U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
Blog Round-up

Prepared by the Office of Public Affairs

Friday, February 15, 2013

Table of Contents

Blog Round-up
April 28, 2010

PEOPLE ARE TALKING 2
ROUND-UP OF MAJOR BLOGS 4
CLIMATE CHANGE 4
Fatal Attraction Climate Bill Appears to Finally Sink into the Bathtub (*Huffington Post*).... 4
E.P.A. Makes Its Case on Climate Change (New York Times) 5
EPA issues new climate report (*Washington Post*)..... 7
SOLID WASTE 7
Closet Cast-Offs Clogging Landfills (*Huffington Post*) 7
TOXICS 9
We Need Garbage Equity and Improved Regulation of Toxins (*Huffington Post*)..... 9
WATER 12
EPA scientist warns Atlantic seaboard will be swallowed by rising seas (Grist)..... 12

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

==========

With the internet, blogs, Twitter, forums - people are talking about EPA 24/7
Here's a sampling of what was said on April 27, 2010:

NOTE: To read the entire blog entry, click on underlined URL. To learn more about the blogger, click on the name/link in first line. Notes and headings are from OPA.

Lisa Jackson

Did you see EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson on the Daily Show last night? Very funny climate bill talk with Jon...
Posted by: Biz4CleanEnergy: 4:03 pm Full post: http://bit.ly/bs9J05

BlackAmericaWeb: ANALYSIS: EPA Chief Handles the Dirty Work
Posted by: http://www.facebook.com/pucobrownfields/ 7:40 pm (Monday) Full post: http://www.facebook.com/pucobrownfields/posts/105877666122728
(Note: Lisa Jackson, the nation's first black EPA administrator, is traveling around America calling attention to the dirtiest part of her job. Last week, Jackson took her Environmental Justice Tour to South Carolina…)

Jon Stewart To Lisa P. Jackson (VIDEO): Is Senator Graham "A Big Fat Baby?"
Posted by: rebeccavanderbi 5:53 pm Full post: http://huff.to/auI3gU

The Daily Show With Jon Stewart|Lisa P. Jackson
Posted by: JudyStock: 3:54 pm Full post: http://www.thedailyshow.com/watch/mon-april-26-2010/lisa-p--**jackson**

In case you missed it: EPA head @LisaPJackson talks #climatebill on the Daily Show w/ Jon Stewart.
Posted by: repoweramerica: 2:33 pm Full post: http://bit.ly/9W4hdB

GHG Regulation & Climate Change

Rising Sea Level Threatens Beaches, Warns EPA Scientist
Posted by: V3michael: 7:00 pm Full post: http://bit.ly/ar03iA

Sen. Reid: I'll do Climate Bill Before Immigration: Senate Majority Leader Vows to Take Up Climate Change Legislation A...
Posted by: Moraqeb 6:50 pm Full post: http://bit.ly/bdRgFx

Grist.org: EPA scientist warns Atlantic seaboard will be swallowed by rising seas
Posted by: EnvironUpdates: 6:33 pm Full post: http://bit.ly/c83547

66% of Hispanics: "tackling climate change should be a "high" or "very high" priority":
Posted by: samboykin: 6:00 pm Full post: http://bit.ly/aFLskA

New blog post: EPA Issues Report on U.S. Climate Change Indicators
Posted by: xjournals: 6:20 pm Full post: http://bit.ly/bZgWEf
(Note: Some key findings: GHG from human activities are increasing. Between 1990 and 2008, there has been about a 14 percent increase in emissions in the U.S. Average temperatures are rising. Seven of the top 10 warmest years on record for continental U.S. occurred since 1990.)

ROUND-UP OF MAJOR BLOGS

CLIMATE CHANGE

John Passacantando

Activist, economist, working to create our next economy

Posted: April 28, 2010 10:36 AM

Fatal Attraction Climate Bill Appears to Finally Sink into the Bathtub (*Huffington Post*)

Woke to the news, three grim faced men, Senators, said they weren't going to be able to help on global warming. The only Republican supporter of the not yet announced but widely described bill, Lindsey Graham, had a new demand. Not only did he insist that the bill subsidize the building of nuclear power plants and open up our coasts to oil drilling - conditions since met by the White House -- he wanted the Democrats to hold off immigration reform so it wouldn't hurt some Republicans running for Senate. It's rumored that he also wanted Caps tickets for the final game on Wednesday evening and a guarantee from the White House that they would beat the Canadiens.

