



Minutes

Dare County Oregon Inlet Task Force Meeting

Dare County Administration Building, Manteo, NC

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

Attendance: Harry Schiffman, Bob Peele, John Ponton, Russ King, Brown Douglas

Staff: Barton Grover

Others in Attendance: Ken Willson, Jordan Hennessy, Patrick Tallant, Carl Hendrickson, Todd Horton, Michael Flynn

1.0 Review Minutes- June 13, 2023

- Meeting was called to order at 9:30am. Russ King made the motion to approve the minutes. Bob Peele 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

- Patrick Tallant introduced himself to the Task Force. He has replaced John Ahlen as OIC in Wanchese. Patrick spoke about the 49ft boat which has replaced the 55 boat. The 49 has a higher lifting capacity and can handle larger seas, but is half the speed of the 55.
- They are aware of multiple buoys off station and will be addressing over the next month. Buoy 55 has been reset on station. There is a leftover pipe near buoy 36 from the pipeline project. Barton asked if the Corps was aware of that. Todd said he would touch base with their construction staff.
- Harry said it was reported that buoy 25 in the alternate channel needed a light and reflector. Harry asked if the 49 could tend to those buoys on the Bar since it has a higher lifting capacity. Patrick will look into it.

- Harry mentioned that before John had left, John was going to obtain a record of buoy relocations in interior channels, including Walter Slough and the Crack. Barton also mentioned ranges up to Wanchese may be useful. Patrick will obtain that information and present to the Task Force.

4.0 Dredging Summary Report

- No Corps dredging during June.

5.0 EJE Dredging Update

- Jordan Hennessy stated the Miss Katie returned from Lockwood Folly Inlet on the 21st. Roughly 37,000 cubic yards were dredged from the 21st to the 30th.
- Harry said he received reports concerning shoaling at the entrance to the alternate channel. Jordan said EJE saw that when they returned and they are addressing.
- Russ stated that he has not heard significant complaints from the fleet concerning shoaling.

6.0 O.I. Survey & Channel reports

- Todd commented they performed a survey of the interior channel in mid-June which showed the channel held up well while the Miss Katie was gone. The Bar survey was also updated in mid-June and has also remained in stable condition.
- Barton asked if there was any update on the NEPA process for the alternate channel. Todd said they are internally reviewing a draft EA. Once those internal comments are received, it will be released publicly. Certain agencies have 30 days to review and others 45-60 days to comment.
- Ken asked Todd about the frequency of surveys. Todd said if the channels are in good condition, they are reducing the number of surveys to once a quarter. The ferry channel has required multiple dredging events and therefore is taking up a lot of survey time.

7.0 Corps Dredging Schedule

- Joen reported no anticipated dredging events by the Corps within the next 60 days.

8.0 Permit Updates

- Ken Willson stated a permit modification request was submitted to the Corps and DCM to allow for disposal of material up to 18ft in depth when sea conditions are 3ft or greater. The agencies asked for a bathymetric survey to show the contours of the placement area. Ken said the average difference between 14ft and 18ft depths was approximately 340ft. The agencies are currently reviewing the request.
- Joen Petersen said he saw the request and asked what had instigated the request for 18ft. Ken said historically there was a lot of light loading done by the Corps to allow the dredge to get through the Bar, which was much shallower than the authorized depth. Now the Bar is being maintained much closer to authorized depth, so the Miss Katie is able to transit across the Bar with heavier loads. Placing in 14ft depths during heavy seas is a safety issue. Harry mentioned a lot of dredging in Oregon Inlet was done by the Currituck, which drafts shallower. Joen stated the Corps has been able to place in 14 ft contours up and down the east coast with the Murden. Jordan said it was a safety issue during rough sea conditions and he does not want to jeopardize the safety of his crew and the vessel. Therefore, they are being proactive by requesting deeper disposal depths.
- Ken said the Dare County permit follows the Corps authorization and CPE dug pretty deep into the Corps authorizations. There is not anything in the material that limits the depth of placement, only to ensure material is placed where it would stay in the active system. The studies CPE presented show there is almost no difference between placing in 14ft vs. 18ft depths in terms of material that stays in the active system, which would benefit Pea Island. Harry said historically contract dredgers have placed in deeper depths.
- Jordan asked what would be the status of the Miss Katie once the EA is finalized. Todd said their process is only for Corps dredges and contract dredges. Ken responded the Dare County permit follows the Corps authorization. Once the Corps has authorization to go to 12 + 2, then the Dare County permit will immediately follow upon receipt of a letter from the Corps.

9.0 Administrative comments

9.1 Current Budget

- 9.1.1 Miss Katie DEQ Contract Remaining Funds
 - 9.1.1.1 Oregon Inlet - \$8,500,000
- 9.1.2 Non- Federal Funds with the Corps - \$383,762
- 9.1.3 Federal Funds for OI - \$464,700
- 9.1.4 Dare County OI FY23 Budget- \$3,000,000

9.1.5 President's Budget and Omnibus - \$7.2 million

- Barton commented the new fiscal year budget is reflected. The budget only shows the DEQ funds for the Miss Katie to dredge in Oregon Inlet. There is still an additional \$3.5 million for additional channels that may be permitted. Funds will be able to be reallocated amongst channels.
- Barton said he has received the vibrocore data from the Corps and will share with the Task Force on a flash drive due to the size of attachments being too large to attach to an email.

10.0 Additional comments

10.1 Bob Peele presented a powerpoint. The Right Whale has been declining in population. There is a current rule that states during certain times of year in certain areas, there is a 10-knot speed restriction for vessels over 65ft in length. Last year, NOAA passed a rule to expand the area to essentially cover the entire coast and implement 10-knot speed restrictions on vessels over 35ft. This will impact our charter and commercial boats and our boat builders. Congressman Murphy and the Senators are aware of this. Recently NOAA came out with a similar rule for the Gulf coast, but it was stricter. Russ said this rule would apply between November 1st and April 30th, and would significantly impact the fleet at Oregon Inlet Fishing Center. It will take hours for the boats to reach the gulf stream. Bob said he is requesting we contact our legislators. Bob motioned to submit a letter from the Task Force to the legislators. Russ seconded. All in favor.

11.0 Adjourn

- Bob made the motion to adjourn. Russ seconded.