



# Cape Fear Firebird

*The Light of Save the Cape*

January 5, 2017

*What's past is prologue*  
~ William Shakespeare

## ***That Was the Year That Was***

As we enter the new year, the outlook is for more of the issues we faced last year. Official malfeasance, misfeasance, and nonfeasance—all in the category of ignoring economics and environmental effects—and the interaction.

Carried over from the previous year was the Federal project to license windmill farms off of the Brunswick County coast, notwithstanding local opposition. The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management slipped the licensing process past us by limiting the environmental review to the survey activities— a few survey boats and a short mast for measuring wind velocity. Full environmental review—including damage to the view from the shore—*would be postponed until after the licences had been issued*. Review of the economics—a fundamental issue—has not been done and won't be.

Brunswick County Commissioners, ignoring opposition from coastal communities, listened to the boss—whoever that is—and adopted resolutions supporting wind farms and offshore drilling.

Then BOEM facilitated its skulduggery by integrating the southeastern North Carolina wind energy areas into the leasing process for South Carolina. That process is already underway, notices given, meetings held, decisions made, out of our sight. And will continue so.

Our own State Ports Authority began the year flush with cash—\$70 million provided by Senator Rabon and his colleagues from State taxes over two years. The Authority promptly spent \$22 million widening the turning basin at the Port of Wilmington for the larger vessels from Asia able to pass through the Panama Canal when new locks opened in June. And then coaxed a few large container ships to test the waters of the Cape Fear River by covering the cost of the necessary tugboats.

Because the Cape Fear River is not deep enough for such vessels when loaded, the Ports Authority committed \$5 million for a study of deepening the river. Such studies are normally done by the Corps of Engineers with Federal funds, but efforts to persuade the Corps to do that—at every level—had failed. Indeed, the Corps had previously found that widening the turning basin would cost more than the present value of benefits over 50 years.

That's one story of waste. A more dramatic story was the flood of hog waste, poultry waste, and coal ash washing down the Cape Fear River by the floods brought by Hurricane Matthew in October. Well, that was a natural event, but such events are predictable and the effects can be prevented—or at least attenuated—by effective regulation. But environmental regulation has not been a strength of the State of North Carolina. Not a soul in our government has recognized the connection between effective environmental protection and the economic well-being of our lovely home.