Weird. But I felt happy. Which is weirder still. I've worked for almost 20 years to stop global warming and I feel joy when the Senate global warming bill begins to unravel. How did we get here?

The bill that Senators Kerry, Graham and Lieberman (KGL) keep threatening to introduce is reputed to be more of a polluters' bill than an environmental bill. Massive new subsidies for the coal, oil and gas industries, a new trading scheme for Wall Street (this time in derivatives of carbon pollution instead of mortgages), promised CO2 emissions reductions primarily from ungovernable "offsets" in the developing world, and pre-emption over state effort to stop global warming or even the EPA's recently Supreme Court granted right to do the same.

There are smart people who say that we need a bill on global warming, any bill, and the rest of the world will start moving too. But it seems to me that if we pass a fake bill, it won't be a little first step but rather the last step. And the Chinese, Indians, Brazilians are unlikely to be so

ignorant as to watch the Senate pass a fake bill and turn around and make real emissions reductions in their own economies.

But figuring this out isn't my job. I didn't join the environmental movement to try and become a master dealmaker. Let's leave that to the politicians and their staff. I'm more interested in the people building a powerful swell of public support that politicians eventually have to follow. Democracy done right means politicians listen to the people. Not the coal companies or the oil companies or Goldman Sachs.

I come from the American tradition that liberated itself from a corrupt king and which now has to liberate itself from corrupt corporate oligarchs. To do that we'll have to organize in every corner of this fair land and peel the grip of the polluters off the levers of power. But there is one thing we must do first. The original role of the environmental community is to tell the truth. Our role is not to design ever more complex legislative schemes that enrich the oligarchs and confuse the public. The truth is that global warming is bearing down on us and we are not a step closer to solving it than we were 40 years ago.

And yet there is something that I find hopeful, an alternative bill, though the media pretends it isn't there.

The media has been focused on the three men who have been talking about a bill for months while ignoring two women Senators, Democrat Cantwell and Republican Collins, who have actually introduced a bill, the CLEAR Act (the Carbon Limits and Energy for America's Renewal Act). Simple, elegant architecture, it auctions the right to pollute to the importers, drillers and miners of carbon-based fuels that come into the economy. These costs get passed along to you and me so we use less. It works like a tax, increasing the price so we use less carbon-based fuels. That's a good thing. And then it takes most of that revenue and gives a cash payment, ever year, to everyone with a social security number.

Top Republican pollster Glen Bolger from Public Opinion Strategies recently polled 1,000 likely voters in five politically moderate to conservative states about their views on climate legislation. According to Bolger: "The CLEAR Act from Cantwell and Collins has the best chance of getting more votes over party lines because people like the concept of less government involvement [and a] tax-cuts-style refund back to the people." Maybe this bill is a better way to get Republican support than to start giving companies the right to drill off our beaches.

Follow John Passacantando on Twitter: www.twitter.com/JPassacantando

April 27, 2010, *7:43 pm*

E.P.A. Makes Its Case on Climate Change (New York Times)

By ELISABETH ROSENTHAL

Polls show that tackling climate change is a low priority for the American public. Indeed, a Yale poll found that only 12 percent of Americans were "very worried" about global warming.

In the last few days, the Environmental Protection Agency seems to have initiated a public campaign to make clear where it, and the science, stand, stating that the rise in greenhouse gases is a serious problem to be confronted.

On Monday night, the E.P.A. administrator, Lisa Jackson, made the point as a guest on "The Daily Show With Jon Stewart." And on Tuesday, the agency released an 80-page glossy report called "Climate Change Indicators in the United States" to help Americans make sense of climate change data.

That report begins: "Over the last several decades, evidence of human influences on climate change has become increasingly clear and compelling. There is indisputable evidence that human activities such as electricity production and transportation are adding to the concentrations of greenhouse gases that are already naturally present in the atmosphere."

The agency lays out 24 possible indicators of climate change — from United States greenhouse gas emissions to tropical cyclone activity to bird wintering ranges — while tracing how they have shifted in recent decades. It lays out what is known, according to the agency's survey of current science, and what remains uncertain.

Some of the conclusions are already well publicized: "In the United States, greenhouse gas emissions caused by human activities increased by 14 percent from 1990 to 2008."

