

Marine Debris Funding Moving Through Congress

Thursday, 05 December 2013

Liz Ruskin/APRN

Two bills aimed at helping coastal communities deal with marine debris have advanced in Congress. Alaska Congressman Don Young, a co-sponsor, says they would make it easier for local, state and tribal governments to get money to remove rubbish that floats to their shores.

One bill would broaden the ability the federal government to reimburse communities for cleaning up debris stemming from the 2011 Japanese tsunami, using \$5-million Japan donated last year. The other would speed grants to communities in the midst of a severe debris event. Young says the bill doesn't appropriate funds so it's unclear how much would be available.

Both bills cleared the House Natural Resources Committee yesterday.

Japan estimates the tsunami washed 5-million tons of debris out to sea. NOAA said in September the greatest concentration of flotsam is likely to be northeast of Hawaii, about half way to the West Coast of the U.S., but that the debris field extends to Southeast Alaska and the Gulf of Alaska.