

Dare County Waterways Commission

Minutes

Monday, October 11, 2021
7:00 PM (Virtual Meeting)

Call to Order

Roll Call: Steve Coulter, Ernie Foster, Natalie Kavanagh, Michael Flynn, Danny Couch, KP Scott

Acceptance of Minutes: September 13, 2021

- Michael Flynn made a motion to approve the minutes. Steve Coulter seconded the motion. All in favor.

Welcome: Chairman Steve Coulter

- Steve Coulter welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Public Comment

- No public comment

New Business

USCG Report

- John Ahlen stated the Coast Guard worked with the Corps to move 4 and 6 to help with dredging operations. The Coast Guard will be back down there later in the week to mark the channel, now that the Army Corps has finished dredging. KP Scott thanked the Coast Guard for their efforts in South Ferry Channel. He asked that more buoys be placed in the channel. A straight line from 5sf to 7sf to 9sf will run a boat into a shoal, the channel is too narrow. John Ahlen said the plan is to work with Station, because they are limited on the weight the 26 can hold, to carry extra buoys. Chain length will have to be the precise length so they do not impede the channel during ebb and flood tide, but also don't disappear during large swell.
- John Matuska said they are at full response for search and rescue. He ran the western route from 4sf to sloop channel during low tide and it appeared that there was 4 feet the whole way through and it is wider and flows better than South Ferry Channel.

Corps Report

- Jeremy Smith said they plan to have survey boat back out in South Ferry Channel next week and take a look at the route to the left of 4sf. Steve explained that there is about 75 feet of shoal and if the dredge could sidecast into the deeper water of Sloop Channel, the sand would be taken away rather than creating a shallow shoal like in the existing South Ferry Channel. Jeremy would talk to Joen tomorrow. Jeremy stated that at the most recent event, the Merritt

would have been sidestepping onto dry shoal in approximately a day and it would have been a waste of money to continue working without improving conditions. Steve asked Jeremy to clarify that typically the Merritt arrives before the Murden arrives to remove sand. Jeremy said that is absolutely correct, it was not conventional but the Murden was much more successful than the Merritt would have been. Steve agreed, but said if the Murden had stayed for a few more days, South Ferry Channel would have been wider and safer. Jeremy responded they had been putting off Bulkhead Channel for a month and a half, so they had to send the Murden there and then the Murden had a scheduled dry dock for two weeks of deferred maintenance. Jeremy said that the Merritt is in Dare County for the month and can immediately return to South Ferry Channel if it is shoaling in.

- Steve asked about the Rollinson Realignment. Jeremy responded the EA was with Counsel and should be signed off and released for a 30 day public review within a week. Sloop Channel has now been permitted.
- Ken Willson asked that if the Merritt does come down to South Ferry Channel and can only work a couple days before creating a dry shoal, could the Corps have the Merritt spend time on the western or southern route to see if the captains are comfortable working in the other possible channels.
- Michael Flynn brought up that there is a tool available that provides depth average velocity in the inlet. This model could provide information on where the Corps should focus dredging efforts based on natural velocity of water over time. Ken stated that the model is on a regional scale, but the model could be narrowed down to Hatteras Inlet to determine where water is flowing provided there is enough bathymetric data for the area. The bathymetry is changing week to week.
- Danny Couch spoke about making sure we have a plan of action and the required permits when the Miss Katie dredge comes online during the middle of next year. Ken Willson commented that the Murden was much more effective than the sidestepper in the four or five days there and if it was able to be there for another week or two to carve into the side a reasonable channel would have been created. This is information that the new dredge operators will need to know. Steve commented that with the Rollinson realignment, it will be important that the channel can be maintained 12 months out of the year, rather than the time consuming process of requests for relief during the summer as is the case now. The Corps was originally able to dredge all year on the east side of the inlet to the gorge. The proposed realignment requests all year dredging, but it is still undecided until after agency and public review.

NCDOT FERRY Report

- Catherine Peele from the Ferry Division said they now have the permit in hand for Sloop Channel. Now funding will need to be transferred to the Corps for dredging to occur. The Manteo is still in the yard until the end of December or January. The Corps will have the Snell available later this year or early next year and may be able to dredge the emergency ferry route in Rodanthe. Cat will reach out to Barton about spoil site capacity and available funds.

- Steve asked if the infrastructure bill had funds for Sloop Channel. Jeremy answered that Silver Lake Harbor and Rollinson were priority projects to place a pipeline dredge, but still uncertain if those projects will be funded.
- Ernie Foster asked about the status of the pilings at South Dock. Catherine responded that they are waiting on funding for dredging South Dock before placing pilings. DOT is working on a cost estimate.
- Danny mentioned if the Snell is in Dare County, it might be an opportunity to dredge Avon Harbor. There are a lot of moving parts to that project, but it is something we should think about.
- Ken asked about spoil site capacity at South Dock. Cat responded that she would look into it. Ken and Steve believed that would be something to consider as a spoil site for future dredge events.
- Captain Rom Whitaker spoke about his disappointment that the Murden could not work additional days. A large amount of funds have been spent on bridges to get people to Hatteras Island, but then a lack of funds spent on Hatteras Inlet. Sloop Channel needs buoys. He stated that the lack of a safe channel to the gorge affects our livelihood. We need to focus on a long term plan rather than putting band aids on the situation. Cameron Whitaker stated that it is an emergency right now if KP cannot get through such a narrow cut with his headboat and the dredge needs to be there now. Steve said it has been 10 years since the Corps stopped maintaining the original Rollinson channel and the Coast Guard pulled the buoys and it is a fight every day to maintain a navigable channel so the Coast Guard can respond to emergencies. KP expanded upon what Cameron had spoken about. KP runs through South Ferry Channel four times a day. He ran aground in the marked channel, there was an injury and had to take his boat to Wanchese to get hauled out and inspected. It wasn't a life threatening injury, but with conditions as they are something bad may happen. He had to shut down the end of September before the Murden arrived and refund customers. He stated we need to do better to keep a safe and navigable channel to the gorge.

Old Business

- None

Administrative Business

- Current Budget
 - Non-Federal Funds with Corps for SFC: \$1,035,000 (Before October Dredging Event)
 - President's Budget FY2022 for Rollinson Channel: \$30,000
 - Dare County FY2022 Budget: \$250,000 (\$0 remaining)
- MOA/Permit Status
 - MOA- Expires 01/2022
 - CAMA – Expires 12/2024
 - Department of the Army Permit – Expires 03/2027

- Barton stated the Murden arrived Sunday and departed Wednesday morning. The Murden operated 24 hours a day at a cost of approximately \$45,000 a day. Therefore, the non-federal budget will be reduced by approximately \$250,000.

Board Member Business

- Michael said the Coastal Federation completed the removal of 20 abandoned and derelict vessels from Dare County and identified quite a few more. At the end of the month, he will be working for the National Park Service as a physical scientist and looks forward to continuing to work with the Waterways Commission.

Adjournment

- Steve made the motion to adjourn, KP seconded. All in favor.

Next meeting is November 8, 2021 at 7:00pm. The meeting will be virtual.

Respectfully submitted,

By: _____
Barton Grover
Grants & Waterways Administrator

APPROVED By: _____
Steve Coulter, Board Chair
Dare County Waterways Commission