Others are less so: "Long-term studies have found that bird species in North America have shifted their wintering grounds northward by an average of 35 miles since 1966, with a few species shifting by several hundred miles."

And, given the long snowy winter in the mid-Atlantic states this year, readers will certainly find this one interesting: "The portion of North America covered by snow has generally decreased since 1972, although there has been much year-to-year variability. Snow covered an average of 3.18 million square miles of North America during the years 2000 to 2008, compared with 3.43 million square miles during the 1970s."

The report makes clear that some phenomena that might be viewed as "proof" of climate change may or may not be: From 2001 to 2009, it notes, roughly 30 to 60 percent of the nation was experiencing drought at any given time. But it adds that "data for this indicator have not been collected for long enough to determine whether droughts are increasing or decreasing."

Filled with charts and graphs, the report is a valuable resource for voters who are trying to make sense of climate change or how they feel about national environment and energy policy.

And just as the climate skeptics poured over a landmark 2007 report by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in search of possible errors, I'm sure that they'll be going over the E.P.A.'s offering with a very fine-tooth comb.

EPA issues new climate report (*Washington Post*)

By Juliet Eilperin

The **Environmental Protection Agency** issued a new report Tuesday, "**Climate Change Indicators in the United States**," examining 24 key indicators of global warming's effects on U.S. citizens.

Among the findings:
-- U.S. greenhouse gas emissions have increased 14 percent between 1990 and 2008.
-- Tropical cyclone intensity is on the upswing, with six of the 10 most active hurricane seasons taking place since the mid-1990s.
-- Sea levels are rising, with an increase between 1993 and 2000 that's twice as fast as the long-term trend.
-- The rate of glacier loss has accelerated over the past decade.

"These indicators show us that climate change is a very real problem with impacts that are already being seen," said Gina McCarthy, assistant administrator for the EPA's Office of Air and Radiation. "The actions Americans are taking today to save energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions will help us solve this global challenge."

Well, at least the actions of those Americans who didn't contribute to the 14 percent boost in the nation's emissions over the past 18 years.

BY

JULIET EILPERIN
| APRIL 27, 2010; 2:12 PM ET

SOLID WASTE

Posted:
April
27,
2010
07:27
PM

Closet Cast-Offs Clogging Landfills (*Huffington Post*)

Christmas sweaters and dad jeans aren't just offensive out of principle - they can pose a serious threat to the environment.

Innocuous as they might seem when compared with plastic shopping bags or Styrofoam cups, clothing and textiles become garbage just like everything else when thrown away - and given our country's shopping crazed culture, discarded clothing is clogging up landfills at an alarming rate.

According to the EPA Office of Solid Waste, Americans throw away more than 68 pounds of clothing and textiles per person per year and clothing and other textiles represent about 6.3% of the municipal solid waste (in major cities like New York and Chicago alone, textiles make up a whopping 10% of all municipal waste).

This figure only continues to grow, with large clothing companies like H&M setting disturbing precedents. The company recently came under fire for purposely destroying brand-new wearable clothing and tossing it into the trash, rather than recycling it.

Yet unlike recycling plastics, glass and aluminum - which is today taken for granted as a part of our daily life - there is an inherent lack of knowledge about the damage textile waste can do to the environment and of the options available for recycling it.

Most people don't realize there are outlets for putting their used and unwanted clothes back into the consumer cycle. There are.

The best way to "recycle" clothing is to simply offer it out to channels of reuse - including vintage stores, thrift shops, coat drives, and more. Charities and businesses all over the world collect used clothing to be resold or donated.

In fact, many people don't realize that used clothing represents a massive global market. Your giveaway "dad jeans" might end up for sale in a village market in Guatemala or Nigeria, helping the local economy while at the same time taking the burden off of landfills.

Some companies, like my own USagain, uses collection bins in major metro areas to offer a simple and convenient option for people to get rid of their unwanted clothing. Then we re-sell what we collect to thrift stores and wholesalers. From our experience, we know that if we work to provide the option of textile recycling, people will happily take advantage of these resources.

In 2009 alone, we diverted 54 million pounds of clothing from landfills.

Seems like it's catching on. Clothing companies like GAP are joining the trend of clothing recycling and encouraging their customers to follow in their steps. And New York City is mulling a proposal to provide Department of Sanitation-sanctioned textile recycling bins throughout the metro-area to collect textiles that would otherwise be thrown in the trash.

