



Dare County Waterways Commission

Minutes

August 12, 2024

Call to Order

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

Acceptance of Minutes: July 8, 2024

- Danny Couch made the motion to approve the minutes. Natalie Kavanagh seconded the motion. All in favor.

New Business

USCG Report

- Patrick Tallant reported the Coast Guard corrected discrepancies in Rollinson Channel and have been relocating buoys in Sloop as dredging occurs.
- Patrick Tallant asked if the Waterways Commission had received any comments concerning the channel markers near Buxton. Natalie Kavanagh stated she has spoke to several boaters who go through the area who would like the markers to remain but relocated to correctly mark the channel. Steve Coulter has also spoke to several people who have indicated it should remain marked if there was a storm and the channel was needed. KP Scott said the channel is not accessible for any vessel other than a skiff. There is no deep water to mark on that side of the reef, only inside the reef. Steve Coulter and KP Scott indicated there should be more buoys inside the reef and Patrick Tallant said there may be more added there. Patrick Tallant said there is no navigable channel in the area, so the markers will have a danger shoal on the pilings moving forward. Natalie asked how quickly this process will move forward, because they have not had a chance to look at the channel conditions in the

area since last months meeting. Patrick responded there will be a notice to mariners posted and public comment accepted before the markers are changed to dangerous shoal signage.

- Steve Coulter stated 6A is a lit buoy but is currently not lit. Patrick Tallant said he will put it on the list to correct. Steve said we really need a light because if you go between lit buoys 3 and 6, boats will run over the shoal. It is getting dark in the mornings on their way out. Going out the gorge, the first red buoy moved a 100 or so yards into the channel. Patrick commented they should be in Hatteras Wednesday to address. John Matuska said he would also take a look.

Corps Report

- Erin Weller reported the Merritt is in a repair period until mid-September. Bids are due on August 27th. Steve Coulter asked for an update on the Rodanthe Emergency Ferry Channel. Erin stated she was not at the recent meeting so would have to defer to Barton Grover. Barton stated that with the Merritt out, the Corps did not have a dredge plant to operate in Rodanthe. Also, their authorization would allow them to dredge Rodanthe immediately after a storm, but not before. The Corps previously utilized the Snell to pipeline dredge channels such as Rodanthe, but the replacement vessel, the Brandy Station, drafts too deep. Dare County will be obtaining a CAMA General Permit to bucket and barge dredge Rodanthe and should have that permit within 30 days.
- Barton Grover stated the public notice was sent out by the Corps on expanding the Rollinson corridor to include the emergency Sloop Channel as well as perform other actions. Erin Weller said the scoping meeting should occur soon. Barton Grover said the Corps is looking at placing material on the beach in front of the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum area and noted it would be good to clear the environmental assessment hurdle at this time for the Corps to be able to place all the way to where Isabel inlet was located. Ken Willson will prepare a comment letter for the Waterways Commission to review. Steve Coulter asked if this letter will address the width of Sloop. Barton said it would, but last month Todd Horton informed the Waterways Commission widening the channel would be a separate congressional action. Steve said when the storms come through like this afternoon, boaters can't see 100 yards. Ferries cannot pass each other in a 100 ft wide channel. 12 boats had to stop during the squall because a ferry was coming through the channel.

NCDOT Ferry Division Report

- Catherine Peele showed an image their CAD team prepared which showed the width of the channel and the visual of what two ferries would look like going through a 100ft channel. There would be less than 20ft between the vessels in a 100ft wide channel, which is not safe during any kind of wind or swell.
- The Ferry Division has advertised a bid for dredging the basin in Stumpy Point and dredging is projected to occur in early September. Permits were received last week. Danny Couch

asked the time frame for the project. Catherine responded they are requesting the project be complete by October 23rd. KP Scott asked how much material would be dredged from Stumpy Point. Catherine said 3,900 cubic yards. Catherine thanked the Miss Katie, Dare County, and Hyde County for dredging in Sloop. The ferry captains have commented the channel is in the best condition it has been in a long time.

- Natalie Kavanagh said she had several people ask her how often the ferry division runs the Rodanthe Channel to determine if it is safe for ferries to use. Catherine said she will double check the frequency. Natalie said with how long the turnaround time is to have that channel dredged, it would be good to check the channel more frequently. Catherine said they are looking at their protocol and schedule for checking the Rodanthe channel.

