer than the  
15 four regions defined in the April 2011 report entitled "North Carolina Beach and Inlet  
16 Management Plan" published by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The  
17 oceanfront regions are: Region 1 (Brunswick County), Region 2 (New Hanover, Pender, and  
18 Onslow Counties and a portion of Carteret County), Region 3 (a portion of Carteret County and  
19 Hyde County), and Region 4 (Dare and Currituck Counties). For estuarine shorelines, the  
20 Commission shall consider no fewer than two separate regions defined as those north of Cape  
21 Lookout and those south of Cape Lookout. In regions that may lack statistically significant,  
22 peer-reviewed historical data, rates from adjacent regions may be considered and modified  
23 using generally accepted scientific and statistical techniques to account for relevant historical  
24 geologic and hydrologic processes.

25 (d) Any State agency, board, commission, or institution that develops a policy  
26 addressing sea-level rise that includes a definition or rate of sea-level rise for the coastal-area  
27 counties shall use only the definitions and rates of sea-level rise developed by the Division of  
28 Coastal Management as approved by the Coastal Resources Commission.

29 (e) The provisions in this act shall not prohibit other State agencies, boards,  
30 commissions, other public entities or institutions, including academic institutions within The  
31 University of North Carolina, or any county, municipality, or other local public body from  
32 engaging in studies and dissemination of studies of sea-level research for nonregulatory  
33 purposes. Collaboration between academic institutions, including those within The University  
34 of North Carolina, the Division of Coastal Management, the Coastal Resources Commission,  
35 and other State agencies, boards, commissions, or other public entities or counties,  
36 municipalities, or other local public bodies regarding generally accepted, peer-reviewed  
37 scientific and statistically significant sea-level research is encouraged.

38 (f) All policies, rules, regulations, or any other product of the Commission or the  
39 Division of Coastal Management related to sea-level rise shall be subject to the requirements  
40 set forth in Chapter 150B of the General Statutes."

41 **SECTION 3.** The Coastal Resources Commission shall study the feasibility of  
42 creating an exception to the Commission's rule changes regarding oceanfront setback  
43 determinations (15A NCAC 07H .0306(a)(2)) that became effective on August 11, 2009, that  
44 may allow certain structures to continue to be regulated under the oceanfront setback  
45 determination rules that were in effect prior to August 11, 2009. The exception may apply to  
46 single-family buildings built prior to August 11, 2009, that are larger than 5,000 square feet and  
47 to multifamily buildings built prior to August 11, 2009, that are less than four units and larger  
48 than 5,000 square feet. In its study, the Commission may consider the following limitations  
49 and evaluate whether it is appropriate to include any of those limitations as part of the criteria  
50 that may be used to determine whether a specific structure may qualify for the exception:  
51 replacement of a building or structure destroyed beyond fifty percent (50%) of its value by

1 factors other than coastal erosion, storm surge, and hurricane- and nor'easter-related winds;  
2 replacement of a building or structure in areas landward of a static line exception; replacement  
3 of a building or structure as far landward on the lot as feasible; replacement of a building or  
4 structure with a total floor area and footprint not greater than the preexisting building or  
5 structure; and replacement of a building or structure that is no further oceanward than the  
6 landward most adjacent building or structure.

7 The Commission shall use the most recent erosion rates calculated by the Division  
8 of Coastal Management and presented to the Commission in 2011 rather than the 1998 rates  
9 referenced in the rule (15A NCAC 07H .0304(1)(a)) when assessing setback scenarios and the  
10 feasibility of any exception to the current setback rules.

11 The Commission shall report its findings, including any proposed actions the  
12 Commission deems appropriate, to the Secretary of the Department of Environment and  
13 Natural Resources, the Governor, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and the Speaker of  
14 the House of Representatives on or before December 31, 2012.

15 During this study, the Commission shall not delay the movement or progression of  
16 the updated 2011 erosion rates through the rule-making process.

17 **SECTION 4.** The Coastal Resources Commission shall study the feasibility of  
18 creating a new Area of Environmental Concern for the lands adjacent to the mouth of the Cape  
19 Fear River. In studying this region, which shall at least encompass the Town of Caswell Beach  
20 and the Village of Bald Head Island, the Commission shall consider the unique coastal  
21 morphologies and hydrographic conditions not found elsewhere along the coast. If the  
22 Commission deems action is necessary to preserve, protect, and balance the economic and  
23 natural resources of this region, the Commission shall work to eliminate overlapping Areas of  
24 Environmental Concern in these areas and, instead, incorporate appropriate development  
25 standards into one single Area of Environmental Concern unique to this location.

26 The Commission shall report its findings, including any proposed actions the  
27 Commission deems appropriate, to the Secretary of the Department of Environment and  
28 Natural Resources, the Governor, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and the Speaker of  
29 the House of Representatives on or before December 31, 2013.

30 **SECTION 5.** The Coastal Resources Commission shall study the feasibility of  
31 eliminating the Inlet Hazard Area of Environmental Concern and incorporating appropriate  
32 development standards adjacent to the State's developed inlets into the Ocean Erodible Area of  
33 Environmental Concern. If the Commission deems action is necessary to preserve, protect, and  
34 balance the economic and natural resources adjacent to inlets, the Commission shall consider  
35 the elimination of the inlet hazard boxes; the development of shoreline management strategies  
36 that take into account short- and long-term inlet shoreline oscillation and variation, including  
37 erosion rates and setback factors; the development of standards that account for the lateral  
38 movement of inlets and their impact on adjacent development and habitat; and consideration of  
39 how new and existing development standards, as well as existing and proposed development,  
40 are impacted by historical and ongoing beach and inlet management techniques, including  
41 dredging, beach fill, and engineered structures such as groins and jetties, impact both the inlet  
42 and adjacent shorelines.

43 The Commission shall report its findings, including any proposed actions the  
44 Commission deems appropriate, to the Secretary of the Department of Environment and  
45 Natural Resources, the Governor, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and the Speaker of  
46 the House of Representatives on or before January 31, 2015.

47 **SECTION 6.** This act is effective when it becomes law.