

N.C. beach communities seek aid for preservation

Congress to vote on funding this week

ATLANTIC BEACH — North Carolina's beaches are a powerful and growing economic force.

Coastal tourism is a \$2.6 billion-a-year industry and generates about 40,000 jobs. Meantime, the year-round population of all coastal counties has risen by 21 percent since 1990 and by 50 percent or more in Dare, Brunswick, Currituck and Pender counties.

But booming development and hurricanes are eroding several feet of the sandy gold mine each year. Several beach communities want to join a federal program that offers fresh sand more frequently than the current 10-year cycle and at low prices.

But the Bush administration opposes the program, which Congress inserted into the budget bill it's expected to vote on this week.

The unstable program — which this year would pump \$1.5 million into North Carolina's coastline — has fueled debate over how best to preserve beaches.

Advocates of beach-building say injections of fresh sand are critical to maintain the tourism economy.

Opponents typically are environmentalists who say sand harms natural habitats and taxpayer watchdogs who say it is unfair for the public to subsidize wealthy, oceanfront landowners.

Orrin Pilkey, the James B. Duke professor emeritus of geology at Duke University, doesn't like beach-building because of its environmental risks.

He predicts Congress eventually will bow to powerful development interests. "It's the wave of the future," Pilkey said.

If Congress were to junk the long-term beach programs, it would be left to the state and local governments to pick up most of the tab, which could hit more than \$500 million a decade if all 160 miles of developable coastline is replenished every four years, according to Pilkey's research.

State taxpayers already are on the hook in the form of matching grants to the federal program. And last fiscal year, state taxpayers spent \$3.6 million for various studies and small, local projects, according to the N.C. Division of Water Resources.

"It's an enormous cost," said Indian Beach Mayor Buck Fugate, whose town is trying to get a 50-year plan. "I don't know where we will go if the feds pull out completely."

Several programs allow some towns to get sand occasionally as a byproduct of routine dredging of federal waterways and harbors. This fall and winter in Atlantic

Beach and Fort Macon State Park, for example, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is pumping sand accumulated from 10 years' worth of dredging the Morehead City inner harbor.

The beaches get the sand free because the Corps has to dump it somewhere. For now, four North Carolina communities have 50-year deals with the federal government to buy cheap sand every few years; nearly 20 more want something similar.

The program came to North Carolina in the 1960s, when Wrightsville Beach and Carolina Beach signed on.

For years, that was it — just 5.4 miles getting new sand every three or four years. Then, in the late 1990s, Kure Beach and Ocean Isle Beach got similar deals.

Today, communities from Dare County in the north to Brunswick County at the state's southern tip are trying to develop their own contracts, covering an additional 67 miles.

Barrier islands naturally shift as sands move along the coastline. Storms can eat away whole swaths of the beach at one time, but the islands recover naturally.

Only when immovable objects such as homes, roads and utilities sprout on the beaches does erosion become a problem, especially when hurricanes and nor'easters hit the coastline.

Disputes continue in Ukrainian election

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

KIEV, Ukraine — The crisis over Ukraine's disputed presidential election intensified Sunday, as a key eastern province called a referendum on autonomy and the opposition demanded the current president fire his prime minister, the official winner of last week's vote that has bitterly divided this former Soviet republic.

The opposition warned President Leonid Kuchma it would block his movements unless he fired Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich and fulfilled other demands within 24 hours.

Earlier, Kuchma called on the opposition to end its four-day blockade of government buildings, saying compromise was the only solution to the crisis that has developed into a tense political tug-of-war between the West and Moscow over Ukraine's future.

On Saturday, Ukraine's parliament declared the election invalid amid international calls for a new vote, and lawmakers also passed a vote of no confidence in the Central Elections Commission, which declared Moscow-backed Yanukovich the winner.

But both parliamentary votes

are symbolic only and have no legal standing.

Opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko, who claims he was cheated out of victory in the Nov. 21 presidential runoff, urged his supporters Sunday to stay in the streets. Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators have thronged downtown Kiev for a week to support Yushchenko's claim that the election was rigged.

The Supreme Court will consider Yushchenko's appeal Monday. The court's ruling could pave the way for a new vote, which the opposition is demanding, or remove the only barrier to Yanukovich's inauguration.

The United States and other Western nations say the vote was marred by massive fraud. Russian President Vladimir Putin openly backed Yanukovich and congratulated him on his victory. Moscow considers this nation of 48 million people part of its sphere of influence and a buffer between Russia and NATO's eastern flank.

Yushchenko also has called for a new vote Dec. 12 under the watch of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. He also demanded that the 15 members of the election commission be

replaced.

Yulia Tymoshenko, a top ally of Yushchenko, told a rally of about 100,000 opposition supporters in Kiev's main square Sunday that Kuchma had until Monday evening to fire Yanukovich.

