CAL-COAST

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In April of 1997, I attended a dinner sponsored by the California Shore and Beach Preservation Association (CSBPA). During the dinner, I heard a very illuminating presentation on beach erosion and restoration by Dr. Craig Everts, a recognized coastal scientist. Kim Sterrett of the California Department of Boating and Waterways also discussed an economic study which is being prepared by the University of San Francisco. The study emphasizes how vital our beaches and our coast are, not only to our environment, but also to the economy of the State of California.

I returned from that dinner shocked and energized. The Huntington Beach staff immediately formed a task force or strike team comprised of City staff and local coastal consultants. The consultants included Concept Marine, Moffatt and Nichol, Nobie Consultants and Bob Fisher. The team drafted a preliminary strategic plan for developing a coalition for advocacy of grant programs dedicated to coastal restoration.

What do we know about our California coast? California has 1067 miles of shoreline. These are the most heavily used recreational areas in the State. In addition to recreational opportunities, our coast provides a critical habitat. Our beaches have a greater annual attendance than Disneyland, Disneyworld and all of our national parks combined. Nine out of ten California residents visit our beaches each year. Over 500,000 California jobs are supported by coastal tourism. That represents 3.12% of all jobs in the State.

Our beaches drive the California tourist economy. They generate over $1 billion annually in total tax revenue. What if all that tax revenue were to be returned to our beaches for on-going maintenance and rehabilitation? Beach-goers spend over $27 billion annually. That is 3% of total economic activity in this State.

Approximately 925 miles of California shoreline continue to erode. However, California ranks last in the nation in coastal restoration spending at $0.07 per capita annually. The state of Delaware ranks first at $4.28 per capita annually. A recent survey indicates that beach-goers would be willing to pay as much as $25 per capita annually. If Assembly Bill 1228 sponsored by Assemblymember Ducheneau had passed, it would have provided $15 million or only $0.46 per capita annually. We would have still been last in the nation.

In order to increase shore restoration funding to a reasonable level in this State, Huntington Beach and other organizations are considering forming a coalition to support advocacy. We are considering a tentative name of “Cal-Coast” or the California Coastal Coalition. This organization could possibly be a California branch of the American Coastal Coalition.

In the next few months, we will be accepting membership applications. We are also exploring the creation of a new Coastal Cities Division of the League of California Cities.

Any encouragement or innovative proposals would be greatly appreciated.