



Cape Fear Firebird

The Light of Save the Cape

November 1, 2011

It was without compeer among swindles: rounded, symmetric, colossal.
–Mark Twain

The “On Hold” Hoax

On July 21, 2010, the North Carolina State Ports Authority issued a statement that it: “is placing the proposed NC International Terminal project on hold.” References to the “North Carolina International Terminal” promptly vanished from the Ports Authority Web site. Indeed, it is no longer mentioned in any statement emanating from a State source.

But the project is very much alive. It’s just not called the North Carolina International Terminal anymore. Here’s what’s happening:

- In February, Moffatt & Nichol delivered a comprehensive report to the Ports Authority cataloguing the reasons why the port at Wilmington cannot grow: poor highway and rail access, river too narrow for a larger turning basin, and a nasty channel turn at Battery Island.
- In April, the Wilmington District of the Corps of Engineers delivered a “Section 905(b) Analysis” confirming the inadequacies of the Cape Fear River for large ships and recommending further study. Dredging for a port at Southport is included as an alternative.
- In June, the General Assembly adopted a budget bill with a water resources slush fund available for studies of channel improvements in the Cape Fear River.
- The NCDOT’s new Maritime Strategy Study includes “Potential uses for NC Ports-owned land near Southport... .” That site has passed the first screening of alternatives and the study team has visited the site and interviewed local groups. Including us. We expect a ratification by the study team of the Moffatt & Nichol findings. We also expect a recommendation for a smaller port at the Southport site as a placeholder for a larger port when demand develops.
- Ports Authority management advised its Board of Directors that business would soon migrate to other ports and has presented the “Southeast Brunswick County site” as a strategic alternative.

That’s the game. Change the name of the project, keep it out of sight, and move forward with plans for a smaller port as a building block for a larger port down the road. When the economy recovers. When there’s support in the General Assembly. When the opposition becomes weary.

Southeast Brunswick County Site

- Vacant Site Zoned Heavy Industrial
- Purchased by NC Ports in April 2006
- 600 Acres; 4800 LF of Berth
- 4 Miles from Atlantic Ocean; 9.5 Miles from Sea Buoy
- Site is Rail Served
- Strategic to regional and State economic development
- Strategic to NC Military