These initiatives are promising and leave us hopeful that with the right demand, word will spread about the necessity of textile recycling.

Who knows - with the right awareness, a used Christmas sweater might just become just the latest (unlikely) symbol of consumers doing their part for the environment.

Follow Mattias Wallander on Twitter: **www.twitter.com/MattiasWall**

TOXICS

==========

Gavin Kearney

Director, Environmental Justice, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, Race-Talk contributor

Posted: April 27, 2010 02:48 PM

We Need Garbage Equity and Improved Regulation of Toxins (*Huffington Post*)

The 40th anniversary of the first Earth Day is upon us and I have to admit to some ambivalence. On the positive side, Earth Day can provide a useful platform for educating and engaging the public around critical environmental issues. At the same time, Earth Day reminds me in some ways of MLK day. Each can provide a brief and painless way for people to express their commitment to a vague ideal without engaging its deep and difficult societal implications.

On MLK Day, one can celebrate Dr. King's life and work in ways that affirm the view that we live in a basically fair society and that suggest that the only thing standing between us and racial harmony is our inability to put aside petty interpersonal biases. Its not necessary to engage issues of racial justice and hard realities like pervasive inequalities of opportunity.

Earth Day is similar. It allows people to profess a commitment to an abstraction, in this case "the environment," through discrete, individual actions that implicitly affirm the basic order of the world. In addition, though it's not often recognized, Earth Day, like MLK Day, ought to prompt us to engage profound issues of race and class. One can organize a recycling drive without thinking about the communities that deal with the landfills and incinerators that exist to support consumption. And one can pledge to turn off unused lights without thinking about the places burdened by the coal mines and power plants that provide cheap and reliable electricity.

But Earth Day can be much more than this. Earth Day can be an opportunity to seriously engage tough questions of environmental justice and issues of complicity and privilege wrapped up in the world's environmental inequalities. In so doing, Earth Day celebrants can seek out meaningful, sustained ways to engage in the struggle for environmentally sound and just policies and practices. Below are a couple of examples, one local and one national, of the kinds of actions that Earth Day can and should catalyze and celebrate.

Garbage Equity in New York City

A number of studies document that communities of color and low-income communities throughout the U.S. are disproportionately burdened by waste facilities. In New York City, between two-thirds and three-fourths of the tens of thousands of tons of waste generated every day is trucked to facilities in three low-income communities and communities of color: Williamsburg-Greenpoint Brooklyn, the South Bronx, and Jamaica, Queens. And as is often the case, these communities deal with a multitude of other environmental health threats like toxic contamination due to current and former industrial uses and sludge treatment plants that process the City's organic (i.e. human) waste.

In response to this discriminatory waste system, organizations from communities of color and low-income communities joined together in a coalition called the Organization of Waterfront Neighborhoods (OWN). OWN recognized early on that, in addition to concentrating environmental burdens in a few communities, NYC's waste management system has negative, and avoidable, impacts for the City as a whole. Most notably, the system depends heavily on trucking waste, which worsens overall air quality and clogs streets throughout the City. This recognition paved the way for building strategic alliances with mainstream environmental groups and for articulating an alternative vision that would address overburdening and move the City to a waste management system that would benefit the City as a whole.

Due in no small part to OWN's work, New York City adopted a landmark Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) in 2006 that, when fully implemented, will site state-of-the-art waste handling facilities throughout the City and replace long-haul trucks with barge and rail cars. It paves the way for making every community handle its fair share of the garbage that New Yorkers create.

In addition it will eliminate tens of millions of truck miles traveled in and around New York City every year by siting facilities throughout the City (which will reduce the distances collection trucks travel from pick-up to drop-off) and moving waste out of the City by barge and rail with positive impacts on human respiratory health and quality of life.

I believe that the benefits of this plan will reach farther because of the fundamentally transformative nature of communities' engaging their environmental impacts out of necessity rather than altruism. The greatest flashpoint in the struggle to pass NYC's plan was around a facility proposed for the wealthy, white, and politically powerful Upper East Side of Manhattan. While the plan was being debated, I attended several public hearings on the Upper East Side. I heard a number of exasperated locals declare that no one should have to live near a waste facility.

