

I identify with many of the comments the gentleman made in his initial comments. However, I have some reluctance in having us come forward with this proposal today. The backdrop of the hurricane that is taking place, the devastation that is going up and down the East Coast, and we are taking a critical piece of legislation, the coastal barrier resources system, where we should be looking at ways to strengthen the legislation. We should be looking at areas to add land that are protected, and instead, we revisiting it again on a piecemeal basis, adding additional land, in some cases in dispute. I am sorry, it may be that it is flooded and we cannot find where it is. I find a great deal of irony that we would be having this today, not even being able to know what it is precisely that we are talking about.

Mr. Speaker, this is a piece of environmental legislation that came forward in the Reagan administration. It was focused on making sure that the federal taxpayer was not subsidizing inappropriate development. I am one that feels that it is entirely appropriate for government on the State, federal, and local level to perhaps exercise a little more discretion about where we do permit and encourage development. But at a minimum, the federal taxpayer ought not to be in a position of subsidizing development that is environmentally not sound.

We are whittling away, bit by bit, pulling land out of this. We do not have clear and convincing criteria to guide what is going on. It seems to me that this is again wildly inappropriate, given the backdrop of what is going on to serve as a reason for why we should insist that this be done properly. We ought not to have a series of confusing directives from the Fish and Wildlife Service, something that is submitted to potential political manipulated. We should be strengthening this system today, adding integrity to the decisionmaking process, by having Congress codify the development criteria into law, once and for all. And we ought to be very clear that we know exactly what we are voting on, especially when this is coming forward on a suspension calendar.

With all due respect, I do not feel comfortable moving forward like this. I feel very strongly that it is time to be evaluating the West Coast lands for inclusion. It has been trapped in limbo now for years. We should be as a Congress moving forward with the administration to make sure that we are not having inappropriate federal subsidies for development on the West Coast lands, along with other remaining undeveloped coastal barriers among the East, the Gulf and the Great Lakes region.

Mr. Speaker, it is frustrating for me when I think Congress has a role to be a good partner with the private sector, with State and local governments, to make sure that we are promoting sound environmental developments and livable communities. I am frustrated that the Federal Government is aiding and abetting some of the disaster that we are seeing right now in the Carolinas because we have not had a thoughtful approach frankly to our flood insurance; and we give money to people who are repeatedly flooded out of areas and they move back in.

This is another example of where we are not taking advantage of a comprehensive approach.

With all due respect, I would urge that this legislation not move forward today, that we come forward with a comprehensive approach to the system, that we deal with the West Coast that is in limbo, and for heaven's sakes, we do not come forward with areas to withdraw additional land when we do not know what we are talking about and we are hoping that something is going to be taken care of in a never, never land in a conference committee.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge rejection of the proposal before us today.