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Environmental coalition calls for end to subsidies for high-risk coastal development

Bruce Ritchie, 01/04/2012 - 05:03 PM

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An environmental coalition on Wednesday called on the state to maintain its ban on nearshore oil drilling, to remove subsidies for high-risk coastal development and to encourage local ordinances regulating the use of fertilizer.

The **Florida Coastal and Ocean Coalition** says the 2010 BP oil spill demonstrated that Florida's coast is the state's "economic engine," attracting tourists and creating recreational opportunities for residents while providing habitat for numerous species of fish, birds, sea turtles and other wildlife.

The coalition of nine environmental groups on Wednesday issued a [32-page report](#) updating its 2006 "Blueprint for Economic and Environmental Leadership." The updated report includes new issues that have arisen since 2006 including the oil spill, concerns about coastal development and the state's financial risk exposure through **Citizens Property Insurance Corp.**

The coalition called on the Legislature and governor to support limiting construction seaward of the "coastal construction control line."

The groups recommend linking any insurance coverage in coastal areas to coastal protection policies and prohibiting insurance coverage in the highest risk areas.

With the Legislature in 2011 having substantially reduced state oversight of growth management, the coalition is calling for a reinstatement of a requirement that local governments develop post-disaster plans with a long-term strategy for dealing with coastal resources and infrastructure.

The Legislature in 2012 will again consider bills (**SB 604/HB 421**) that restrict local ordinances regulating the use of fertilizer, which the environmental groups support. The Legislature in 2012 is not expected to reconsider the ban on oil drilling in state waters but an effort by environmental groups to collect signatures to put a constitutional ban on the ballot has been faltering.

In their report on Wednesday, the groups also call on the Legislature to provide funding for the **Florida Forever** conservation land acquisition program and to restore **Florida Department of Environmental Protection** funding for aquatic preserves.

And they call on Congress to pass legislation that would direct 80 percent of any future **Clean Water Act** fines collected from BP to be directed towards Gulf restoration as called for in the **RESTORE Act** supported by U.S. Sens. **Bill Nelson**, D-Orlando, and **Marco Rubio**, R-West Miami.

"I think certainly it [BP oil spill] demonstrated to me how much Florida is about the coast," said **Janet Bowman**, director of legislative policy and strategies at **The Nature Conservancy's**

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Florida chapter. "If it were to disappear it would fundamentally change the nature of the state."

Reporter Bruce Ritchie can be reached at britchie@thefloridacurrent.com.

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