"We know where he is, and we can prevent him from making a single step if he doesn't fulfill our demands," Tymoshenko said.

Her other demands included firing the governors of eastern regions warning of autonomy bids and initiating a bill to reshuffle the Central Election Commission. If Kuchma does not fulfill them, he should be prosecuted for "crimes against the people," Tymoshenko said as protesters shouted "Down with Kuchma!"

Supporters of Yanukovich struck back from Donetsk, his native region and power base. The regional legislature voted 164-1 to hold a Dec. 5 referendum on autonomy for the province. About 30,000 demonstrators gathered outside the regional legislature in the city of Donetsk.

"We won't tolerate what's going on in Ukraine," Donetsk Gov. Anatoly Bliznyuk told lawmakers. "We have shown that we are a force to consider."

Faircloth, 20, U.S. Marine

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MOBILE, Ala. — A decorated U.S. Marine from Mobile was killed on Thanksgiving Day while fighting insurgents in Fallujah, Iraq, his family said.

Lance Cpl. Brad Faircloth, 20, stationed out of Camp Lejeune, was a member of the First Battalion, 8th Marines, Alpha Company, 3rd Platoon.

Faircloth earned a Purple Heart on Nov. 16 when he was wounded in attempts to drive insurgents from Fallujah, said his stepfather, Paul Smith. He said Faircloth had an injury to his face.

A week later, Smith said, Faircloth earned his second Purple Heart after being injured in the leg.

Two days after that, his family was told, Faircloth was killed.

"He died trying to get his third Purple Heart," Smith said Saturday.

Military officials did not immediately release details of Faircloth's death. A Marine spokesman said it could be today before any information is made public.

A 2002 graduate of Murphy High School, Faircloth joined the Marines in October 2003 in part because of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, said his mother, Kathleen Faircloth-Smith. He chose the Marines, she said, because he wanted to be with the best.

"He was tough," Faircloth-Smith said. "Everybody else would have been sissies."

Her son played on the defensive line for the Murphy Panthers football team, and he was an avid supporter of the program even after graduation, said his former coach, Jim Sudeiha.

Recently, Sudeiha said, Faircloth had requested videotapes of the Panthers' 2004 season so he could watch the games while he was in

Iraq.

After his graduation, Faircloth spent a year playing football on a partial scholarship at Delta State University in Mississippi, Faircloth-Smith said.

Before he left for Iraq in July, Faircloth-Smith said, he told her that if he were to die there, he wanted a donation made in his honor to Murphy for the creation of a Panthers statue.

Part of his respect for all people came from his experience on church mission trips to other countries, Faircloth-Smith said.

At 9 years old, Faircloth traveled with his mother to Jamaica, Faircloth-Smith said, pointing to a picture of her son beaming in a classroom surrounded by several children. The mother and son went on a mission to Ghana about two years later, she said.

"He was a rebel with a cause," Faircloth-Smith said.

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Confusion puts UNC's bowl opponent on hold

BY JACOB KARABELL
SPORTS EDITOR

North Carolina's football team could resume workouts this week without knowing its next opponent.

After UNC accepted a bid to the Continental Tire Bowl on Tuesday, bowl executive director Will Webb said he expected to announce the Big East representative Sunday after the weekend's slate of games had played out.

But Boston College's unexpected loss to Syracuse on Saturday created a four-way tie atop the Big East among the Eagles, Pittsburgh, Syracuse and West Virginia.

This created a precarious situation with regard to which of those four teams will qualify for the Bowl Championship Series — a verdict that will then determine from which teams the Tire Bowl can select.

All four teams finished 4-2 in the conference, but Pittsburgh and Syracuse emerged from the four-team tiebreaker with a better head-to-head record between them.

The final tiebreaker between those two schools will be the ranking in the final BCS standings. Pittsburgh likely will be ranked in the BCS after defeating West Virginia on Thursday, but the Panthers still have to face South Florida this Saturday in a makeup game originally canceled during Hurricane Charley.

If Pittsburgh loses to the Bulls, it

appears probable that neither team will be ranked in the BCS, making it anyone's guess as to which one will emerge as the conference's representative.

That decision will trigger a chain of events that will permit the Tire Bowl to select a team to face the Tar Heels.

On Tuesday, Webb leaned toward Connecticut.

"I'd have to say Connecticut is the most likely choice, but that's subject to change," Webb said.

Things might have changed — Boston College, Syracuse and West Virginia all could be viable options for the Tire Bowl in addition to UConn.

The Tar Heels, meanwhile, reconvened Sunday after taking last week off for Thanksgiving. They will resume strength training this week before resuming full practices Friday.

"When we know who our opponent is, our coordinators who usually don't go out on the road will start studying their tape," Coach John Bunting said Tuesday. "And we've already set up a preliminary practice schedule based on the Tire Bowl."

But it looks like Bunting and his staff might have to hold off on that scouting for another week.

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