



# Cape Fear Firebird

*The Light of Save the Cape*

May 11, 2015

*Don't ever take a fence down until you know why it was put up.*  
~ Robert Frost (also a paraphrase of GK Chesterton)

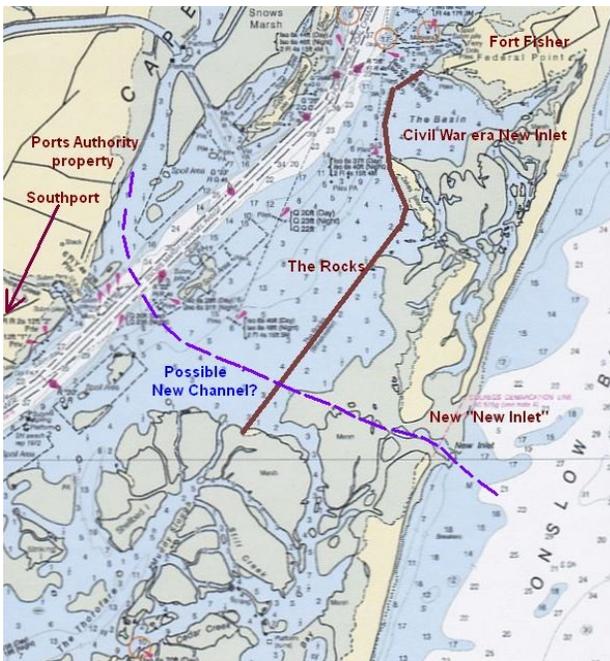
## Between the Rocks and a Soft Place

On April 30 we commented on Gareth McGrath's *Star News* exposé of Senator Michael Lee's insertion of language in SB160 to remove *The Rocks*, a rock wall along the east side of the Cape Fear River. And the astonishing excuse Senator Lee gave: to "restore the area's natural equilibrium."

So what is that equilibrium? The North Carolina coast is a dynamic place, with inlets opening and closing in the barrier islands with every major storm. The earliest maps show the Cape Fear, on the east side of the river, as a continuous strip of land all the way to the river's mouth at what is now Bald Head Island. Then in 1761 a storm opened a *New Inlet* from the sea, just below the location of Fort Fisher. By 1861 that inlet had grown large enough to admit shallow-draft blockade runners.

After the war the Corps of Engineers built *The Rocks* to block the currents that kept that inlet open, resulting in restoration, over the years, of the continuous land bridge to Bald Head Island.

So what does Senator Lee have in mind for "equilibrium"? Let's assemble a few facts:



- Since 2011, Michael Lee served on the Board of Directors of the State Ports Authority; he was appointed Vice Chairman in 2013;
- In March 2014, Paul Cozza was appointed CEO of the Ports Authority;
- In April 2014, Vice Chairman Lee was named Chairman of the Ports Authority; he served until appointed to the Senate in August 2014.
- In February 2015, Paul Cozza issued his 2015 Strategic Plan, recommending study of a new seaport at the Authority's property just above Southport, where a container megaport project was fed \$50 million before expiring in 2010.

Sen. Lee and Mr. Cozza seem to have been looking at charts. We have, too. And what we see, with *The Rocks* removed, is the route of a channel from the Ports Authority's Southport property to a natural inlet on the other side. Equilibrium, indeed. We wouldn't be so suspicious had we not been tutored for years in the Ports Authority's fascination with multi-billion dollar dreams of vainglory.