

**This is Radio Hatteras. Hello. I'm Grace with the Weekly News Summary for Sunday, April 21, 2024.**

### **North Carolina's Department of Environmental Quality weighs in on Buxton Beach Access.**

By letters dated April 17, 2024, the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality gave the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Coast Guard 10 days from the date of receipt to respond if they intend to clean up the mess at Buxton Beach Access.

Responding to the National Park Service and the Dare County Board of Commissioners resolution demanding immediate action at the site, Sushma Masemore, Assistant Secretary, North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality, told the agencies to provide "the Department with a work plan containing a proposed schedule for the completion of the required corrective action...."

Both letters are labeled "Notice of Regulatory Requirements for Contaminant Assessment and Cleanup." Also listed is the following: Buxton Navy Facility (Former), Old Lighthouse Road, Buxton, Dare County, NC. The site ID is NC9799F4825.

To the U.S Navy and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the letter cites the Department of Defense and State Memorandum of Agreement, dated June 6, 1991, requiring cleanup.

Both letters state "the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) assumed responsibility to investigate and remediate the releases related to the Navy's operation at the site."

The letters cite references to the North Carolina Administrative Code, specifically groundwater and surface water quality.

Regarding surface water quality, the letters cite "citizen inquiries over petroleum-like substance in surface water and an oily sheen on top of surface water adjacent to the former Buxton Navy Facility Building 19." The conditions may constitute violations of surface water quality standards found in Tidal Water Quality Standards for Class SC Waters, say the letters.

The final paragraph of the letters says: "Please note: the remedial measures required to address soil, sediment, and groundwater contamination must be extended to the level necessary to ensure that surface waters along the beachfront and site in general are protected and surface water quality violations are prevented."

This information comes from The Coastland Times.

### **Update on Buxton Beach Access**

The Cape Hatteras National Seashore beach in front of the Buxton Beach Access remains closed for three tenths of a mile. A Public Health Advisory is in place.

Petroleum contaminated soil, ocean sheen, foundations of buildings, left over septic field pipes and hunks of concrete continue to show up due to erosion.

A new Buxton NC Civic Association has formed and is encouraging an email campaign to public and agency officials. The Southern Environmental Law Center and the North Carolina Coastal Federation are now in the fight. Southern Environmental has already sent a long letter to the Army Corps of Engineers.

Sara Keisler, FUDS which stands for Formerly Used Defense Site, Program Manager, Corps of Engineers, responded to an initial letter from Brian Harris with Buxton Civic Association. The letter seems to say that the Corps will not fund site restoration. The Civic Association responded to the letter.

On its Facebook page, Buxton NC Civic Association spelled out its position: “We will settle for nothing less than a plan for full removal of all structures, foundations, drain fields and contaminated soils on every portion of the site.”

On Facebook, go to Buxton N C Civic Association to keep up with what’s happening.

### **Beach driving in front of Hatteras Island villages is now prohibited.**

Seasonal off-road vehicle routes in front of Hatteras Island villages became pedestrian-only Monday, April 15.

These routes, which run parallel to the towns of Hatteras, Frisco, Avon, Salvo, Waves and Rodanthe, open to beach driving during winter months when the visitor population is low and close from April 15 until October 14.

Beachgoers can check on updates to current beach access via the Cape Hatteras National Seashore website at [nps dot gov slash caha slash planyourvisit slash conditions](https://www.nps.gov/caha/planyourvisit/conditions).

Ramps 23 south of Salvo and 34 north of Avon are completely closed to off-road vehicles. For Ramp 23, pedestrians can park and walk northward to the villages and walk southward for more than a tenth of a mile.

For Ramp 34, pedestrians can walk northward for six tenths of a mile and walk southward into Avon Village.

Pre-nesting closures are in place now. Two American Oystercatcher nests have been located on Hatteras Island.

### **Update on Affordable Housing**

Robert L. Woodard, Chairman of Dare’s Board of Commissioners, called for a meeting on April 9 to make decisions about the board’s four and a half year, unsuccessful attempt to move the needle on housing.

At that April 9 meeting, the board decided to cut ties with Coastal Affordable Housing and return \$35 million that has lots of strings attached to the State of North Carolina.

Woodard had already appointed a Dare County Housing Task Force with 24 people. That group met April 16. The group agreed to send letters to the area’s legislative group.

The housing task force will meet with the area’s two North Carolina Senators Monday, at 3:30 at the Dare County Administrative Building in Manteo. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss having House Bill 259 rescinded.

### **Early College design for Dare moving quickly**

One week after an initial meeting, on April 16, the design crew from Oakley Collier showed up with two versions of building placement for the Dare County Early College on the current College of The Albemarle campus and a reduced square footage.

The Capital Improvements Planning Committee quickly decided on placing the new building off the courtyard, preserving much of the green space and expansion options for College of The Albemarle.

The building will now be 25,756 square feet. Initially, the building was proposed for 28,000 square feet. Oakley Collier Architects reduced the square footage by eliminating the media center as the College already has one. Secondly, the initial building proposal showed two science labs. As with the College, the early college will have one science lab.

