

MEDIA ADVISORY

Contact Howard Marlowe: (202) 775-1796

So Far, Senator Coburn *A No Show* for Coastal Debate



March 2, 2010 – The American Shore & Beach Preservation Association is puzzled that Senator Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) has chosen not to accept our invitation to be a featured speaker at the annual Coastal Summit in Washington, D.C. next week. Considering that the Senator had his staff devote enough time to come up with [“Washed Out to Sea: How Congress Prioritizes Beach Pork over National Needs”](#) (a 43-page document that masquerades as a “Congressional Oversight & Investigations Report”), we thought that he would have jumped at the chance to join us this month. Our invitation to the Senator and his staff, however, has fallen on deaf ears.

Among his flurry of criticisms, the Senator claims that the federal beach nourishment program annually provides huge amounts of money to ensure “coastal towns maintain picturesque beaches for property owners and tourists.” Of course, many of those owners and tourists are voters in Senator Coburn’s own landlocked State of Oklahoma seeking a breath of fresh coastal air.

As with his other tired attacks, we find it interesting that the Senator continues to ignore that there are only two purposes for which federal taxpayer dollars can be spent on coastal restoration: *storm damage reduction* and *environmental restoration*. The fact that 180 million people visit the beach each year, some of whom own homes near the coast, is *not factored* into determining whether federal tax dollars can be spent reducing the impacts of erosion on coastal infrastructure and habitat.

The federal government spends only \$100 million a year on beach nourishment projects and studies. That’s less than the cost of a single major highway interchange in Oklahoma. Senator Coburn knows that not one cent can be spent on any federally authorized water resource project without a thorough study which takes at least 10 years to complete, only then to be followed by an Act of Congress which authorizes the project to be eligible for federal funding. *He knows that because, while there are no ocean beaches in Oklahoma, there are federal water resource projects*

PRESIDENT’S OFFICE

1100 Caswell Beach Road, Caswell Beach, NC 28465
(910) 200-7867 • Fax (800) 967-0816
E-mail: president@asbpa.org
Visit the ASBPA online at www.asbpa.org

WASHINGTON OFFICE

c/o Marlowe & Company
1667 K Street, Suite 480, Washington, DC 20006
(202) 775-1796 • Fax (202) 775-0214
E-mail: beaches@asbpa.org

there which received over \$113 million in Fiscal Year 2010 alone – more than the entire annual beach renourishment budget for the Nation!

Equally fascinating is the Senator's decision to take rhetorically expedient potshots at beach nourishment when, conveniently, *he fails to offer an alternative solution to the current federal program*. Senator Coburn argues that the nation should just let its beaches erode. This is a prescription for malevolent neglect. Farmers do not neglect their farms because they lie in a floodplain. The same can be said of ranchers, local governments, hospitals and even corporations. These groups get billions of dollars of federal assistance each year without one word of criticism from Senator Coburn.

The Senator contends that those who live, do business, or simply recreate on America's coasts should retreat. Where does he suggest they go? Is Oklahoma ready to put out the welcome mat? Will Senator Coburn propose a multi-billion dollar Federal buyout program? Since major floods in Oklahoma are frequent in the spring and fall, just as major storms affect the coast in summer and winter, those who live along the coast shouldn't be forced to abandon their flood-prone property any more than the residents of Oklahoma.

Bashing beaches for the sake of getting media attention is child's play. Talking about what the Nation should be doing to be a good steward of its coastal resources requires a rational adult discussion. We hope the Senator will reconsider our invitation and join us on March 10 to begin that conversation.

Founded in 1926, the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association represents the scientific, technical and political interests along the coast in an effort to shape national research and policy concerning shore and beach management and restoration. The group strives to engage a factual debate on coastal issues and economics that will foster sound, far-sighted and economical development and preservation of our beaches; thereby aiding in placing their benefits within the reach of the largest possible number of people in accordance with the ideals of a democratic nation.