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Contact: Barbara Garrity-Blake
(252) 808-5712

BARBARA GARRITY-BLAKE APPLAUDS NEW WATERFRONT ACCESS BILL

Barbara Garrity-Blake, Democratic candidate for House District 13, Carteret and Jones counties, expressed support for Senate Bill 2043 which would continue the waterfront access program for a second year.

The measure, introduced by Sen. Charles Albertson, D-Duplin, calls for \$20 million to be disbursed from the General Fund to acquire waterfront land for public access and shore up flagging fish houses with capital and infrastructure improvements.

“This money would come out of the general fund, and therefore not have the limitations of last year’s funding, which had to be state purchases of property,” Garrity-Blake explained. “This money could go toward capital improvements like dock repairs or seafood processing.”

Garrity-Blake led the effort that resulted in last year’s Waterfront Access Marine Industry Fund, and served on the committee that recommended the funding as well as the Present Use Taxation policy for pier and fish house owners.

“Starting next July, pier owners and fish house owners will be able to pay property tax based on what their land is actually used for, rather than the real estate value,” she said. “This helps business owners stay in business, and protects our working waterfronts.”

Last year’s funds, pending final negotiations of approved projects, will go toward the construction of the Emerald Isle fishing pier, the expansion of the Radio Island public access site, and a mixed commercial/recreational docking site in Cedar Island. Several other projects up and down North Carolina’s coast are pending as well.

“I realize this is a tight-budget year,” Garrity-Blake added. “But I urge our legislators to pass this bill and maintain the momentum that we started. The seafood industry is in crisis, and the public’s access to the water will only diminish unless we stay vigilant. Our waters are the heart of our economy here at the Crystal Coast, and all citizens have a right to enjoy these waters.”