



Dare County Waterways Commission

Minutes

December 11, 2023

Call to Order

Roll Call: Natalie Kavanagh, Ernie Foster, KP Scott, Michael Flynn, Steve Coulter (online), Danny Couch, John Berquist

Acceptance of Minutes: November 13, 2023

- Michael Flynn made the motion to approve the minutes. John Berquist seconded the motion. All in favor.

New Business

USCG Report

- Patrick Tallant reported the buoys have been rearranged in Sloop and asked the Waterways Commission if there were any concerns. KP Scott responded that additional green markers would be helpful, but he was able to transit through Sloop two weeks ago. Patrick stated 3B is off station and the Coast Guard will be resetting tomorrow.
- Cape Hatteras Lighthouse will be getting renovated and the light will be temporarily extinguished during the construction project. Patrick asked that the Commission email him any concerns, because it is possible they request to turn the light off permanently. Natalie Kavanagh asked if the public will be notified when the light is off. Patrick said there would be a 3 week notice to mariners before it is turned off. Danny Couch said it has been an active shrimp season, so as long as there is a temporary light and measures to address any issues they may have then that should be okay.

Corps Report

- Todd Horton stated the Sloop survey was updated on the 30th. The channel has narrowed down to 50 to 75 ft wide. Catherine Peele commented the ferries have needed to wait outside the channel for ferries running the opposite direction to pass through. It has been extremely difficult for the captains to navigate and has delayed the departure schedule. Vessels have grounded in Sloop and Barney.
- Dredging began near 12A on the 7th and they will be departing Wednesday morning. Todd said they are allocated a limited amount per quarter and he needs to check if there are remaining federal funds available for further dredging. A after dredge survey will be performed in the next week.
- Danny Couch asked if there is emergency funding available. Bob Keistler said there currently is not, but a storm may allow for funding to become available.
- Catherine said the letter was submitted for emergency dredging near Barney. Todd said that was to allow for dredging outside the permitted corridor and dispose in deep scour holes.
- Michael Flynn asked if Sloop did shoal in, would that allow for an emergency declaration similar to the western alternate route at Oregon Inlet. Todd said they need to internally look at the situation and communicate with the Ferry Division to determine if they can request to dredge the straight shot opening up in Sloop.
- Steve Coulter said the straight shot will reduce distance and travel time and be more easily maintainable. Opening that up would offset the time it takes for the ferries to run the longer passenger ferry route. And would save the costs associated with maintaining the Barney Slough portion of the ferry channel. Natalie asked what kind of dredge could be used in the new route. Todd said they would look into sending the Merritt in there during high tide. Natalie and Catherine said if there is anything needed from Dare County or the Ferry Division, let us know.
- Bob Keistler stated there are a lot of moving parts and there may be additional options next year for a pipeline project to be completed in the ferry channel.
- Todd Horton introduced Erin Weller as the new Project Manager for the area.

NCDOT Ferry Division Report

- Catherine Peele said the Corps covered most of the information already. Last week the route was shifted to the passenger ferry/Rollinson route due to shoaling and dredging in Barney Slough. There has been significant impacts to the ferries, over \$1 million, due to groundings which require repairs. They are currently down to a two-boat schedule which severely limits the number of trips. They are hopeful the channel will be open once the Corps dredge departs.
- As mentioned earlier, the Ferry Division is in support of the straight shot being permitted for dredging. The agencies have asked for coordination between the entities dredging in Hatteras Inlet and DOT has recently reached out to Dare County to discuss possible options

for DOT to operate under Dare County's permit. Both Catherine and Barton said DOT and Dare County are in the preliminary discussions on a possible MOA.

Public Comment

- Bianca Aniski said representatives from the Congressmen and Senator's office have historically participated in these meetings, but have not attended recent meetings. Have they been made aware of the issues? Catherine Peele and Steve Coulter both responded that the representatives are aware of the situation.

Old Business

- Ken Willson reported Coastal Protection Engineering spoke with the Division of Coastal Management last week and they felt comfortable permits would be sent out before Christmas. On the federal side, he received an email from Josh Pelletier this morning. They are waiting for final resolution to the 408 review by Civil Works to ensure the proposed actions do not interfere with federal channels. Ken's group has addressed all comments from Civil Works and the Corps is going through their internal process to finalize the review. It is likely we receive the Department of Army permit in January.
- Ken said to permit the straight shot channel, there would need to be additional geotechnical work and cultural resource surveys. If the Corps declares an emergency, that would be the quickest method to allow the Sloop Channel shortcut to be dredged. Modifying our permit would be a minimum of 6 months. KP Scott asked when could the Miss Katie dredge the current Sloop Channel. Ken said if the Miss Katie had availability, that could be done in January. There would need to be a MOA developed between the Ferry Division and Dare County for DOT to use the permit and Hyde County would need to set up a shallow draft contract for funding. Ken said DOT and Hyde would be responsible for all costs associated with operating under the permit.

Administrative Business

- Barton Grover reported there is \$623,835 remaining in funds for the Miss Katie. The federal funds reflect the budget for the entire year and not what has been expended so far. As the Corps mentioned, they receive their funds on a quarterly basis.
- Once permits are received and disposal areas identified, then Coastal Protection Engineering will be discussing with the Waterways Commission about pursuing the permit modification to allow for dredging of the ocean bar and adding the additional disposal areas to the Connector Channel.
- Barton presented the 2024 meeting schedule and no issues were noted by the Commission.

- Michael mentioned that the Park Service would provide comments on the Hatteras Inlet Management Plan related to placement on Park Service beaches to ensure compliance with the sediment management framework developed by the Park Service.

Adjournment

- Danny motioned to adjourn. KP seconded.

DRAFT