



## Minutes

### Dare County Oregon Inlet Task Force Meeting

Dare County Administration Building, Manteo, NC

9:30 a.m., April 11, 2023

Attendance: Harry Schiffman, Steve House, John Ponton, Bob Peele, Russ King

Staff: Barton Grover

Others in Attendance: Michael Flynn, Ken Willson, Woody Joyner, Kyle Ward, David Hewett, George Fadok, Harrison Walker, Jordan Hennessy, John Ahlen

#### 1.0 Review Minutes- March 14, 2023

- Meeting was called to order at 9:30am. Bob Peele made the motion to approve the minutes. John Ponton seconded the motion. All in favor.

#### 2.0 Welcome guests

- Harry Schiffman welcomed guests to the meeting.

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

- John Ahlen reported almost all buoys in the Oregon Inlet Channel have been relocated. 54 is now a fixed aid. It was the plan to fix the large buoys east of the bridge, but the vessel needed to perform that task is still under repair. The buoys are correctly placed where the pipeline dredge recently completed operations.

#### 4.0 Dredging Summary Report

- John Ponton stated no Corps dredging was performed last month in Oregon Inlet.

#### 5.0 EJE Dredging Update

- Jordan Hennessy reported the Miss Katie departed on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March for Hatteras and returned the 24<sup>th</sup>. 61,443 cubic yards were dredged in Oregon Inlet and 17,496 from Hatteras Inlet in March.
- Harry Schiffman welcomed David Hewett from the Town of Holden Beach. David presented the situation in Lockwood Folly Inlet and requested the Miss Katie if the dredge is available. Lockwood Folly has been shoaled in for approximately 6 weeks. Holden Beach will need to perform some permit coordination before the dredge arrives, but wanted to determine if there was an opportunity to have the Miss Katie dredge the inlet.
- Harry asked about the rectangular box outlined in black on the survey. David stated it was a Civil War wreck exclusion zone. Joen Petersen stated they are not allowed to dredge in that box and they typically dredge just west of it. Joen said with limited floating plant availability and significant shoaling, the Corps does not have the ability to dredge Lockwood Folly. Mother nature has not cooperated. They do have a 4 to 5-foot tide difference where dredging could occur during high tide for two to three hours. Bob asked if the channel typically followed the white dashed line on the survey. Joen confirmed that to be the case. Bob asked if it was feasible. Jordan said it is not an easy task, but they will need to focus on dredging around high tide. The captain believes there are a couple options where sidecasting could occur to open a pilot channel. Once a deep enough channel is created, the crew will go on a 24-hour schedule. They will need at least 3 weeks.
- Harry said based on the legislation and agreements, the Task Force is here to manage where it goes, not what it does. The Task Force is not on the operational side. Harry said if the conditions of Oregon Inlet are in a satisfactory condition, then the Task Force will need to consider whether or not to allow it to leave Dare County. Jordan said the Town will need to arrange permits and funding for the dredging event, so the Miss Katie will continue to work Oregon Inlet until those items are completed.
- Harry suggested that if the conditions of Oregon Inlet are in the same or better condition than before the storm that occurred over the weekend of the 8<sup>th</sup>, then EJE be allowed to operate outside the County for up to 30 days once Holden Beach has acquired necessary permit modifications and funding. Bob agreed, that would allow them to begin the permit process and funding with the caveat that conditions of Oregon Inlet must be good before departure.
- David Hewett stated the SDI 5 permit has generic language which he anticipates will allow the use of the Miss Katie, but wanted to confirm dredge availability before reaching out to the agencies. John Ponton commented that we seem to all be

in favor of allowing the Miss Katie to go down to Holden Beach assuming Oregon Inlet is in good condition.

- Harry asked David if that was good enough for Holden Beach to begin moving forward arranging permits and funding. David confirmed it was and he expected coming into today that if Oregon Inlet shoaled in then the Task Force would be within their right to have the Miss Katie return to Dare County. Steve House stated we can revisit this at the next meeting to determine EJE and Holden Beach's proposed schedule and conditions of Oregon Inlet. Jordan said they may try to schedule a needed shipyard visit while in that area. Harry stated it is the Task Force's purview to give EJE permission to dredge somewhere else, not to tell them to dredge a certain area.
- Steve House motioned to approve the request by the Town of Holden Beach and EJE to allow the Miss Katie to depart Dare County for up to 30 days contingent on conditions of Oregon Inlet being at or better than the conditions on April 6<sup>th</sup> before the storm. Bob Peele seconded the motion. All in favor.

## **6.0 O.I. Survey & Channel reports**

- John Ponton asked about conditions of the channels after the recent storm. Jordan said the channel appeared to hold up during the storm, but the entrance would need attention. Joen anticipated a new survey will be performed in the next week.

## **7.0 Corps Dredging Schedule**

- Joen stated there is no anticipated Corps dredging events on the horizon.

