Senate CST Committee passes Coastal Coordination Act of 2016

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The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation held an executive session to consider the Coastal Coordination Act of 2016 (S. 3038), which would update and reauthorize the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA). Enacted in 1972, the CZMA created three national programs to manage coastal resources: the National Coastal Zone Management Program, the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, and the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program. Since then, the act has been amended only once, in 1990.

The new bill would make changes that emphasize coastal resilience and remove a vague provision requiring the Commerce Secretary to evaluate state proposals based on “benefits to the public.” It also recognizes the need for local, state, and federal coordination during emergency situations, such as oil spills and hurricanes, in order to minimize conflict and duplication of efforts. For example, the bill designates the Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GOMA), an existing regional partnership between federal agencies, five Gulf states, and other organizations, as a Regional Coordination Entity of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Ranking Member Bill Nelson (D-FL) praised the act for helping Florida test flood adaptation plans in Fort Lauderdale. He also credited the act with providing funds for research on freshwater discharge into the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River system and its associated oyster fishery.

Although Republicans previously asserted that such a bill could hinder coastal energy development, the Senate committee unanimously passed the bill.

Source: E&E News, fortlauderdale.gov, Gulf of Mexico Alliance, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Senate.gov

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