



Cape Fear Firebird

The Light of Save the Cape

September 29, 2014

It's deja vu all over again
-Yogi Berra

A Nasty Surprise

At a meeting of the State Ports Authority Board of Directors last week, we learned of the new NCDOT plan for dredging the Cape Fear River deeper and wider. Our response to the Secretary:

Dear Secretary Tata and Mr. Cozza:

After embarking on a six-hour round trip, we were disappointed that our audience with you was cut short after only 15 minutes. Had we been given adequate time, we would have asked, WHY?

WHY are there plans to widen and deepen the existing channel, knowing the potential risks of exposing a superfund site, penetrating the aquifer that serves thousands of people with fresh drinking water in Brunswick County, and exacerbation of an already severe problem of erosion of the beaches at the river mouth?

WHY have you ignored the lessons of the most recent channel deepening, a project begun in 2000 and not yet finished, that has consumed about \$400 million, including \$140 million in State funds, and done inestimable environmental damage up and down the river, for the sake of two vessels per week?

And, WHY do you think the Army Corps of Engineers will find that an additional deep water container port – at Wilmington or Southport - will be in the National interest, as you propose to spend \$500 million more, including \$175 million in State funds, to widen and deepen the existing channel?

WHY have you turned away from the promising and beneficial business of serving eastern North Carolina agribusiness - your natural niche and the most relevant for your mission as a State agency - accountable to the taxpayers - and chosen instead to compete with larger, deeper, better situated, and more accessible ports where container traffic is already concentrated?

WHY have you ignored the lessons of the NCIT, a project conceived in unrestrained hubris, that has left you with \$50 million in debt?

Lastly, WHY are you not testing Jim Bradshaw's plan of marketing the Southport site for heavy industry in a market swollen with better situated industrial sites by giving him authority to do that? And conducting your own investigation of the market and the value of the site in that market? If we had had time, we would have urged you to let Jim Bradshaw test that market for a year. We are confident that you will find that the only reasonable use of the land, compatible with a nuclear plant and ammunition depot, is benign use such as our proposed park.

We remain willing to work with you on the park project. We must, however, oppose the channel dredging plan.

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