



Cape Fear Firebird

The Light of Save the Cape

March 16, 2011

Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants, electric light the best policeman.
–Justice Louis Brandeis

Sunshine

Last December, the Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources sent a letter to the Wilmington District of the US Army Corps of Engineers advising that “the State intends to be a cost share partner” for studies of modifications to the channel in the Cape Fear River to “accommodate slightly larger vessels.”

What cost? A similar study for the channel in the Savannah River, not yet complete, has cost \$36 million. And that is for the study—before a single cubic yard of silt has been scooped up.

And how large are the “slightly larger vessels”? Now, the channel can accommodate ships of 38-foot draft, but the proprietors of the Panama Canal are preparing for passage of ships of 50-foot draft. The last estimate we saw for dredging the Cape Fear River for those was \$1.2 billion.

We, you, and the General Assembly need the answers to those questions. We have been unable to discover anything but the skimpiest description of the scope of the study or anything at all about the anticipated cost, for the which the State would pay half. So in honor of Sunshine Week, an initiative of the American Society of News Editors, we used the Freedom of Information Act and its North Carolina counterpart, the Public Records law, to request documents and correspondence. After a week, these are the results:

- The Governor’s office has not responded.
- NCDENR responded promptly and cordially, with an undertaking to furnish materials.
- Likewise, the NC State Ports Authority.
- The Corps of Engineers South Atlantic Division responded promptly, complaining about the request being overly broad and warning of substantial fees.
- The Corps of Engineers Wilmington District also responded promptly, with an estimate of \$792 for search fees and additional fees for copies.

So far we have not received any requested materials. When we get results, so will you.

Save the Cape Tax Status

The Internal Revenue Service has determined that Save the Cape, Inc., is a “public charity” under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, and that contributions to Save the Cape are deductible from your Federal income taxes under section 170 of the Code. This determination is effective as of August 3, 2010, so past contributions can be deducted. And any you make now.

Save the Cape, Inc

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