

Weekly News Summary for December 29, 2024.

The end of 2024 is rapidly approaching. Today, Radio Hatteras presents a review of news through the year.

The old U.S. Navy base in Buxton is sometimes called the Buxton Beach Access. The U.S. Navy used 50 acres of Cape Hatteras National Seashore land from 1956 to 1982 at the end of Old Lighthouse Road.

The U.S. Coast Guard used that same acreage from 1984 to 2010.

The current situation arises from two off-shore hurricanes in the fall of 2023. Surfers noted petroleum smells and oil in the water and on their wetsuits. Infrastructure from the Navy base emerged. The surfers raised their voices. In addition to the petroleum contamination, coastal erosion unveiled “abandoned facilities, construction debris, and septic systems associated with historic use of the area. Due to hazards the National Park Service along with the Dare County Public Health Division closed three-tenths of a mile of beach. That closure remains in place today.

Finally, the United States Army Corps of Engineers resumed some work at the site, namely removing a pipe that was dripping petroleum into the ocean. A Buxton Civic Association, which held its first meeting in April, was formed to speak to local, state and federal officials. The Corps of Engineers held a meeting at the Fessenden Center. Some 90 people showed up. The Corps of Engineers found some money to proceed with remediation. A contract was let to haul out contaminated soil and ground water and debris. The Corps of Engineers is now in the process of setting up a Restoration Advisory Board.

Rodanthe houses collapse. In 2024, six unoccupied oceanfront houses in northern Rodanthe collapsed into the Atlantic Ocean sending debris to Avon, and in one case into the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge. A beach area remains closed to all use between G A Kohler Court and Sea Oats Drive in Rodanthe.

Houses collapsed in May, Aug, Sept, and November. The Cape Hatteras National Seashore is in communication with property owners along the oceanfront in Rodanthe. Seashore staff is urging the property owners to make arrangements with contractors for beach cleanup after houses collapse.

Cape Hatteras Lighthouse restoration. It is undergoing an 18-month restoration project. Walking in designated areas is permitted. The lighthouse is closed for climbing but the Museum of the Sea and Park Store are open.

On September 25, 2023, the National Park Service awarded a \$19.2 million contract for restoration of the famed structure to Stone and Lime Historic Restoration Service. Prepping the site started in January 2024. By April 2024, exterior scaffolding was completed and interior scaffolding was almost finished. A temporary LED beacon was installed on top of the scaffolding.

From May to June, landscaping was started and by October, the contractor had moved onto building sidewalks. The black and white spiral paint on the lighthouse exterior had been removed by October.

The restoration continues. The estimated time for opening the lighthouse for climbing is 2026.

Outer Banks Forever builds sidewalk to Lighthouse

A mile-long, accessible, paved pathway for walking, running, and cycling runs from N.C. 12 to the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse thanks to the official non-profit organization for the three national parks on the Outer Banks.

That organization is called Outer Banks Forever, which raised the money to build the pathway that connects along Buxton Back Road to the Cape Hatteras Secondary School.

A formal opening ceremony will be held in the spring.

Honors bestowed. The following people have been formally acknowledged during the year.

Daniel Pullen, Hatteras Island's photographer, was awarded the North Carolina Coastal Federation's Pelican Award for Exceptional Efforts to Inspire Coastal Stewardship through Art and Actions. The Pelican Award joins other Pullen Awards, namely, Time Magazine in its Top 100 Photos of 2020, and the North Carolina Press Association's Photographer of the Year in 2021.

Bryan Perry for 50 years of service to the Buxton Volunteer Fire Department.

Danny Couch, now retired from the Dare County Board of Commissioners, had the Fessenden Center Gymnasium in Buxton named in his honor.

Karen Lebing, who lives on the Pamlico Sound side in Waves, spends most every morning in her yard. As a result of her hours and hours of observation, for 2024, her yard is the number 2 for number of species seen in the whole United States, according to eBird.

Storms. Stormy weather put water and sand over NC 12 and disrupted travel plans of residents and visitors. Crews from the North Carolina Department of Transportation worked to keep NC 12 open in February, March, September and November, and we thank them.

Major openings. The *Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum* in Hatteras Village reopened to rave reviews. The new museum gallery and lobby layout are terrific. Go see it. Hours are Monday through Friday from 10-4. Across Oregon Inlet, the new *Oregon Inlet Fishing Center* opened. And, Outer Banks *Hotline's Thrift Shop South* moved from Buxton to Frisco to a spacious new facility, open Tuesday-Saturday, 9-4, at 53321 NC 12, Frisco.

Celebration. In October, Chicamacomico Life-Saving Station celebrated the 150th Anniversary of the station's existence. Federal funding was appropriated to begin building seven life-saving stations along the coast of North Carolina. Chicamacomico was the first to be completed. It was the commissioned December 4, 1874.

Now for some current news:

Dare County has published a Request for Qualifications for Pre-Construction and Construction services for five projects, two of which are on Hatteras Island. Included on Hatteras Island are a new Emergency Medical Services station in Waves (at the same location as the current recycling center) and a new public works facility in Buxton (to be located at the Buxton transfer station behind the Fessenden Center Annex Building).

Other projects are a new public works complex on Roanoke Island, a Sheriff's Department evidence storage facility in Manteo and another new Emergency Medical Services station in Nags Head.

Statements of Qualifications are due Friday, January 17, at 3pm to the Dare County Finance Office, Attention Dustin Peele. The mailing address is P.O. Box 1000, Manteo, NC 27954-1000. The physical delivery address is 954 Marshall C. Collins Drive, Manteo, NC 27954. No electronic submissions will be accepted. Dare County reserves the right to reject and any all submissions in accordance with North Carolina General Statutes.

And, Finally...New Year's Day Dare government closures. All Dare County offices and facilities will be closed Wednesday, January 1, in observance of New Year's Day. Dare County Public Works has announced that there are no changes to residential trash collection for the week of Monday, December 30, through Friday, January 3. However, facility closures on January 1 include the Dare County C&D Landfill in Manns Harbor, the Buxton Transfer Station and the Manteo Recycle Yard. These sites will reopen and operate with regularly scheduled hours on Thursday, January 2, 2025. Commercial dumpster collection for the Hatteras Island will take place Monday, December 30, 2024 and Friday, January 3, 2025.

That's it for this week, our last news summary for 2024! We'll be back in the New Year. be safe out there...and thanks for listening. This is Radio Hatteras.