



“TWENTY COUNTIES...ONE VOICE”

MEMO: NC 20 Members  
FROM: Tom Thompson, Chairman  
DATE: December 2, 2011  
SUBJ: Sea level Rise Negotiations

As all of you know, the State has been pushing hard to declare a 39” (1 meter) Sea Level Rise (SLR) by 2100 a fact. The CRC came within 24 hours of mandating it for NC 20 counties Land Use Plans. Larry Baldwin and I met with Bob Emory, CRC Chair, the night before the key meeting and persuaded him to retract the mandate. To his credit and our relief, he did.

However, the problem didn’t stop there. The NC Department of Crime Control and Public Safety picked up the fumbled 39” and headed for the goal line. The Department’s Division of Emergency Management, tasked with drawing new flood plain maps, included it as the 2100 target. However, they modified the “hockey stick” exponential projection used by the CRC to a simple straight line projection to 1 meter by tenths of a meter. They disavowed any probability for any of the increments and maintained it was not a projection at all but simply a planning tool and users could select any increment they felt was reasonable and get a flood map. The problem, of course, is that industries looking at NC 20 counties, to use but one example, would simply avoid any hint of a flood zone without trying to understand the niceties involved.

The underlying problem is that the one meter sea level rise is a myth promoted by manmade global warming advocates based on expectations of melting ice. The reality, quite simply, is that sea level rise in the world, and in North Carolina, has shown absolutely no acceleration at all. In fact, Dr. Robert Dean (Professor Emeritus, University of Florida) presented the most extensive evidence ever assembled at our New Bern Symposium last month. It showed conclusively that sea level rise is decelerating in every case, in every spot in the world where it’s measured. It is a fact that sea level is rising, but it has been for centuries at a very slow rate (about 8” per century) and the rate is linear, meaning it is not accelerating. In fact, it is decelerating slightly in every study ever done.

The danger to our economies is that if we project a substantial rate of increase, as the CRC did, potential investment and construction will be severely impacted. Remember, SLR is not the same as the flood level – it’s added to the flood level. It would be impossible to estimate the billions of dollars in cost to NC 20 counties in

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both lost investment, as well as increased construction cost for everything from roads to industries and schools. And remember, the CRC was prepared to mandate 39" in your land use planning to "guide development."

I am pleased to announce that NC 20 has been able to prevent this unwelcome incursion on our property rights through a series of meetings in the last month. Here's what we did. First, we brought world-class scientists to our annual meeting that gave us the scholarly ammunition we needed to provide the evidence to our lawmakers and State Government officials. We combined that with the unbelievable amount of evidence of our own science advisors, John Droz, Jr. and Dave Burton. They both provided the ammunition we used to unmask the pretenders and convince both the CRC and the Department of Crime Control and Public Safety to blink. At a meeting in the Legislative Building set up by Rep. George Cleveland and our other NC 20 legislators, John and Dave combined their talents with Board Member Larry Baldwin to present an open-and-shut case to throw the 39" projection into the trash pile, where it belongs. Hearing the evidence for the first time were Cabinet Secretaries Keith Crisco (Commerce) and Reuben F. Young (Crime Control and Public Safety). Within two days, I received a call from the State official in charge of flood plain mapping asking for a meeting. Within a week, we were sitting in my conference room hammering out the details with NC 20 President Willo Kelly, VP for Regulatory Issues Larry Baldwin, Science Advisors and Board Members John Droz, Jr. and Dave Burton, and V.P. for Economic Development Bud Stilley. Our Governmental Affairs Representative, Fred Bone, also attended.

Bottom Line: we got everything we asked for. I'll send the technical details later, but we got a commitment to totally abandon any reference to accelerated SLR. Instead, the State will use historic, linear sea level measurements to create future projections (about 8 inches by 2100 instead of the 56 inches once being considered) and the provision of standard deviations which are basically fluctuations around the average projection at any given year. This is a huge win for NC 20 counties which always seem to lose in regulatory negotiations. It proves once again that unity is the key to advancing the cause of equity for NC 20 in matters such as regulation and economic development. Our next target is a revisit of coastal insurance followed by a re-examination of stormwater regulation.

A big thank you to Rep. Cleveland and the other NC 20 legislators for their support.

All the best



Tom Thompson

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