Instead, they urged that the City's waste be taken to an isolated - and, to be blunt, imaginary - location. OWN members used this as an opportunity to inform that that they lived in these locations - the places that bear the environmental impacts of the privileged and powerful. Although many Upper East Siders continued (and continue) to fight against the plan, its passage greatly broadened the number of communities with a strong self-interest in waste. Over time, I believe that this shared interest will lead to effective (and unusual) alliances. And it would be a great thing for the Earth if cities and states throughout the country embraced fair siting mandates so that similar coalitions evolved around other critical environmental issues like energy policy. I

can't help but think, for example, that more people on Cape Cod would enthusiastically embrace a wind farm if they were staring down the smokestack of a coal-fired power plant.

Reforming the Regulation of Toxins

At the federal level, reforming the regulation of chemicals through the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) provides a similar opportunity to build a broad alliance that addresses the disproportionate impacts of toxins on communities of color, indigenous communities, and low-income communities while also advancing the environmental health of society at large. TSCA was passed in 1976 and is the main vehicle through which the federal government tests and restricts the use of chemicals.

TSCA suffers from a number of major flaws that render it weak. As a result, only 200 of the more than 80,000 chemicals that have been developed in the U.S. since its passage have undergone testing for their impact on human health and the environment. In addition, more than 60,000 manufactured chemicals in existence prior to the passage of TSCA were "grandfathered" in by the law, meaning that their continued use would be permitted without testing.

It is of particular concern that TSCA requires a chemical to be proven harmful before its use can be restricted rather than requiring that a chemical be proven safe before its use is allowed. Recent scientific research is just beginning to document the harms of exposure to chemicals that have long been in wide use. For example, the negative effects of Bisphenol A (BPA), a chemical used in plastics and can lining for over 50 years, have only recently come to light.

BPA is an endocrine disruptor meaning that, among other things, it can affect the development of organs and the immune system and impair the functioning of the brain. And as any parent of a young child can tell you, BPA, which was until recently prevalent in baby bottles, is particularly harmful to babies whose bodily systems are still under development.

Even more troubling than what we know about the harms of chemical exposure is the tremendous amount that we don't know. We are seeing significant increases in the prevalence of diseases and disorders like childhood cancer, autism, and reproductive problems and are only just beginning their link to chemicals. And there is a clear race and class dynamic to this as people of color, indigenous people and poor people are more likely to be exposed to toxins for reasons such as an increased likelihood of living in substandard housing, increased proximity to toxic industrial sites, and an increased reliance on subsistence fishing from waters that have been contaminated by toxic emissions.

TSCA reform bill have recently been introduced in the House and Senate and my organization is part of a broad national coalition called Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families that includes environmental justice, mainstream environmental, and other stakeholder groups pushing together for effective reform. The proposed bills would substantially improve health protections through measures such as requiring that companies develop and publish health information for all chemicals and developing a program to identify communities that are toxic "hot spots" and focusing exposure reduction efforts on them.

At the same time, the bills do not go far enough. Among other things, they do not require that the safety of new chemicals be demonstrated before they can be put in to use, and they do not give the Environmental Protection Agency the clear authority to take immediate action to restrict the use of those chemicals already known to be the most dangerous. TSCA reform, and the Safer Chemicals coalition, provide a great opportunity for folks to celebrate Earth Day by contributing to a broad, inclusive effort that gets at the policies and practices that shape our environment.

These are just a couple of examples of ways in which we can deeply engage the implications of our relationship to the environment. And in that spirit, I wish everyone an Earth Day filled with difficult questions and important breakthroughs that lead to transformative action.

Cross-posted from Race-Talk

WATER

Buh-bye east coast beaches

EPA scientist warns Atlantic seaboard will be swallowed by rising seas (Grist)

by Josh Harkinson

- 27 Apr 2010 2:04 PM

For most of the 20th century, Chesapeake Beach, Maryland, was known for its boardwalk, amusement park, and wide, sandy beaches, popular with daytrippers from Washington, D.C. "The bathing beach has a frontage of three miles," boasted a tourist brochure from about 1900, "and is equal, if not superior, to any beach on the Atlantic Coast."

Today, on a cloudless spring afternoon, the resort town's sweeping view of Chesapeake Bay is no less stunning. But there's no longer any beach in Chesapeake Beach. Where there once was sand, water now laps against a seven-foot-high wall of boulders protecting a strip of pricey homes marked with "No Trespassing" signs.

