



Cape Fear Firebird

The Light of Save the Cape

September 12, 2013

You're not going to attract people to your beautiful places if you don't protect your beautiful places.
–Reid Wilson, Head of the Conservation Trust for North Carolina.

Park's Progress

In May, we introduced Save the Cape's plan for a new State park on the 600-acre site on the Cape Fear River above Southport originally purchased by the North Carolina State Ports Authority for a huge marine container terminal. Here are the components of the plan:

- The State Ports Authority needs substantial amounts of capital to improve its facilities to meet emerging needs of the State's economy, and wishes to extract value from the Southport site.
- Brunswick County is the sixth largest of the 100 counties in North Carolina and the tenth ranked in tourist revenues, but does not have a State park.
- Federal grants are available for parks and land preservation and for conservation of estuarine and coastal natural assets.

The plan we are developing would transfer the 600-acre Ports Authority property to the NCDENR Division of Parks and Recreation in exchange for the proceeds of Federal grants, supplemented by State matching appropriations. This would provide the State ports with needed funds for improvements, while establishing a park to meet conservation goals and recreational needs for Brunswick County's future. We have a draft prospectus for the park on our Web site, www.savethecape.org, sidebar.

In July, we presented the emerging plan to the Board of Directors of the State Ports Authority. We are pleased to report support for the concept and interest in the plan from the members, in particular Secretary of Transportation Tata, who has since taken the plan to the Governor. Press reports of the presentation to the board are on our Web site.

On the same day, we met with representatives of the NCDENR Division of Parks and Recreation in our office on Howe Street. They told us they were actively looking for a site for a new park in Brunswick County, and they were seeking a balance of conservation and recreational values for such a park. From that meeting emerged the concept of using the Southport site as a gateway for a "megapark," a State version of a national seashore, created by assembling the various State nature preserves, recreation areas, and historical sites at the Cape Fear.

So we move forward. Turning the concept into a workable plan, including inventory of the ecological values of the site, identifying sources of funding, estimating economic impacts, and pushing the plan up various governmental slopes will take money. Please send us some.