



Cape Fear Firebird

The Light of Save the Cape

December 1, 2011

Positioning North Carolina as a portal to the global maritime economy.
–NCDOT Maritime Strategy Study

It's Back

A few months ago, we sat in a room in Raleigh with Senators Bill Rabon, Phil Berger, David Rouzer, and other members of the leadership to ask how and why the prohibition on spending on the North Carolina International Terminal vanished from the budget legislation. “I don’t know,” they each said in turn. And then with one voice assured us that there was no support for the NCIT in the General Assembly, and we should not worry about a thing.

“Well, then, why is NCDOT spending two million on this Maritime Strategy Study about deepwater ports?” we asked, having peeked at the study prospectus and seen the reference, not to the NCIT, but to the State Ports Authority property in Southport. “Isn’t seven million in studies enough to put this project away? After all, the last cost estimate was \$4.4 billion.” we added.

”Just one more study,” they said, again with one voice. “This will be the last one.”

So we have followed the study and attended meetings in Fayetteville and Asheville and Raleigh and Wilmington, and watched the plan for a deepwater port at Southport emerge from hiding and develop into imminent reality. The study team coyly examined the North Carolina coast from Virginia to South Carolina to find suitable locations for an ocean port. As if that had not been done 300 years ago. The locations discovered were Morehead City, Wilmington, and *mirabile dictu*, Southport. And Southport now appears on the analytical charts, rising proudly above the rest.

The Maritime Strategy study plan includes public outreach. They hired special consultants to do the reaching; their job seems to be to keep us at a distance. The program schedule calls for meetings in Wilmington and Morehead City. When the study team showed obvious interest in Southport, inspecting the NCIT site, that sort of thing, we asked for a public meeting here, the area most affected. We were told that there would not be a meeting in Southport unless the Southport site was being seriously considered.

So here we are. NCDOT has arranged a public meeting at the St. James Community Center for Tuesday, December 13, 4 to 8. Southport is on the short list.

It is has not been enough that the governing bodies of the six communities most affected, the sitting Congressman for the District, the Baptist Convention, and a bunch of environmental groups have registered opposition. We the people must do that, too. Be there. Do that. Last chance.