The changes reduced the total square footage by 2,244 square feet.

Preliminary first floor plans show administration offices, a kitchen and inside eating/gathering area facing the courtyard, and a couple of classrooms. The second floor is entirely classrooms. The entrance to the new building is proposed for Grenville Street. The construction budget is \$25 million.

### **Island business is mixed**

Business news from Radio Hatteras business correspondent Tom Hranika focuses on the island's real estate market indicators through March of this year.

Essentially, the major market measures are showing mixed results.

30-year fixed mortgage interest rates remained at 6.79% last month.

On a standalone monthly basis, the number of houses for sale continued a slight upward trend since January. The supply in March was 95 houses for sale through March. Most of the increase has been since October.

25 houses were sold on the island during March. The number of sales for the same month last year was similar. Home sales have exhibited a declining trend for the past 15 months with the number of monthly sales being 19 houses.

The island selling price was somewhat lower during March. The median sale prices of houses last month was \$500,000 while the average sale price was \$583,960.

The number of houses under contract to be sold for March was reported at 39 houses, slightly better than the long-term monthly average of 35 homes. This indicator is considered to be a predictor of future sales.

Turning to the market for undeveloped lots, March was a relatively slow month for sale with just three lots sold on the entire island. This market segment increased to 80 in the number of properties for sale.

In other measures of the Hatteras Island economy, tax collections reflect continuing weakness. Meal tax receipts decreased by 12.9 percent while occupancy tax receipts declined for 83.6 percent. Adverse weather combined with traditionally slow visitation could account for these reports.

### **Humpback whale stranded in fishing gear**

On April 16, a humpback whale washed ashore and stranded on the shoreline of Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge. It was previously reported to NOAA Fisheries on April 13 and April 14 off Rodanthe.

The whale had fishing gear around its pectoral fin and gear in its mouth.

The juvenile female whale 31.5 feet long did not survive.

### **Dare commissioners partially fund July 4<sup>th</sup> Fireworks**

The Dare County Tourism Board asked for commissioners' consent to spend \$60,025 on July 4th Fireworks Grant Awards. The commissioners consented to awards to Avon Property Owners Association for \$14,875; to Town of Kill Devil Hills for \$12,400; to Town of Manteo for \$19,000; and to Town of Nags Head for \$13,750.

### **Marine Fisheries needs advisors**

The N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries is looking for commercial and recreational fishermen, scientists and other interested parties to sit on the Shellfish Fishery Management Plan Advisory Committee, specifically for Eastern oyster and hard clam.

The committee will assist the division in developing Amendment 5 to the N.C. Oyster Fishery Management Plan and Amendment 3 to the N.C. Hard Clam Fishery Management Plan. The Division will hold an in-person, workshop-style meeting that will allow scientists, managers and stakeholders to collaborate on drafting potential oyster and clam management measures.

To be qualified to serve on the committee, applicants may not have had a significant fisheries violation within the past three years.

Interested individuals must be available to attend and actively participate in the workshop over several days the week of July 15, 2024. The workshop will take place in New Bern during normal business hours.

Applications are available at Division of Marine Fisheries offices, or by calling 252-515-5534 or 800-682-2632. Applications should be returned by May 3, 2024, by email to Debbie dot Manley at deq dot nc dot gov or by mail to N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, P.O. Box 769, Morehead City, N.C. 28557, Attention: Debbie Manley.

### **Cape Hatteras players and coach recognized by Atlantic 6 Conference**

Atlantic 6 Conference has announced its Coach of the Year and All Conference Basketball Players for the 2023-2024 season.

Cape Hatteras Girls Basketball coach Earl Fountain was named the Coach of the Year.

After 30 years of coaching basketball at the Hatteras Island school, Fountain is retiring. A celebration was held in his honor Feb. 15, 2024, at the last home game of the regular basketball season. The current girls team delivered a winning last season for Fountain.

Named to the Girls All-Conference First Team is Abby O'Neal. Named to the Second Team are Kylie Phillips and Alyssa Bryan.

For the Cape Hatteras boys team, Griffin Couch was named to the Second All Conference Team.

### **Cape Hatteras Elementary students and staff say goodbye**

On April 16, cheers from students, teachers and administrators rang out for the school's favorite United Parcel Service truck driver Mr. Drew on his last delivery to the school. "Enjoy your retirement," said a Facebook post, "and thank you for all of your hard work over the years."

### **Special weeks**

The National Park Service protects our nation's greatest treasures and Hatteras Islanders know it. National Park Week is happening through April 28.

The National Park Service offers programs and works with partners to preserve natural and cultural heritage and provides recreational opportunities for all residents and visitors. Thanks.

It's also National Volunteer Week, going through April 17. Nationwide, the National Park Service is thanking 300,000 volunteers for their amazing contributions!

And we are Radio Hatteras are thanking the 20 volunteers who keep this station on the air. Thanks to these very special people for their devotion to Radio Hatteras.

**Now, be safe out there. Thanks for listening. This is Radio Hatteras.**