

Dare County Waterways Commission

Minutes

Monday, March 14, 2022
7:00 PM (Virtual Meeting)

Call to Order

Roll Call: Steve Coulter, Natalie Kavanagh, Ernie Foster, Michael Flynn, Kermit Skinner, KP Scott

Acceptance of Minutes: February 14, 2022

- Michael Flynn made the motion to approve the minutes. KP Scott seconded the motion. All in favor.

Welcome: Chairman Steve Coulter

- Steve thanked everyone for attending.

Public Comment

- Brian Patteson commented about the emergency dredging event that occurred in Hatteras Inlet for the Ferry Division, while no dredging occurred in South Ferry Channel because the MOU had expired. People need to be aware how time sensitive this opportunity for dredging is, and because we missed our opportunity to dredge in February, the fleet and Coast Guard cannot get out. When the Merritt returned in March, they did not attempt to dredge during the days when weather conditions were the best to take a crack at it. He would like to know why. We have been shut off from the ocean for two months. Steve thanked Brian for his comments and hoped we'll get answers to those questions.

New Business

USCG Report

- John Ahlen said they have been busy down in Hatteras Inlet Channel and Barney Slough due to ferry groundings and trying to find deeper water. It is again becoming shallow between 14 and 15. The Coast Guard is on standby for anything at South Ferry Channel. John Matuska said he would be out tomorrow with the smaller boats to explore near South Ferry Channel. They still cannot get out of the inlet with the 47. They've talked with the Corps about surveying a larger area, because they are concerned the existing South Ferry Channel has shoaled in. Greg Kennerley said they are attempting to exhaust their resources and have contacted Elizabeth City to see if they can get aerial photography.

Corps Report

- Jeremy Smith reported that the conditions of South Ferry Channel are preventing the Corps from accessing the channel to dredge. Also, one of the crew had a family emergency, so the dredge is docked until Wednesday in Wanchese. Conditions are not looking good to dredge this week. Steve Shriver will be surveying the area to determine if there is another channel that is opening up. Barton commented that Steve informed him he would be there Wednesday.
- Joen Petersen responded to Brian's comments. Everyone at the Corps wishes they had an open channel for the boaters. Joen commented that they only had one rudder when working the ferry route in February, and they could operate in Rudee with one rudder, but not in South Ferry Channel. Steve commented that at that point, the MOU had not been signed so they could not work in South Ferry Channel. Jeremy said there are multiple inlets and a priority they must follow. Unfortunately when they arrived in South Ferry Channel in March, tides and weather conditions were not appropriate. Steve asked if they would be back Thursday. Joen said they first need a survey before they move back into South Ferry Channel.
- Steve asked if there were any meetings about utilizing the mechanical dredge at Sloop to allow the Merritt to access South Ferry Channel. Joen and Jeremy both responded that they reached out to DOT concerning this option, and it was not an option for permitting and contractual reasons. Barton commented that Ken and he had reached out to DOT and the contractor. Dare County would be willing to modify the permit to allow the bucket and barge to access South Ferry Channel and create a deep enough channel for the Merritt. Ken said he had a good conversation with the contractor today and it shouldn't be a heavy lift to modify the permit. The contractor was going to look at South Ferry Channel today to determine if they could operate in that area. If that is the case, we'll move full speed ahead with the contractor and coordinating with DOT. DOT will get more sand quicker from South Ferry Channel than Sloop. Steve asked if we could get the bucket and barge in there, could the Corps have flexibility in their schedule to arrive soon thereafter to dredge. Jeremy commented that they could, they are keeping the Merritt in the area.
- Natalie asked what the weather and tides need to be for the Merritt to operate. Jeremy commented that they cannot afford to lose another rudder, and they cannot operate at night. Best conditions are rising water in the morning, low water midday is the worst time they can be in the area.
- Charlie commented that we seem to always be operating in crisis mode every Spring and we need to manage the inlet in a more organized fashion. Ken commented that the County has obtained the permits and allocated funding for the issue, but the Corps is operating with limited equipment. They are forced to triage the issues up and down the coast. And if South Ferry Channel is not dredged for a couple months, we see the extensive shoaling as has occurred now. When the Miss Katie comes online, that should reduce the issues.
- Steve asked about realignment. Jeremy said they are responding to comments from National Marine Fisheries concerning submerged aquatic vegetation and hope to have that finalized by the end of the month. Ernie said it seemed to him that an important consideration in this decision should be the fact that the Coast Guard cannot get out of the inlet.

NCDOT Ferry Report

- Catherine Peele said they are not running the Hatteras Class ferries due to conditions at Sloop Channel. They are having issues at Bigfoot Slough and have reached out to the Corps for dredging. The dredge Manteo is leaving for Southport and will be there until mid-April.
- Steve asked about South Dock and Catherine responded she will reach out for more information concerning the installation timeline.
- Barton stated Roger sent an updated sketch of the pilings at South Dock and EJE and the Corps have reviewed. DOT will next provide a design and total cost.

Old Business

- None

Administrative Business

- Current Budget
 - Non-Federal Funds with Corps for SFC: \$400,000
 - Infrastructure Bill for Rollinson Channel: \$1,430,000
 - 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 referenced earlier conversations about the MOA and issues with it expiring. It is his understanding that once Rollinson Channel is realigned, the project will fall under the long-term MOA and the one-year short term MOA will no longer be necessary.
- Natalie asked if there is anything that needs to be requested for an event in April. Ken said they have been communicating with the agencies and Corps Regulatory every week and they are aware of the delays. It is not a formal modification, but a request for relief that agencies need about two weeks to review.
- Steve asked Barton if there will be a meeting with DOT Division One to talk about the bucket and barge. Barton said there will be a meeting later this week to talk over the specifics of getting the mechanical dredge into South Ferry Channel. Ken commented that it would be a one-time modification of the permit to allow for the bucket and barge.

Board Member Business

- Steve asked Michael if there were any updates concerning the placement of Avon dredged materials on the interdunal road. Michael Flynn stated staff completed an on-site assessment of the interdunal road to determine placement of material and where to temporarily store it before construction begins. Barton said he provided sediment samples of the Avon material to the Park Service. We are waiting on the Corps to provide a new survey to determine the amount of material which will need to be removed from Avon.

Adjournment

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

Respectfully submitted,

By: _____
Barton Grover
Grants & Waterways Administrator

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

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