

Posted March 25, 2017 08:53 pm - Updated March 26, 2017 08:01 am

<http://savannahnow.com/column/opinion/2017-03-25/david-kyler-coastal-georgia-will-suffer-under-proposed-trump-budget>

David Kyler: Coastal Georgia will suffer under proposed Trump budget

Comments 1 Share



In regard to the budget cuts being proposed by the Trump Administration (“Coastal programs face fears of deep budget cuts,” Savannah Morning News, March 23), those of us who care about our region’s environment and nature-based jobs are well-justified in having serious apprehensions.

Although the budget proposal is being cast by political analysts as largely symbolic — since Congress has budgeting authority — the Trump proposal expresses deep and troubling distortions in the perception of public interest. Not only would it disable essential government functions vital to public health and environmental quality, but the budget proposal demonstrates an outrageously merciless transfer of tax benefits to those who least need them, putting the majority of Americans at greater risk.

Under this woefully misled budget proposal, coastal Georgia would suffer disproportionately because of our region's high dependence on natural resources and environmentally-sensitive quality of life.

With some 20 percent of coastal Georgia's economy derived from eco-tourism, outdoor recreation and fisheries — about 40,000 jobs and \$2 billion a year in business activities — cuts in funding for natural resource research, monitoring and regulation will undoubtedly harm our communities, taxpayers, and businesses.

Reductions, or even elimination, of funds for evaluating environmental conditions and trends will further endanger coastal areas at greatest risk from sea-level rise caused by climate change.

It appears the administration's view is that the less we understand about harsh environmental realities, the better.

The delusional rationale served by this budget proposal seems to be that reckless short-term exploitation of natural resources for profit justifies neglecting serious long-term consequences — including impacts such as flooding, drought, destruction of property and dangerously degraded marine resources vital to U.S. and global food supplies.

At this critical stage in the emergence of America's foremost challenges, this budget proposal ignores major threats while indulging the very irresponsible policies and practices that have generated them.

The penalties for ignoring and marginalizing environmental factors are mounting, jeopardizing both public health and economic stability.

In his seminal book, "Endangered Economies," Columbia economics professor Geoffrey Heal makes a strong case supporting his assertion that continued neglect of nature now severely threatens our prosperity.

Self-defeating, devious denial of accumulating damage caused by the abusive pursuit of economic goals must not be reinforced by Trump's willfully negligent budget proposal.

Our nation cannot tolerate compounding threats to the health of our natural systems, upon which we all depend for survival itself.

David C. Kyler is the director of the Center for a Sustainable Coast, based on Saint Simons Island.