

## Unofficial Minutes

### Dare County Oregon Inlet Task Force Meeting

Dare County Administration Building, Manteo, NC

9:30 a.m., July 12, 2022

Attendance: Harry Schiffman, John Ponton, Russ King

#### 1.0 Review Minutes- June 14, 2022

Harry Schiffman noted edits to Section 2 of the June minutes, replace Jim's name with Harry's. Without a quorum, minutes will be approved at the next meeting.

#### 2.0 Welcome guests

Harry thanked everyone for joining.

#### 3.0 Update on buoys placement in & around O.I. by USCG ANT, Wanchese

John Ahlen reported they have removed the buoys from the north cut over the bar and have established the south channel over the ocean bar. As of right now, the new channel is holding up well. They will move buoy 19 to align with 15 to mark the bridge span near bents 31 and 32. A shoal has closed off the span between bents 33 and 34, so nav lights will be moved.

#### 4.0 Dredging Summary Report

John Ponton reported the Corps dredged 11,535 cubic yards west of the bridge during three separate events in June. This work was completed near Island C at the northwest end of the alternate channel. Joen Petersen stated this is the only area of the alternate channel currently permitted for the Corps to dredge. John reported cost data has been received from October of 2021 to June of 2022 from the Corps, so he has adjusted all cost data for those months. John asked now that we have received that information, will we get monthly reports? Barton responded no, the Corps will require FOIA requests to get that information. However, once a FOIA request is submitted for the same information 3 times, the Corps must provide that information electronically. John said we should request the information monthly.

#### 5.0 O.I. Survey & Channel reports

Todd Horton stated the Corps conducted surveys on both sides of the bridge during the first week of July. The shoal has shifted southward, as has the deep water. We are seeing deeper water near bent 28, which is the first navigation span. The navigation span between 20 and 28 is the only area where the dredges are authorized to go under. The bar is holding up well. Harry asked if the Snell could operate near bent 28 at a distance to open up a pilot channel. Joen responded the channel on the west side of the bridge does not have long term viability. By the time the Snell reached the other end of the channel, the initial dredged area will have shoaled in. It is also narrow and poses a risk. The Snell needs to spud down and the current is too strong in that area. Joen said they have been monitoring

the alternate route and the channel looks to be staying pretty consistent and will hold open for a longer.

Harry asked Ken Willson about the permits for this area. Ken stated there have been internal discussions at the Corps, and Corps Counsel believes the alternate route was not included in the 2004 FONSI. Therefore, their stance is the Corps and Dare County do not have authority to dredge there. When Dare County submitted the Miss Katie permit drawings, to reduce ambiguity, a corridor was delineated. This corridor was reviewed by the agencies and agreed to, but there is a condition on the permit that Dare does not exceed the authority of the 2004 FONSI. The 2004 FONSI states the channel follows best water, but does not give specific extent of dredge limits. Dare County will have a meeting later this week to discuss the Corps interpretation of the FONSI. Joen stated the Miss Katie would have authority to dredge west of the bridge. Ken said the Miss Katie needs slightly deeper water than the Merritt, so if the Merritt cannot dredge west of the bridge due to safety issues related to shoaling close to the bridge, than neither can the Miss Katie. Harry asked who is the adjudicator of this decision. Todd said Regulatory and Office of Counsel would be responsible for the decision and who Dare County would meet with later this week.

Todd said they have started the NEPA process for the alternate channel and the Snell is collecting vibracores. The Coast Guard has sent a letter requesting dredging in Oregon Inlet, which could elevate the situation to an emergency.

Ken said that the concern is even if there is an emergency authorization to open up the alternate route, the Corps current interpretation is that the Miss Katie could not maintain it until the NEPA process is complete in early 2023. Harry said the Corps has looked at this channel for a long time, so it is frustrating that the Corps did not realize until an inopportune time we are not authorized to dredge the channel. Todd said the Corps is looking to as quickly as possible complete NEPA. If emergency authorization is given, this will give access to east of the bridge.

## **6.0 Corps Dredging Schedule**

Joen said the Merritt is going to work the ferry channel in Hatteras then will be moving up to Oregon Inlet after.

## **7.0 EJE Dredging Construction Update**

Jordan reported there were a couple issues last week. The vendors installed motors for the pumps that were 900rpm instead of 1800rpm, so those needed to be replaced. Sea trials will begin next week. Expecting the leave the shipyard at the end of the month with a 10-day voyage.

## **8.0 Permit Updates**

Updates discussed during Item 5. No further discussion.

## **9.0 Additional comments**

### **9.1 NPS – OI No Wake Zone**

Michael Flynn with the National Park Service spoke about the proposal for a no-wake zone near Oregon Inlet Fishing Center to increase the safety of the waterways for multiple user groups. A copy of the NPS presentation can be acquired by contacting Dare County Grants & Waterways. Harry expressed concerns with the no-wake zone extending 1,200ft to where the current buoys are located. It is shallow, and boats coming off plane will have issues. Russ and Harry also recommended signage for kayakers to avoid the navigation channel. Ken stated the Miss Katie permit that is being applied for will include the area all the way to the existing dolphins and towards the Coast Guard station to include the area near the proposed fuel dock. Russ stated the Coast Guard and the fishing center have both recently dredged their basin.

## **10.0 Administrative comments**

### **10.1 Current Budget**

10.1.1 Miss Katie Remaining Funds - \$9,000,000

10.1.2 Non- Federal Funds with Corps, estimated - \$1,350,250

10.1.3 FY2022 President's Budget - \$3,296,000

10.1.4 Dare County FY2022 Budget - \$3,000,000

10.1.5 Infrastructure Bill (Wanchese to Oregon Inlet) - \$6,400,000

Barton stated the Island H work is out for bid. That project will provide additional capacity for the Corps pipeline project. Barton spoke to DOT and the camera at Oregon Inlet will be online later this year. DOT is currently spray painting bent numbers on the bridge and will be looking into installing reflective numbers like the Bonner Bridge had. Harry and John mentioned looking into possible areas to tie up on the southern side of the bridge where the barges for bridge construction and boats related to the beach nourishment operations have been tying up.

## **11.0 Adjourn**