Surveying the armored shoreline, Jim Titus explains how the natural sinking of the shoreline and slow but steady sea-level rise, mostly due to climate change, have driven the bay's water more than a foot higher over the past century. Reinforcing the eroding shore with a sea wall held the water back, but it also choked off the natural supply of sand that had replenished the beach. What sand remained gradually sank beneath the rising water.

Titus, the Environmental Protection Agency's resident expert on sea-level rise, first happened upon Maryland's disappearing beaches 15 years ago while looking for a place to windsurf.

"Having the name 'beach,'" he discovered, "is not a very good predictor of having a beach." Since then, he's kept an eye out for other beach towns that have lost their namesakes -- Maryland's Masons Beach and Tolchester Beach, North Carolina's Pamlico Beach, and many more. (See a map of Maryland's phantom beach towns here.) A 54-year old with a thick shock of hair and sturdy build, Titus could pass for a vacationer in his Panama hat, khakis, and polo shirt. But as he picks his way over the rocky shore, he's anything but relaxed.

For nearly 30 years, Titus has been sounding the alarm about our rising oceans. Global warming is melting polar ice, adding to the volume of the oceans, as well as warming up seawater, causing it to expand. Most climatologists expect oceans around the world to rise between 1.5 and 5 feet this century. Some of the hardest-hit areas could be in our own backyard: Erosion and a shift in ocean currents could cause water to rise four feet or more along much of the East Coast. Titus, who contributed to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Nobel Prize-winning reports, has done more than anyone to determine how those rising seas will affect us and what can be done about them.

Like his occasional collaborator, NASA climatologist James Hansen, Titus has decided to speak out. He's crisscrossed the country to meet with state and local officials in coastal areas, urging them to start planning now for the slow-motion flood. Yet his warnings have mostly fallen on deaf ears. "We were often told by mid-level officials that their bosses did not want to plan for anything past the next election," he says.

Neither, it seems, does the federal government. Over the past decade, Titus and a team of contractors combined reams of data to construct a remarkably detailed model of how sea-level rise will impact the eastern seaboard. It was the largest such study ever undertaken, and its findings were alarming: Over the next 90 years, 1,000 square miles of inhabited land on the East Coast could be flooded, and most of the wetlands between Massachusetts and Florida could be lost. The favorably peer-reviewed study was scheduled for publication in early 2008 as part of a Bush Administration report on sea-level rise, but it never saw the light of day-an omission criticized by the EPA's own scientific advisory committee. Titus has urged the more science-friendly Obama administration to publish his work, but so far, it hasn't-and won't say why.

So Titus recently launched a personal website, risingsea.net, to publish his work. "I decided to do my best to prevent the taxpayer investment from being wasted," he says. The site includes "When the North Pole Melts," a prescient holiday ditty recorded by his musical alter ego, Captain Sea Level, in the late '80s.

Titus gazes at Chesapeake Beach's jagged shoreline, where two children scramble over the barrier of large grey boulders known as a revetment. "The children of 21st Century Chesapeake Beach, what do they do?" he asks. "They play on revetments." A generation ago, these kids might have been skipping through the waves. A generation from now, many of the rocks they're playing on will almost certainly be underwater.

Living near the ocean has always come with the risk of getting wet. Yet coastal dwellers whose homes got swamped by the occasional storm surge could rely on the water to eventually recede. That certainty is gone. Titus has calculated that a three-foot rise in sea level will push back East

Coast shorelines an average of 300 to 600 feet in the next 90 years, threatening to submerge densely developed areas inhabited by some 3 million people, including large parts of New York City, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. As Margaret Davidson, director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Coastal Services Center in Charleston, South Carolina, puts it, "Today's flood is tomorrow's high tide."

The rising waters can be kept at bay by constructing dikes and bulkheads, pumping sand to fill out receding beaches, and elevating existing buildings and roads on embankments or pylons. But such efforts may prove prohibitively expensive -- Titus says that in the lower 48 states alone, they could cost as much as $1 trillion over the next century, and he estimates that in the process, 60 to 90 percent of the East Coast's wetlands could be destroyed as bulkheads and other defensive measures restrict the movement of estuaries and marshes, drowning them when the ocean rises.

