



Cape Fear Audubon Society

Cape Fear Audubon Society ≈ P.O. Box 414, Wilmington, N.C. 28402 ≈ www.capefearaudubon.org

February 23, 2009

Mr. Thomas J. Eagar
Chief Executive Officer
North Carolina State Ports Authority
2202 Burnett Boulevard
P. O. Box 9002
Wilmington, NC 28402

Dear Mr. Eagar:

The Board and members of the Cape Fear Audubon Society wish to express our concern with the proposed North Carolina International Terminal (NCIT) at Southport. We believe that such a port is incompatible with the environmental health of our region. Our first concern is with the width, depth and location of a new channel into the proposed port and the proximity of this channel to prime shorebird-nesting areas in the Cape Fear River. The existing channel will have to be straightened to accommodate the newest, jumbo-sized container ships and its new course will lie just east of Battery Island, a "globally significant" nesting site for White Ibis and home to North Carolina's largest breeding colony of wading birds. The negative impact on nesting birds of increased boat traffic and the resulting water pollution make this an inappropriate location for a major port.

The deepening of the channel is also a significant threat to the Castle Hayne aquifer, which lies only 50' below sea level at the site of the proposed port. Dredging the channel to 54' risks causing saltwater intrusion into this important aquifer, resulting in the loss of important freshwater habitat in addition to the loss of drinking water for Brunswick and part of New Hanover counties. Such intrusion would further endanger the White Ibis colony, since the birds are dependent on nearby freshwater habitats to feed their young. The loss of over 400 acres of marsh and the addition of almost 600 acres of impervious surfaces would further degrade water quality and wading bird habitat.

For every port this size, there is the threat from invasive species in ballast water. This region, with its rich ecosystems, is particularly vulnerable to ecological disturbances of this kind. This danger is compounded by the famously rough weather and dangerous waters of Cape Fear, which make catastrophic spills a clear possibility. The surrounding area of Brunswick County, with its unique biological treasures, would face the pressures of major road building and added rail traffic with the attendant, inevitable pollution. We are deeply concerned with the amount and type of air

Steve Boekell, Sally Buchanan (Treasurer), Andy Fairbanks (Vice President), Mark Jones, Nikki Mitchell, Jim Nesbit, Cary Paynter (Secretary), Jamie Rotenberg, Stacy Smaltz, D.D.S., Juanita Roushdy (President), Andy Wood

pollution. Each day, 4400 trucks, 10 to 14 trains , and container ships over 1,000 feet long will emit vast amounts of air pollutants that cause cancer, asthma, heart attack and stroke. Furthermore, black carbon, a type of particulate matter found in diesel exhaust, is a powerful greenhouse gas. Coastal North Carolina is exceptionally vulnerable to the rise in sea level and increased strength of hurricanes that global warming is likely to cause.

We urge the North Carolina State Ports Authority to recognize and respect the depth, significance and vulnerability of the biological diversity in the Cape Fear area by withdrawing this proposal.

Sincerely,

Juanita Roushdy
President
Cape Fear Audubon Society

cc:

Governor Beverly Purdue

Mr. Dee Freeman
Secretary
N.C. DENR

Mr. Keith Overcash
Director
Division of Air Quality, NC DENR

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