Public Comment

- Public comment concerning the lack of boat ramps in the Frisco area. The Scotch Bonnet boat ramp is no longer usable and boaters in the area are looking for alternative access points. They asked how public access could be provided and which entity could provide that access. Danny Couch commented that several years ago, there was a discussion between acquiring the property we are in now and the property across from Pop's. Danny said there were almost 21 owners on that property which would have provided soundside access, so the County did not acquire due to title concerns. Michael Flynn said the Division of Coastal Management provides grants for these types of projects, but that requires Dare County ownership or easement over the property to apply for that grant. Barton noted the Wildlife Resources Commission is typically involved in boat ramps. The Waterways Commission said it merited further discussion, but there are no quick and easy solutions. Existing ramps in the area are privately owned. Steve Coulter said people in the Brigands Bay HOA need to get together to find a common area to use as a ramp access.

Old Business

- Jordan Hennessy stated the Miss Katie is planning to arrive on Saturday to dredge the Connector Channel. 21,986 cubic yards was dredged from Sloop Channel. They will circle up with Hyde County if they require additional dredging while the Miss Katie is dredging the Connector Channel. Steve Coulter thanked Jordan for the dredging in Sloop and commented it is in good condition now.
- Ken Willson said everything is in place for the Miss Katie to begin dredging this weekend. The minor modification to the permit to allow for placement inside the flood channel disposal area and remove the moratorium has not been issued by the Corps. This modification has been issued by the State. Comments from the National Marine Fisheries have stalled the process. The Corps did issue relief to allow for dredging, but the Miss Katie will only be able to place offshore Ocracoke. Jordan commented when there are seas of 2 foot and the Bar is 10ft deep, that creates dangerous conditions for the Miss Katie to place

- material there. Michael Flynn commented there will be swell this weekend from Ernesto. Jordan said his current plan is when conditions are not appropriate to place offshore, the Miss Katie will dredge Sloop where they can place in the flood channel disposal area.
- Steve Coulter asked why is there a delay in getting a permit from the Corps. Ken responded that National Marine Fisheries is concerned with placement in the flood channel disposal area and that it may cause shoaling of adjacent channels and change the inlet dynamics. However, we have informed them that this placement area is a secondary disposal area when offshore conditions are rough and this disposal area has already been permitted for Sloop. Ken said the amount of material is a drop in the bucket. As Jordan mentioned, they placed around 20,000 cubic yards in the disposal area and the capacity is over 300,000 cubic yards and the disposal area is over 30ft deep in spots. Steve Coulter said we are allowed to place material in the flood channel disposal area to allow the ferries to navigate, but not allowed to place the material from the channel that the working man uses.
 - Ken said the Corps wanted to process the request for this minor modification at the same time as the Bar, and this also seems to be making the process take longer. National Marine Fisheries also had concerns with the proposal on the Bar and that dredging would alter the inlet system. The request was similar to the channel dimensions in Oregon Inlet and Ocracoke Inlet and the existing width of the Bar channel is not too dissimilar than existing conditions. We are requesting 16ft by 400ft.
 - Ken Willson said there have been promising conversations with the Corps that Dare County may be able to widen Sloop to 200ft while the Corps is operating under the emergency declaration. Hyde County has requested a cost share contract modification to fund the costs to modify the Dare County permit. The Corps would still only be able to dredge to 100ft with federal funds. Ken will also be working to survey the disposal site north of Sloop to allow for placement in that location. Ernie Foster said if there are survey boats in the area, it may be good to look at Rollinson to determine the amount of shoaling that has occurred near the breakwater.

Administrative Business

- Barton Grover stated the agenda reflects FY25 funding. \$900,000 for the Hatteras Connector and \$100,000 for Rollinson Channel.

Board Member Business

- Michael Flynn stated he visited the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum now that it is reopened and it was a good testament and tribute to the fishing industry. Steve Coulter said he's heard nothing but great things about it. Danny Couch said there are about a 1000 visitors a day.

Adjournment

- Danny Couch motioned to adjourn. Ernie Foster seconded.

DRAFT