

## **The Many Faces of the Wilmington Harbor Project**

***The Wilmington Harbor Project.*** The current” Wilmington Harbor Project” involves deepening the channel in the Cape Fear River from 38 to 42 feet, enlarging the turning and anchorage basins for the Port of Wilmington and other river users upriver, and related environmental mitigation projects.

Construction of the project commenced in 1998. In 2004, the channel was opened at the new depth, but many phases of the project, including environmental mitigation measures, were not then complete and remain incomplete in 2012. This remains an active project.

The cost of the project was originally estimated to be approximately \$250 million. In 2009, the Wilmington District estimated the cost to complete the project at \$533 million. Parts of the project have been discontinued and the latest estimate (2011) to complete the project is \$384 million. The cost to July 2011 is \$317,548.550.

The State share of the cost is 35%. Of the project cost to July 2011, approximately \$37 million of the State share remains owed to the Federal government.

In 2000, the Wilmington District conducted a study, called an “environmental assessment,” of changing the channel alignment where the channel extends into the sea off of Bald Head Island. That change was made following the study.

In 2005, the District began a General Reevaluation Report of the project; that study stopped in 2009.

### ***The Wilmington Harbor Navigation Improvement Project, North Carolina***

***International Terminal.*** In 2009, the Wilmington District began a reconnaissance study of dredging in the Cape Fear River for the planned North Carolina International Terminal at Southport. This was done under authority of a 2006 resolution of the US House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure for review of the Wilmington Harbor Project that had been commenced in 1998. A draft “Section 905(b) Analysis dated February 2010 was prepared but not released. In July 2010 the project was put “on hold” by the North Carolina State Ports Authority.

***The Wilmington Harbor Improvement Project.*** In late 2010, the Wilmington District redirected the North Carolina International Terminal reconnaissance study to a project entitled “Wilmington Harbor Improvement Project.” The same authority and funding were used. The study addressed three problems that had emerged from the 1998 Wilmington Harbor Project: shoaling at the turning basin at Wilmington and at the mouth of the river, and difficulty navigating the turn between Southport and Battery Island. A report of the first part of that study, the “section 905(b) analysis,” was issued in April 2011. The report included the North Carolina International Terminal as an alternative for study, and included the material from the earlier, February 2010 draft. The District Engineer’s recommendation, however, excluded that alternative.