

WALTER B. JONES
3D DISTRICT, NORTH CAROLINA

ROOM 2333
RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
TELEPHONE: (202) 225-3415

COMMITTEES:
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

DISTRICT OFFICE:
1105-C CORPORATE DRIVE
GREENVILLE, NC 27858
(252) 931-1003
(800) 351-1697

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3303

February 5, 2014

Colonel Steven A. Baker
Commander
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Wilmington
69 Darlington Avenue
Wilmington, NC 28403

Patrick Kenney
Superintendent
Cape Lookout National Seashore
131 Charles Street
Harkers Island, NC 28531

Dear Colonel Baker and Superintendent Kenney:

I am writing to express my opposition to the Draft Dredged Material Management Plan (DMMP) and Environment Impact Statement for Morehead City Harbor, North Carolina. I would urge the Corps of Engineers and the National Park Service to listen to the public and create a new plan that better meets the stated needs of all involved, particularly the taxpayers.

The Corps was compelled to create the DMMP as a result of the settlement of a 2007 Carteret County lawsuit over the impact of Morehead City Harbor dredging on Bogue Banks. Therefore, it is surprising to see the DMMP propose to direct 43 percent of sand dredged from the harbor to Shackleford Banks, not Bogue Banks.

While NPS and the Corps have asserted that Morehead City Harbor dredging has caused erosion on the western tip of Shackleford Banks, the Park Service has never expressed a desire to actually place dredged sand back on Shackleford Banks. In fact, Park Service management has repeatedly stated to my office that all the agency wants from a DMMP is to reserve the right to place dredged sand on Shackleford Banks at some point over the 20-year life of the plan.

Unfortunately, the DMMP goes far beyond reserving that right. In reality, it lays out a specific timetable for placing sand on, or just offshore of, Shackleford Banks every year for the next 20 years. Corps personnel explain the discrepancy by arguing that each year NPS will decide whether or not it wants to place sand on the beach in accordance with the plan. However, the plan does not specify, nor can the Park Service explain, what metrics they might use to decide when they want sand. In my opinion, that's a very poor way to manage the situation, as it gives the people of Carteret County no certainty about how much sand they'll receive in any given year.

If the Park Service decides it wants to place sand on Shackleford Banks in accordance with the DMMP, it is difficult to see how the plan is affordable, or the best deal for taxpayers. The plan's average annual cost is over \$11.1 million. That is almost twice the roughly \$6 million which the project has been allocated in average annual federal appropriations over the

past five years. Given the fiscal challenges facing the federal government for the foreseeable future, it is difficult to see where the additional funds would come from on a regular basis.

One reason the cost appears to be so high is because the plan calls for placement of sand on Bogue Banks and Shackleford Banks via pipeline dredge every third year starting in year one of the plan. Knowing of the significant costs to mobilize a pipeline dredge, it would be cheaper to place sand on only one beach in any given year, rather than two.

I am also concerned about the lack of analysis in the DMMP on how sand placement on Shackleford Banks might benefit or harm the Shackleford horses. These horses are a key piece of Eastern North Carolina's heritage. Under federal law, NPS is required to allow for a herd of at least 110 horses on the seashore. Given this responsibility, the plan should ensure that sand placement, if done, is carried out in a way that does not jeopardize the herd.

For these reasons and more, I would again urge you to create a new DMMP that better meets the need of the taxpayers. Thank you for your consideration of my thoughts on this important matter. I look forward to hearing back from you soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Walter B. Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent initial "W".

Walter B. Jones
Member of Congress