Environmental Economics
Economists on Environmental and Natural Resources: News, Opinion and Analysis

August 23, 2007
North Carolina's seawall ban

From the Coastal Review, NC Coastal Federation's quarterly pub (sorry, it's print only):

A group of oceanfront property owners once again are trying to establish a beachhead in their decades-long struggle to rid the state of its enlightened ban on beachfront seawalls, groins, jetties and other types of hard structures to control erosion.

... The Figure Eight Island Homeowners Association is pushing to reverse the 22-year prohibition to protect a few dozen vacation homes. It sought legislation that would allow a small jetty, called a terminal groin, to be built as a "pilot project" at Rich Inlet on the northern end of the private island.

It's most definitely a private island. There is a guarded gate and you need some sort of owner's pass to get on the island. I don't hate rich people, but I don't like privately-owned islands whose beaches aren't open to the public. So, I don't like rich people who limit access to public beaches (i.e., public goods).

... To hear proponents of this ill-conceived bill tell it, we really don't know what seawalls, jetties or groins will do to the beachfront environment.

The article goes on to explain that there are plenty of examples where hard structures, designed to protect private property, end up reducing the quality of the public beach and sometimes eliminating it (at high tide).

OK, I think I'm coming to grips with my views on beach management. My advice to rich people:

1. Don't build your house on sand.
2. Understand the risks before you build your house on sand.
3. Don't ask the public (i.e., government) to help insure against your risk if you build your house on sand (e.g., beach nourishment, etc).
4. Don't suppose that you own the sandy beach and the dunes.

I'm part of the problem as part of the demand side of the beach house rental market. But I'm willing to pay higher prices for a week of a beach house if all of these subsidies go away.

Posted by John Whitehead at 07:07 AM in Coastal management | Permalink
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Comments

If the legislation is repealed, would that be called a groin pull?

Posted by: Tim Haab | August 23, 2007 at 09:47 AM
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Posted by: Joshua Cornig | August 23, 2007 at 07:29 PM
I don't hate rich people, but I don't like privately-owned islands whose beaches aren't open to the public. So, I don't like rich people who limit access to public beaches (i.e., public goods).

read: BLEEDING EXTERNALITIES.

Why is it bad for people to own the beach again?
Environmental Economics: North Carolina's seawall ban


And when did you start hating "rich" people?

By the way,

... To hear proponents of this ill-conceived bill tell it, we really don't know what seawalls, jetties or groins will do to the beachfront environment.

It would stabilize and improve it both by increasing environmental functions and values as well as protecting peoples investments.

Posted by: joshua corning | August 23, 2007 at 07:39 PM

Joshua,

What's that map all about.

In answer to your question, I started to hate rich people when I watched Gilligan's Island. That Thurston Howell III didn't lift a finger to help around the island and, I'm sure, his trunk load of possessions certainly didn't help when the tiny ship was tossed.

Posted by: John Whitehead | August 23, 2007 at 07:45 PM

Three things:

1) The jetties at Gray's Harbor, WA have done anything but stabilize and improve the beach front environment. In fact, the jetties have had a *HUGE* negative impact on adjacent shorelines (on the order of several miles) and are responsible for the breach of the South Grays Harbor Jetty in Westport, erosion of the beach near the North Grays Harbor Jetty in Ocean Shores and the massive erosion at the mouth of Willapa Bay.

2) Nobody truly "owns" the beach. Sure private property ownership may extend to the mean high water line, but that line is in a state of constant flux and will probably become even more dynamic in the coming decades as sea level continues to rise, and as storms become more frequent, bigger and more intense.

Now step over the mean high water line and you're standing on a sacred public trust resource that's owned by everyone (hence the term "public") and managed by the state not for affluent and powerful oceanfront property owners who made a lucrative but risky investment, but for everyone...including my kids' kids' kids.

3) Mary Ann, definitely.

Posted by: Newbom Turk | August 24, 2007 at 09:00 AM

Newbom Turk,

Ginger, definitely.

Posted by: John Whitehead | August 24, 2007 at 09:35 AM

What's that map all about.

It is a jetty in Washington state that benefits both public and private interests.

Might not be applicable to North Carolina. Plate tectonics say that while Washington state is growing into the Pacific, north Carolina being devoured by the Atlantic.

Anyway private jetties may screw public beaches that are down current from them but upcurrent public beaches would see a benefit.

