

## **We must act now**

*Letter to the editor, [State Port Pilot](#), 05.03.23*

The forces of Big Development are once again making a power grab via a bill in the N.C. legislature. Recently, these forces targeted NC cities and towns — and our ability to control zoning and building codes. Many of us emailed or called our representatives in Raleigh — and, thankfully, that bill was "parked" in the N.C. Senate Rules Committee. But now, big development is targeting a key N.C. government agency -- CAMA -- and its ability to protect our coast.

What's at stake this time? Our wetlands and, therefore, the preservation of our beaches, our shoreline, and our coastal environment. Wetlands are a natural protection against storm water run off, flooding, water pollution, and — what's maybe most important --coastal erosion. Big development wants to fill wetlands to build houses on land that is not appropriate. That would endanger our coast. Of course, federal law protects some of our N.C. wetlands, requiring developers to obtain permits and go through review by the Army Corps of Engineers. But many other wetlands are not specifically covered by federal law. Those wetlands fall under North Carolina's Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA), and that is what Senate Bill 582 would change.

Specifically, Section 15 of Senate Bill 582 would require CAMA to redefine the word "wetlands" to mean ONLY those wetlands already covered by federal law. So far as other NC wetlands are concerned, CAMA's hands would be tied. It would be open-season, so to speak, for big development.

Our towns have spent millions on beach renourishment. Our citizens have repaired their homes after hurricanes and flooding. Our local businesses, our way of life and our future depend on protecting our coast.

Although N.C. Bill 582 has now passed the N.C. Senate, it's not too late. As of this writing, that bill has yet to pass the House. And even if it were to pass the House, there is still the possibility of a veto by N.C. Governor Cooper which, of course, would have to be sustained by the N.C. House. All of which means, we must stand against N.C. Senate Bill 582. It's not too late. But we must act now.

Email our local representatives in the NC House, Charles Miller ([Charles.Miller@ncleg.gov](mailto:Charles.Miller@ncleg.gov)) and Frank Iler ([Frank.Iler@ncleg.gov](mailto:Frank.Iler@ncleg.gov)).

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