



Dear Governor Haley:

I am the Director of the Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines and a Licensed Professional Geologist in the State of South Carolina. I served as a member of the State's Blue Ribbon Committee on Shoreline Change.

Following the two years of work on that committee, I find it shocking that we are in a position to have to consider a budget proviso (#34.55) that would allow the construction of a seawall in defiance of long-settled state law. There was bi-partisan unanimity on the committee that the 25-year old seawall ban had been good coastal management: good for the economy, good for neighboring private property, good for protecting the beach that all coastal businesses rely on for tourist income. Seawalls, we all agreed, protect only a small number of investment properties at the expense of the beach. It is indisputable scientific fact that if you build a seawall on an eroding beach the beach will disappear.

I have always admired the State of South Carolina for the fairness and openness in its coastal management procedures. I work on these issues nationally. Perhaps, the greatest concern with the seawall proviso in this budget is how it seeks to "micro-legislate" coastal management for the benefit of a small number of property investors. If this passes, you can be sure that we will be faced with many more such efforts next year. The worst way to manage the coast is one lot at a time. The impacts of any action are felt down the beach. This new seawall will increase the rate of erosion on the property owners to the south. One property owner is helped, another is hurt. This is why the state stepped out of the seawall business so many years ago.

It is helpful to examine the legislature's intent when eliminating seawalls from the coastal management toolkit:

SECTION 48-39-250. Legislative findings regarding the coastal beach/dune system.

(5) The use of armoring in the form of hard erosion control devices such as seawalls, bulkheads, and rip-rap to protect erosion-threatened structures adjacent to the beach has not proven effective. These armoring devices have given a false sense of security to beachfront property owners. In reality, these hard structures, in many instances, have increased the vulnerability of beachfront property to damage from wind and waves while contributing to the deterioration and loss of the dry sand beach which is so important to the tourism industry.

I urge you to Veto Proviso #34.55, the seawall proviso to ensure the great state of South Carolina remains a leader in smart and fair coastal management.

Robert S. Young, PhD, Director, Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines
Professor, Coastal Geology, Western Carolina University, ryoung@email.wcu.edu