



# Cape Fear Firebird

*The Light of Save the Cape*

August 5, 2011

*WHEREAS, there has been recent public outcry regarding the planned sulphur smelting plant at the Morehead City Port due to potential incompatibility between the proposed use of the port and the existing economy within Morehead City, the Town of Beaufort, and Carteret County; and*

*WHEREAS, it is important for state-owned and state-operated facilities to work with local governments and private neighbors to coordinate activities in such a manner that they may have an overall positive impact in the community of which they are a part.*

–Governor Beverly Perdue, Executive Order 99, July 27, 2011

## ***The Steady Study Smokescreen***

On July 8 the *Carteret County News Times* exposed the plan of the North Carolina State Ports Authority and PCS Phosphate Company to install a plant to melt sulphur to the molten state right there in Morehead City. It took some time, maybe a few minutes, for the populace to work out the consequences of emissions of hydrogen sulfide wafting over their community, and maybe a few more minutes to consider the effects of a spill of molten sulfur into the Newport River or Bogue Sound.

The public outcry reached Raleigh. On July 27 the Governor announced that PCS Phosphate was abandoning plans to melt sulfur at the port, and issued Executive Order 99 requiring the Department of Transportation’s maritime strategy study to “specifically identify activities at and uses of the Wilmington and Morehead City ports that are not incompatible with the underlying economic base and existing predominant economic sectors supported by the surrounding community.”

There is less here than meets the eye. Not a prohibition on nasty and hazardous activities. Not a specific instruction to the NCDOT or the Ports Authority to consider the host communities. No commitment on the part of the State to prohibit irresponsible actions on the part of its enterprise agencies. And not a blessed word on protecting the sensitive environment surrounding the ports. Just assurances that we’ll be sure to consider the situation in a study.

We’ve heard that before. On that same July 27 your faithful servants at Save the Cape sat with the North Carolina Senate leadership to inquire about some peculiar changes in the recent budget law that lifted a prohibition on using State funds for the North Carolina International Terminal. We reminded the Senators that studies had been going on since 2005 consuming more than \$8 million and amply demonstrating that the proposed port would be an economic and environmental calamity. Studies that no one seems to read. Yet that project is astounding in its incompatibility with the underlying economic base of the surrounding community. Our tourists, our visitors, our guests. They cherish the Cape Fear. We cherish it. Why does not the State cherish it?

Don’t worry about a thing, the Senators said with one voice. There is no support for the NCIT here. Just this one more study, the maritime strategy study, and it will be over. Really?