

## Save Our Sand: The Inlet Solution

North Carolina has been losing hundreds of millions of dollars in public and private property and infrastructure at several of its 19 coastal inlets. We are also losing public access and important coastal habitat for turtles, shorebirds and other critters. These losses must be stopped now.

Coastal management issues are complex, often with no clear answers and sometimes with multiple answers. Erosion at inlets is different from erosion on the open ocean coast, requiring different tools. North Carolina already has different rules for development in inlet areas than the rules we have for development on the open coast. One more special rule is needed.

New legislation, Senate Bill 832, has been introduced in the North Carolina General Assembly, at the request of about a dozen coastal towns and counties, to give coastal managers a specific tool to help deal with erosion at inlets. That tool is a terminal groin, sometimes referred to as a terminal structure. Two terminal structures, permitted years ago, already exist in North Carolina: one on the beach at Fort Macon, the other on the south side of Oregon Inlet at the US Fish & Wildlife Service's Pea Island Wildlife Refuge. Both work as designed, helping to retain a sandy beach without doing damage to other areas, which is shown by decades of monitoring.

A terminal structure is not a jetty. A jetty is larger and serves a different, navigational purpose. A terminal structure is not a seawall. Seawalls are parallel to the shoreline and are used in armoring the coast. SB 832 is not seeking to allow jetties or seawalls on the North Carolina Coast.

A terminal structure is perpendicular to the shoreline, just long enough and tall enough to hold in place a pre-determined volume of sand which would be placed there following construction. Since sand from offshore is placed to fill the beach behind the structure, no sand is "stolen" from other parts of the beach. Sand in excess of the volume being held will simply flow around or over the terminal structure. In some cases, one might not even be aware that a terminal structure is in place and doing its job.

The beach that is retained in place by the terminal structure will provide protection to public infrastructure, public access, environmental habitat for various turtle and bird species as well as to public and private property that is important to the economic well-being of coastal communities. In most cases, a terminal structure will replace unsightly sandbags, which are becoming a serious problem at a few coastal inlets.

The legislation would require an assessment of environmental impacts with opportunities for public comment before a decision could be made by a vote of the Coastal Resources Commission. The protections are in place, the need is clear; it is time to provide this tool, which works so well in dozens of other coastal states, to the coastal communities in North Carolina. Urge legislators all across North Carolina to support Senate Bill 832.

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