



Minutes

Dare County Oregon Inlet Task Force Meeting

Dare County Administration Building, Manteo, NC

9:30 a.m., March 12, 2024

Attendance: Steve House, Harry Schiffman, Bob Peele, Russ King, Greg Mayer, Brownly Douglas

Staff: Barton Grover

Others in Attendance: Jordan Hennessy, Brad Rosov, Patrick Tallant, Erin Weller, Todd Horton, Joen Petersen, Kris Noble, Michael Flynn, Carl Hendrickson, Tim Moss

1.0 Welcome guests

- Meeting was called to order at 9:30am by Commissioner House. A moment of silence was held in honor of Chad Dunn and Charlie Griffin.

2.0 Review Minutes- February 13, 2024

- Bob Peele made the motion to approve the minutes. Russ King seconded the motion. All in favor.

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

- Patrick Tallant reported buoys west of the bridge have been reset. Oregon Inlet lighted buoy 3 and 6 are still missing and they are waiting on hardware. Coast Guard believes they will be reset by mid-April.
- Greg Mayer stated that there are multiple buoys outside the Bar, but when you cross the Bar the red is the only one visible. And when there are heavy seas, that red is hard to see. Two or three larger buoys inside the Bar would allow boaters to better line up. Patrick Tallant stated the vessels needed to set those larger buoys cannot get inside the Bar due to depths. Second class foam buoys are the only ones that can be placed that will hold. Taller half metal and half foam buoys previously placed there were ripped apart.

- Russ King asked if there is another option and if more buoys would help. Greg responded it would be hard to do since the Bar shifts, but a good range in front of the bridge would help boaters line up. Brownly Douglas said this needs to be fixed. Greg said if you don't have a range to look at, it is hard to navigate. With the Miss Katie dredging the area frequently, hopefully we can keep the Bar in one location so that the range does not need to be frequently moved. Harry Schiffman said if the Corps will work with us to keep the dredging box in the same location, we could maintain the channel in place. But, if we have to go to the deepest water as directed by the Corps, then the channel may move. Russ said even if the channel shifts and the range needs to be moved yearly, it is a worth pursuing. A set channel would solve this problem and we need to look at how that can be done.

4.0 EJE Dredging Update

- Jordan Hennessy reported the Miss Katie is currently in Hatteras and began dredging the Connector Channel on March 1st. The Miss Katie was previously working in Oregon Inlet west of the bridge and dredged 26,112 cubic yards during the last two weeks of February.
- Bob Peele asked for the location of the wreck east of the bridge that is preventing the Miss Katie from dredging the Bar. Steve House said the Townsend sunk in the 60's but was blown up in the 80's due to being a navigational hazard. So, it is likely a debris field in that area. Jordan commented the State Historic Preservation Office requested a 100ft buffer and it is a condition of the Corps permit. A map was shared of the location of the wreck, which is within the Corps designated dredge box. Steve House stated this is the situation we have been dealing with since the beginning of January. Shoaling is beginning to move in the area based on the most recent survey. Steve House said we have had multiple calls with agencies on this issue and it has not been resolved.

5.0 U.S. Army Corps Update

- Todd Horton commented Erin Weller, Tim Moss, and Joen Petersen were also present. Todd stated there would be a crew out on Thursday and Friday to survey of the Bar and Bridge. A multibeam survey was recently completed of the Townsend wreck. That data showed no debris within project depth of 14ft. Depths were 15 to 16ft in the general vicinity. That data would be sent to Barton Grover and Corps Regulatory later today. Harry Schiffman also asked Todd if a copy of the language on deepest water would be passed along. Todd said he would provide it.

