

The Brunswick News

Letters

March 11, 2019

House Bill 445 weakens vital shorefront protections

On Feb. 28, House Bill 445, a proposal that would weaken Georgia's Shore Protection Act, was quickly adopted by the House Natural Resources Committee without advanced public notice about the proposal, leaving no time for citizens to formulate and voice opinions. Considering the public hazards and unjustified exemptions created by H.B. 445, suspicions have been raised and public opposition to it is strong.

Ponder these highlights:

- Georgia's coast suffered damages in the millions from hurricanes in 2017, and DNR staff frequently talks about the growing risks of rising sea-level, yet HB445 requires a mere 25 feet between high-tide and oceanfront development.
- Instead of using available shore-erosion data, H.B. 445 ghostwriters say absolutely nothing about dangerous erosion along our coast — applying only the 25-foot measurement from various landmarks, despite mounting oceanfront hazards
- Most conspicuous and unsubstantiated are the bill's provisions that essentially exempt from regulation highly vulnerable oceanfront lots on the Sea Island Spit and other areas. It appears that such exemptions would encourage hazardous redevelopment on other beachfronts as well. The fragile strand known as the Spit was nearly wiped off the map by hurricanes Irma and Matthew. Moreover, Federal law prohibits FEMA-subsidized flood insurance on the Spit because it's so hazardous.

At a time when Georgia should be strengthening safeguards along the ocean shoreline, H.B. 445 weakens protections and exempts hazardous areas from needed regulation. Please urge your state General Assembly members to oppose H.B. 445 and ask for a public hearing to be held by the Senate Natural Resources Committee before proceeding.

***David Kyler
Center for a Sustainable Coast***