

EDITORIAL & COMMENTARY



Peekaboo!

SCOTT LONGFIELD

IT'S YOUR TURN

Commentary

Candidates and the Coast: Elections, a Great Time to Get Their Attention

By *The American Shore & Beach Preservation Association*

When running for office, candidates are most often accessible to the average voters as well as more open to listening and stating a position on issues brought to their attention during election season.

During a campaign, you might have opportunities to ask questions at candidates' forums or even tweet them or friend them on Facebook. Some candidates will even allow you to prepare issue papers or talking points for them on topics about which you have more background.

So, as coastal professionals and advocates, use these chances to talk about the coast. Remember, many candidates may not have much background into coastal issues, or may not have taken stances on those issues they have to stand behind. This is your opportunity to help them form opinions that support the coast, as well as to bring into the discussion topics of unique concern to you and your fellow coastal residents

In fact, your questions about the coast may bring a breath of fresh air to monotonous candidates' forums, because who doesn't love talking about the beach!

Keep in mind what level of candidate you are talking to when formulating your questions or pursuing their positions. Although a candidate for a county or municipal office may have strong opinions on federal flood insurance, he or she cannot vote for it. However, what he or she can vote for is local funding for beaches and regulations that keep the waters safe. In some states or areas, so-called "bed taxes" (a charge that's added on to vacation rentals in many tourist areas) are often used to fund local coastal projects. The competition for that revenue can be high, so this is a good time to push the value of funding the coast through this useful mechanism.

You can also take this time to point out that beaches are important local resources for both recreation and storm protection. They provide jobs (good for any economy) and, in states that rely on property taxes, coastal areas contribute substantial tax revenues to the coffers. At the same time, choose which coastal items you emphasize to candidates, because certain issues resonate more with some communities than others and focusing on one aspect will make it more memorable.

Remember that the Sandy-driven destruction of the Jersey Shore pulled on heartstrings because so many people had wonderful childhood memories tied to the shore.

At the state level, look at your state's coastal issues. While each state is different, you want the state government to support healthy shorelines – whatever that means for your state. Again, telling a story to generate support is always the best approach.

If your candidate choices have formed opinions on coastal issues, learn them and either voice your support if you agree or air your alternative if you don't.

If their coastal concerns are still forming, it often helps to frame the issue in a context your state-level candidate cares about. If he or she is into providing recreational opportunities, ask a question on that. If he or she worries about employment, we all know that coastal areas are job creators – and coastal tourism is always a good topic, since beaches bring people from across the nation and even the globe. Ask infrastructure questions if that is a hot-

button topic. Remind them that wide beaches and high dunes along with elevated structures protect coastal communities and property values.

What about federal candidates? In many areas, local and state governments are doing their part to protect the coast. What is your candidate's federal plan, now that his or her influence is more diluted since earmarks are off the table? Do they support adequate coastal funding for federal projects, management and research? Where does he or she stand on some of the Endangered Species Act provisions? On federal flood insurance? The Clean Water Act? Funding coastal disaster recovery?

Finally, if you like what a candidate says, spread the word and consider giving them some financial support. And if they survive the primary and general election, don't forget to meet with the newly elected official and remind them of their promises to the coast – and its importance to the voters they'll be back to pursue two (or four or six) years from now.

While we can seldom hold candidates for public office to their promises, we can at least bring issues to their attention. This is especially true when they're asking for our votes, as it's also a great time to ask something of them.

Founded in 1926, the American Shore & Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) advocates for healthy coastlines by promoting the integration of science, policies and actions that maintain, protect and enhance the coasts of America.

Celebrating Wild Beach Plums

By *Michele S. Byers*

You've probably never picked or tasted a wild beach plum ... but it's not too late!

Beach plums, *prunus maritima*, grow wild on dunes along the East Coast, although summer visitors who flock to the beaches seeking sun and surf tend to miss the short, weather-gnarled bushes. Throughout most of summer, the fruits are green and unobtrusive ... more like olives than the larger purple fruits found at farm stands.

Beach plums have a devoted following, and foragers are known to be secretive about the best places to find them.

"The longtime gatherers have secret spots and favorite bushes, and strangers carrying pails in the dunes are viewed with suspicion," wrote Cornell University researcher Richard Uva in an article about the fruit's cultural and scientific aspects. "In a good crop year, the race to harvest is so competitive that the fruit is sometimes picked when barely ripe."

The Friends of Island Beach State Park don't mind sharing their secrets, if only once a year. The annual Beach Plum Festival, held in early September, celebrates wild beach plums and Island Beach's other natural wonders.

The 17th Annual Beach Plum Festival is scheduled from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 7, at the Ocean Beach Bathing Area No.1, the first pavilion after the park entrance.

The day's highlights include plum picking, native plant tours and beach plum jelly-making demonstrations. Beach plum jelly and even beach plum ice cream are for sale. Visitors wishing to grow beach plums at home can buy small plants.

Beach plums have a flavor that ranges from astringent when picked early to relatively sweet when ripe. They're rarely eaten raw, but their tartness gives jams, jellies and other products a distinctive flavor. Believe it or not, even some beers and wines are flavored with beach plums!

Beach plums were first used by indigenous people and later discovered by European settlers. According to Uva, the earliest account of native plums came from explorer Giovanni da Verrazano, who in 1524 spotted them on the Long Island coast and mistakenly recorded them as "damson trees."

Since then, several coastal land masses have been named after the beach plum, including tiny Plum Island off the northeastern tip of Long Island, the Plum Island barrier beach off Newburyport, Mass., and Prime Hook in Delaware, whose name is a version of the Dutch "Pruime Hoek," or Plum Point.

The Beach Plum Festival is free, although a \$5 donation is requested to support the Friends, a nonprofit volunteer group whose mission is to foster public appreciation and stewardship of Island Beach State Park by enhancing educational, recreational and research programs and offering public events. One of the Friends' most popular initiatives is the "Osprey cam" that allows the public a close-up view on their computers of the osprey pair that nests there each year.

To learn more about the Friends of Island Beach State Park, visit www.friendsofislandbeach.org. The website includes a full schedule of activities, including surf fishing clinics, kayak tours, clamming clinics and beach cleanups.

And to learn more about preserving New Jersey's land and natural resources, check out the New Jersey Conservation Foundation website at www.njconservation.org or contact me at info@njconservation.org.

Michele S. Byers is the executive director of the New Jersey Conservation Foundation.



COURTESY DORN'S CLASSIC IMAGES

Two River Moment

The Rumson was a hotel located on South Ward Avenue in Rumson, shown here in this undated photo. It was known by many at one point as a place to go hear music.