## **8.0 Permit Updates**

- Ken Willson commented that there was a meeting last week with the agencies which Harry, Steve, Bobby, and Barton attended. We expect to hear back from DCM after their initial internal conversations in the next week or so, but believe the meeting went well and that DCM understood the Task Force's concerns on the proposed limitations by WRC. Barton and Ken mentioned discussions were had about monitoring the rate at which the channels shoal in.
- The other issue is the proposed moratorium by DMF on dredging in the Crack and Walter Slough from April 1 to July 31<sup>st</sup> unless a request for relief is submitted. DMF was not in attendance at last week's meeting. Typically, those requests could be processed in as little as two weeks.

- Harry said there is a lot of traffic in those channels during those months and his feeling is we do not want to be restricted on addressing shoaling when it arises. Russ King agreed and added that the junction at the Crack and Walter Slough shifts often and can be an issue for the fleet. John Ponton commented that since we know those areas are issues, we could proactively dredge them to minus 14 up until March 31<sup>st</sup>. Bob said we should not accept the moratorium unless we have to. Harry said the hopper dredge is the least environmentally damaging type of dredging there is compared to a sidecaster or pipeline dredge.
- Ken said the concern of DMF is how many days the dredge operates, so a limitation on the number of days during those four months could be a different option rather than submitting a request for relief. Russ said the dredge will be coming in and out of the Fishing Center for crew change and refueling, so it would make sense for them to take a swipe on the way in and out. Bob and Harry said that if storms occur, a limitation on days of dredging would not work in that situation. Bob said allowing for dredging when it hits a certain depth makes more sense, where there is a trigger that allows us to dredge and maintain. Harry said we do not want to handcuff ourselves. Ken said DMF typically has this moratorium on permits for the Corps and other entities, so DCM is typically comfortable with this condition. Ken understands the Task Force's opinion and will move forward with pushing back against that condition.
- The Task Force recommended having a trigger where if the channel gets to 12ft or less, then the Miss Katie could dredge. Similar to what was presented by DCM during the meeting last week.
- Harry asked if the Corps could operate under a Dare County permit. Ken said from what he understands they cannot, but they can go through their internal process to get federal authorization to acquire the ability to operate in a similar fashion to the permit Dare County has.
- Ken commented the Bar survey has been completed, so with the new data he will extend the dredge box east to allow EJE to address shoaling seen in that area. Those updated permit drawings will be submitted and then await a confirmation from the Corps and DCM to allow for dredging in that area. Jordan asked if the disposal area has changed. Ken said it is still 5,000 feet until a modification is made to the permit, which will also include looking to allow for disposal in deeper depths.

## **9.0 Administrative comments**

### **9.1 Current Budget**

#### **9.1.1 Miss Katie DEQ Contract Remaining Funds - \$3,208,193**

- 9.1.2 Non- Federal Funds with Corps - \$383,762
- 9.1.3 Federal Funds for OI - \$464,700
- 9.1.4 Dare County FY2022 Budget- \$3,000,000 (\$690,000 remaining)
- 9.1.5 President's Budget and Omnibus - \$7.2 million

- Barton informed the Task Force a decision needs to be made on how to allocate the \$12 million for FY24 amongst the channels from Oregon Inlet to Wanchese. DWR has requested separate grant applications for the channels. One contract would consist of Oregon Inlet, another for Old House Channel 2, another for the Crack & Walter Slough, and a minimum of one, possibly two from 17 extension up to Manteo. The funds will be able to be reallocated during the year, but a cost share contract needs to be set up with enough funds for EJE to be able to work in those channels. Modifications to increase contracts take approximately two weeks.
- Walter Slough and the Crack would cost approximately \$2.5 million to dredge to authorized depth and \$1.5 million to dredge Wanchese channel to authorized depth. Harry asked about the other channels. Barton said the Corps just dredged Range 15 to 17 extension. Harry said it would be helpful to know the permit conditions. Barton said there is a 6-week delay between application and contract signature and a Resolution needs to be passed by the Board of Commissioners, so if a decision is not made at this meeting, then it would be August before dredging could occur in these channels.
- John mentioned \$1 million for Wanchese and \$1 million for the Crack & Walter Slough. Harry said the disposal area is a significant distance from Wanchese, so it would be hard for \$1.5 million to be dredged. Harry suggested \$8.5 million for Oregon Inlet, \$1.5 million for the Crack & Walter Slough, \$1 million for Wanchese, \$600,000 for Ranges 15 to 17 extension, and \$400,000 for Old House Channel 2. Russ commented that they will be dredging the Crack & Walter Slough often, so enough funding will need to be placed in that contract. If channels have issues, then modifications can be made to move funds to the problem area contracts.

## **10.0 Additional comments**

## **11.0 Adjourn**

Steve made the motion to adjourn. John seconded.