So are developers getting ready for the water? The National Association of Home Builders, the housing industry's largest trade group, has no policy on adapting coastal projects to account for rising sea levels. "While sea level rise may be a real issue in some areas," Susan Asmus, NAHB's senior vice president of regulatory and environmental affairs, told me in an email, "it is but one of many considerations that are likely already taken into account during the planning process." *Mother Jones* contacted the nation's 10 largest homebuilders, including D.R. Horton, Pulte Homes, and Lennar; none would say how they are responding to sea level rise.

Nor is there any evidence that the issue has much traction with homeowners -- and why should it? Property insurance is readily available in most coastal areas, if not through private insurers, then through state governments and FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program. Though the NFIP requires policyholders to live above the 100-year high-water mark, it doesn't account for how that line may creep inland in the future. Besides, most people would plan to resell their beach houses long before they expect them to be swallowed by encroaching waves.

What about government? Most coastal states have done little or nothing to regulate shoreline development, often for fear of litigation. In 1988, South Carolina's Beachfront Management Act required new beach homes to be set back far enough from the water to be protected from at least 40 years of erosion. A property owner named David Lucas sued, and the U.S. Supreme Court eventually ruled that the construction ban had deprived him of any "economically viable use" of his coastal properties, a "taking" that required the state to compensate him. "After Lucas, fewer people spoke seriously about stopping development," Titus says.

A few state and local governments have taken more constructive action. Several states limit development near tidal waters (Maine and Rhode Island have done this specifically in response to sea-level rise). Chatham, Massachusetts, cites sea-level rise as one reason why it prohibits new homes, even elevated ones, below 100-year flood lines. (State courts have upheld those limits in Chatham and Maine because they still allow property to be used for recreation, farming, and other profitable activities.) In California, where erosion and winter storms routinely knock multimillion dollar homes off seaside cliffs, the state's Coastal Commission has long required anyone who builds on coastal bluffs to submit a geotechnical report proving that their home won't fall into the ocean. Three years ago, it began requiring the reports to account for sea-level

rise. And in a groundbreaking 2008 executive order, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger directed state agencies to plan for sea-level rise in their construction projects.

A handful of developers have also started to seriously grapple with sea-level rise. A residential high-rise project on Treasure Island, a former naval base in the San Francisco Bay, is being built far from the shoreline and is reserving funds for a protective berm if the water rises even higher than the three feet that's anticipated. And in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the insurance industry drew up standards to fortify houses for stronger hurricanes and higher waves; so far, though, only 200 houses nationwide have been built to comply with the standards.

Most coastal dwellers are focused on riding out the next surge, not the next century. You can't really blame them -- nobody really wants to hear that their days on the beach are numbered.

Case in point: Beyoncé's dad. Matthew Knowles has been locked in a bitter struggle to save his beach house in Galveston, which now sits on top of the high-tide line thanks to Hurricane Ike. In most states, Knowles would be allowed to shore up his home, but not in Texas, which is known for one of the most progressive laws in the country on beach access. The state's Open Beaches Act provides that beach as a public resource that must be protected from "erosion or reduction caused by development."

Last year, after Knowles started reinforcing his property with tons of cement, the Texas General Land Office informed him that paving over the beach is illegal. Even so, he continued and then surrounded his home with sod, planters, and sandbags. In March, the agency notified Knowles that it was preparing to fine him up to $2,000 a day for violating the Texas Open Beaches Act by interfering with "the right of the public to use the beach." Knowles did not respond to a request for comment.

Historically, the 51-year-old law has been used to prevent property owners from walling off the beach in front of their homes. But officials say the law clearly applies even when the beach comes to the houses, rather than vice versa. "Even if you make $80 million a year, we don't care," says Jim Suydam, a spokesman for the Texas General Land Office. "The beach is the public's." Incorporated into the state constitution last year and vigorously supported by the state's conservative, gun-packing land commissioner, the Open Beaches Act is remarkably popular, in part because it can guarantee beach access for ATVs.

Titus views the Texas Open Beaches Act as one of the more promising tools for preparing for higher water. It has unintended environmental benefits, ensuring that beaches can migrate inland instead of being walled off -- and at the same time, it sidesteps any debate over climate change. "Developers who deny that the sea will rise would view the policy as costing them nothing," because it wouldn't prevent them from building near the shore, he notes. Only the diehard beach dwellers would stand to get soaked.

With additional reporting by Kate Sheppard.