6.0 CPE Update

- Brad Rosov said once that multibeam survey is received from the Corps, we will reach back out to SHPO to remove the wreck completely as a potentially significant wreck. Since it was dynamited, is not on the NOAA list, and is not located within project depth, then we have a good argument to remove it as a condition of the permit. Jordan Hennessy asked why it was on the permit originally. Brad commented SHPO requested a 100 ft buffer around the 3 wrecks, including the Townsend. Harry Schiffman asked if it was intentionally blown up in the 80's, why would there be historic significance. Brad said SHPO does not consider that action as affecting the historical significance. However, Brad said we now have enough evidence after the survey to remove from the conditions. A letter will be sent to the agencies requesting that removal.
- A quarterly meeting was held on February 23rd for the interior channels. There were conditions on the CAMA permit in relation to SAV and the inshore disposal areas which were addressed. The agencies requested a post construction SAV survey. A response letter to the agencies was submitted on the 27th and the agencies are currently reviewing. Typically those comments are received in two weeks.
- For Walter Slough & the Crack, a Cultural Resources survey was performed and provided on January 29th. The report showed no cultural resources in the area. SHPO has yet to respond to approve the report. Also, the National Park Service must issue a Special Use Permit for the entrance to the Oregon Inlet Fishing Center. The application was submitted a couple of years ago, but the Park Service had to wait for the Environmental Assessment to be issued by the Corps. That EA has just now been completed by the Corps, so Sabrina Henry at the Park Service has begun the process to issue the SUP. This may take 6-8 weeks to receive.
- Harry Schiffman reasserted that the disposal areas west of the bridge, excluding the inshore disposal area adjacent to the former Bonner Bridge, will only be used in emergency circumstances. That needs to be clarified on any written submittal to the agencies. Brad Rosov confirmed he would include that clarification on all written communication with the agencies.
- Barton Grover asked the Corps for an update on the Alternate Channel EA. Erin Weller responded that they anticipate early April, but they are still waiting for the 401 certification from the State. Erin commented they are also in the planning stages for a pipeline project in the alternate route and Old House ranges 1 & 2. Jordan Hennessy asked how long to finalize the EA once the 401

certification is received. Erin and Todd responded between two to three weeks for the legal office to review.

- Michael Flynn commented that a notice to mariners was sent out concerning remnants of the Bonner Bridge Pier which are outside the navigation channel at the northern end of Oregon Inlet. The top of the piles are 2 to 4ft below MHW.

7.0 Administrative comments

7.1 Current Budget

7.1.1 Miss Katie DEQ Contract Remaining Funds

7.1.1.1 Oregon Inlet – 1,057,154 (before contract modifications)

7.1.1.2 Wanchese to 17ext. - \$600,000

7.1.1.3 Crack & Walter Slough - \$1,000,000

7.1.1.4 Old House 2 - \$400,000

7.1.2 Federal Funds

7.1.2.1 Earmark - \$5,706,600

7.1.2.2 IJA – \$4,067,100

7.1.2.3 O&M - \$300,000

7.1.3 Dare County OI FY23 Budget- \$3,000,000

- Barton Grover commented he had forwarded a letter from Hyde County. Hyde County manager Kris Noble thanked the Task Force for their time. Ocracoke has faced issues with shoaling of the ferry channel that threatens to close the navigation channel. Hyde County would like the opportunity to use the Miss Katie utilizing funding from the Shallow Draft Navigation Fund to ensure safe passage for ferries and commercial and recreational vessels. Kris wanted to show up today to get that conversation started and to determine how that would work. Jordan Hennessy asked if there was a set area that Hyde County wanted to be dredged. Kris responded specifically the emergency realigned Sloop Channel, but also areas that would shorten the ferry route. The route has gotten longer over the last several years, from 30 minutes to almost an hour and 30 minutes, and the number of ferries running has been cut. This has a significant impact on Ocracoke.
- The Task Force reviewed a map of the current ferry channel. Harry Schiffman commented that we want to help and we will need to consider outstanding needs in the Oregon Inlet area before scheduling a time. Kris understood and appreciated what the Task Force needed to do in Dare County and it will be a couple months for Hyde County to establish a cost share contract. Steve House said we look forward to working together and we will continue to have conversations to determine what we can do under the existing permits.
- Steve House welcomed John Tayloe from Senator Budd's office. John commented both he and the Senator appreciate the opportunity to listen in on the meeting and

see how the Task Force is functioning and resolving issues in Dare County. Steve thanked John for joining.

- Barton Grover stated the FY25 budgets need to be established. A resolution will need to be passed by the Board of Commissioners and then DEQ takes approximately 60 days to finalize a cost share contract. These contracts can be modified during the fiscal year, so the Task Force would not be locked into these amounts. Harry Schiffman said with the Miss Katie not yet operating in the interior channels, it is still relatively unknown how much will be required for funding. Bob Peele agreed. Greg Mayer asked how long would it take for funding to be added to contracts. Barton Grover responded typically 30 days. Harry commented that the current FY24 budget is a good starting point. Steve House agreed. Harry said the Crack would need to be deepened first, to allow for a fully loaded Miss Katie to transit through once it started dredging channels to the north.
- Jordan Hennessy asked Michael Flynn if a FONSI would be required in the Alternate Channel in addition to the Crack & Walter Slough. Michael stated it would and he will look into the status. Todd Horton stated the Corps had reached out to the Park Service.

8.0 Adjourn

- Russ King made the motion to adjourn. Bob seconded.