

USACE, Wilmington District
NCIT Project Team

NCIT Reconnaissance Study – Public Input Comments

The Bald Head Island Conservancy is an independent non-profit 501-C(3) whose mission is barrier island Conservation, Education, and Preservation. Our organization has been working for 26 years to foster a better understanding of our sensitive barrier island ecosystems and to encourage sustainable living within these buffer systems. The proposal of the International Port (IP) is of great interest to the mission of our organization and the well being of our constituents.

Our organization recognizes that economies must grow and people need jobs. For this reason we advocate for good decision making about the real value the international port will bring to our region and the real costs that our natural and human communities will pay.

The BHI Conservancy poses the following questions for your consideration:

1. **Has the impact of climate change, especially sea level rise, been considered in the design and investment strategy for the IP?** Specifically, sea level rise will cause important changes in our coastlines in the next 20 to 75 years. How long would it take to recoup the investment dollars in the port and does the investment strategy include additional costs to engineer the physical changes needed for the port as seas rise.
2. **How will the placement of the port and the destruction of 30+ acres of wetlands increase the impacts of sea level rise in the Cape Fear Region?** This question is posed with the understanding that wetlands are by far the most efficient and cost effective way to mitigate flooding events from storms and sea level rise.
3. **How will the IP plan compensate for degradation of ecosystems?** Humans derive benefits from intact and functioning natural systems i.e. water supply, raw materials, erosion control, soil formation, storm buffers, etc.. Natural capital is the ability of natural systems to protect us from storms and climate change. Natural capital impacts GNP in Southeastern NC by improving quality of life. Quality of life issues make this area an attractive place to vacation, live and retire. Annually tourism in Brunswick County generates \$43 million in tax revenues and more than 4,880 jobs (NC Division of Tourism). The county has the 9th highest travel impact on the state economy. If we simply take a “growth-at-all-costs” attitude we may forget the value of North Carolina’s strongest economic engines, our environment. The value of the natural capital should be considered by government entities evaluating the economic and environmental impact of any port in Brunswick County, NC. The ecosystem services that could be impacted are:
 - a. Beach and Coastal Erosion

- b.** Castle Hayne Aquifer salt water intrusion
- c.** Decrease in shellfish harvesting from dredging and increased sedimentation
- d.** Impacts on marsh areas and the impact on 85-95% of harvestable seafood organisms
- e.** Salt water intrusion expanding further up the Cape Fear River
- f.** Impact of Battery Island, home to over 20,000 white ibis and nesting site for 90% of the states population (10% of the national population). This site generates important tourism dollars (note Southport's Ibis Fest)
- g.** Southeastern NC has more unique species than any other site on the East Coast (excluding the tropics). The loss of species like the venus fly trap would have economic and quality of life impacts.

The Bald Head Island Conservancy advocates good economic and environmental decision making. The economic value of our natural systems can be quantified by "ecosystem assessment." We strongly encourage that any decisions about the value of a port consider this type of analysis. The Conservancy would be pleased to serve as a partner organization to oversee an independent analysis. Two sources for these analysis are the E.P.A. ecosystem services research division and the Gund Institute. This approach will ensure a full cost accounting of the international port proposal and allow an objective analysis of the value of a new port terminal in Brunswick County.

Thank you for your review,

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Executive Director