



# Cape Fear Firebird

*The Voice of Save the Cape*

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*Nothing dollarable is safe.*  
–John Muir

## *A String of Pearls*

In 1967, the National Park Service recommended establishing a national monument at the Cape Fear, taking in Fort Fisher and all of Smith Island (including what is now called Bald Head Island). That did not happen, of course, but much of the area designated by the Service later came under State protection. This map shows the various State reserves.



The lack of symmetry is obvious—the only State reservation on the west side of the Cape Fear River is the small historic site at Brunswick Town. The rest has been left to the stewardship of the City of Southport and Brunswick County, such as it is.

Yet the West bank of the Cape Fear River and areas immediately inland are no less important ecologically and aesthetically than the east side. Perhaps more important, because of the diversity of plants and animals, some of which are endangered and some of which grow nowhere else. And structures of historic interest abound.

A 1995 study identified many important natural areas and rare species in eastern Brunswick County. Most remain unprotected; exceptions are three natural areas within the boundary of the Military Ocean Terminal at Sunny Point and a conservation area in Caswell Beach. Yet we treasure the Southport historic district, the Southport ferry landing forest, Orton Plantation, and other places along the west bank.

A large jewel in the string of important natural areas on the west bank of the Cape Fear River is the 600-acre site bought for the North Carolina International Terminal. Undeveloped and unmolested, it includes 86 acres of salt marsh and another 20 acres of ponds and tidal marshland.

How much better would it be for that site to be reserved as a park, partly passive and natural and partly available for recreation? The site is owned by an agency of the State, which agency is stalled in its plans to develop the site and struggles to service the debt for its purchase.

So when the General Assembly convenes in January, we shall take a trip to Raleigh and have a word with our elected representatives about moving the site to another State agency for a park.