Anyway this really is a property rights issue.

Who owns the sand on your land? You or the guy who will have that sand on his property 10 years from now when it moves down the beach?

erosion of the beach near the North Grays Harbor Jetty in Ocean Shores and the massive erosion at the mouth of Willapa Bay.

I am familiar with the Ocean Shores Jetty...and that beach has grown since it was put in. And by the way beaches constantly erode and move down shore. Jetties only stabilize that movement.

Posted by: joshua corning | August 24, 2007 at 11:57 AM

sacred public trust

Mark this spot as exactly the point when the failed economic policies of socialism abandon all reason and simply become religious fanaticism.

Posted by: joshua corning | August 24, 2007 at 12:10 PM
Don't believe one optimistic word from any public figure about the economy or humanity in general. They are all part of the problem. Its like a game of Monopoly. In America, the richest 1% now hold 1/2 OF ALL UNITED STATES WEALTH. Unlike 'lesser' estimates, this includes all stocks, bonds, cash, and material assets held by America's richest 1%. Even that filthy pig Oprah acknowledged that it was at about 50% in 2006. Naturally, she put her own 'humanitarian' spin on it. Calling attention to her own 'good will'. WHAT A DISGUSTING HYPOCRITE SLOB. THE RICHEST 1% HAVE LITERALLY MADE WORLD PROSPERITY ABSOLUTELY IMPOSSIBLE. Money does not grow on trees. When too much wealth accumulates at the top, the middle class slip further into debt and the lower class further into poverty. A similar rule applies worldwide. The world's richest 1% now own over 40% of ALL WORLD WEALTH. This is EVEN AFTER you account for all of this 'good will' 'humanitarian' BS from celebrities and executives. ITS A SHAM. As they get richer and richer, less wealth is left circulating beneath them. This is the single greatest underlying cause for the current US recession. The middle class can no longer afford to sustain their share of the economy. Their wealth has been gradually transferred to the richest 1%. One way or another, we suffer because of their incredible greed. We are talking about TRILLIONS of dollars. Transferred FROM US TO THEM. Over a period of about 27 years. Thats Reaganomics for you. The wealth does not 'trickle down' as we were told it would. It just accumulates at the top. Shrinking the middle class and expanding the lower class. Causing a domino effect of socio-economic problems. But the rich will never stop. They will never settle for a reasonable share of ANYTHING. They will do whatever it takes to get even richer. Leaving even less of the pie for the other 99% of us to share. At the same time, they throw back a few tax deductible crumbs and call themselves 'humanitarians'. IT CAN'T WORK THIS WAY. This is going to end just like a game of Monopoly. A total collapse of the US economy. Probably within a decade, The richest 1% will live like royalty while the rest of us fight over jobs, food, and gasoline. Crime, poverty, and suicide will skyrocket. So don't fall for all of this PR CRAP from Hollywood, Pro Sports, and Wall Street PIGS. ITS A SHAM. Remember; They are filthy rich EVEN AFTER their tax deductible contributions. Greedy pigs. Now, we are headed for the worst economic and cultural crisis of all time. SEND A "THANK YOU" NOTE TO YOUR FAVORITE MILLIONAIRE. ITS THEIR FAULT. I'm not discounting other factors like China, sub-prime, or gas prices. But all of those factors combined still pale in comparison to that HUGE transfer of wealth to the rich. Anyway, those other factors are all related and further aggrivated because of GREED. If it weren't for the OBSCENE distribution of wealth within our country, there never would have been such a market for sub-prime to begin with. Which by the way, was another trick whipped up by greedy bankers and executives. IT MAKES THEM RICHER. The credit industry has been ENDORSED by people like Oprah, Ellen, Dr Phil, and many other celebrities. IT MAKES THEM RICHER. So don't fall for their 'humanitarian' BS. ITS A SHAM. NOTHING BUT TAX DEDUCTABLE PR CRAP. Bottom line; The richest 1% will soon tank the largest economy in the world. It will be like nothing we've ever seen before. and thats just the beginning. Greed will eventually tank every major economy in the world. Causing millions to suffer and die. GREED KILLS. IT WILL BE OUR DOWNFALL. Please copy this entry and run it by any professor of socio-economics. I speak the truth. WE ARE IN BIG TROUBLE. Please copy and help spread the word.

Posted by: worried American | February 25, 2008 at 01:03 PM

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