

## **Weekly News Summary for Sunday, December 21, 2024.**

### **National Seashore reopens a portion of Buxton Beach**

The Cape Hatteras National Seashore has reopened about two-tenths-of-a-mile section of beach starting at the southernmost jetty in Buxton and continuing to the south, also known as Old Lighthouse Beach.

Varying sections of the Buxton Beach have been closed to the public since September 2023 after two offshore hurricanes revealed petroleum smells and abandoned infrastructure from former 1956-2010 military bases. This recently-reopened section of the Buxton shoreline was closed September 5, 2024, after heightened erosion resulted in the further degradation of the Buxton Formerly Used Defense Site.

The National Park Service says visitors to Old Lighthouse Beach should use the parking lot near the lifeguarded beach until the Corps' contractor completes the removal of its equipment from near the northern parking lot adjacent to the Old Lighthouse Beach Access.

The decision to essentially revert to the original three-tenths-of-a-mile closure area adjacent to the Buxton Beach Access was made after factoring in the amount of contaminated soil and water removed by the Corps and the prolonged period of time between the last report of apparent petroleum sheens or odors in the area.

Contaminated soil and water are likely still present in the beach adjacent to the Buxton site, so the seashore personnel will continue to monitor, and keep this three-tenths-of-a-mile section of beach closed to the public.

An amended precautionary public health advisory by the Dare County Department of Health and Human Services is forthcoming.

In the coming months, the Corps is expected to comprehensively sample soil and groundwater within the Buxton site with the intent to delineate the nature and extent of any petroleum contamination remaining at the site.

### **Dare County receives upgraded ratings**

On Nov. 14, 2024, Fitch Ratings upgraded two of Dare County's credit ratings.

The Issuer Default Rating was moved to AA+ from AA and the county's credit rating on Limited Obligation Bonds moved to AA from AA-.

According to the announcement, "the rating reflects an 'ample' level of budgetary flexibility and assumes maintenance of unrestricted general funds reserves at least equal to 7.5% of spending.

The county has historically maintained reserves above the 25% fund balance policy." In Fiscal Year 2024, ending June 30, 2024, the fund balance was 35.74%, an increase from 33.89% from the prior year, according to the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report for Fiscal Year 2024, which is now posted on DareNC.gov.

The upgraded ratings will influence the interest rate offered on limited obligation bonds which the county issues for its ongoing construction projects.

The AA+ for the Issuer Default Rating is "one of the highest credit ratings that can be assigned by Fitch Ratings, placing Dare County among a select group of local governments nationwide," states a media release from Dare County.

The upgrade is based on financial performance, economic stability, balanced economic and demographic factors and high revenue-raising capacity, states the media release.

## **Manteo license plate office to close December 31**

On Friday, December 20, Dare County Board of Commissioners Chairman Bob Woodard issued a statement regarding the upcoming closure of the license plate agency in Manteo on December 31, and the steps that are currently being taken by the county to open a new agency.

Chairman Woodard said:

The closure of the Manteo license plate agency on December 31, 2024, is a serious concern, and we understand the inconvenience this poses for our residents.

While the operation and oversight of license plate agencies fall under the jurisdiction of the North Carolina Division of Motor Vehicles (NCDMV), we want to assure you that we are fully committed to advocating for a resolution on behalf of Dare County.

The current contractor's retirement and the NCDMV's facility requirements have created challenges. However, there are discussions with a potential new contractor who is interested in operating in Dare County.

We are working diligently to expedite this process and minimize disruption in service for our community. Although Dare County does not have direct control over this situation, please know that I remain steadfast in my commitment to ensuring our residents' needs are addressed as effectively and efficiently as possible.

## **Christmas Eve Church Services**

St. John United Methodist Church holds a Christmas Eve Pageant and Candlelight Service at 5 o'clock. The church is on McMullen Road, Avon.

Lighthouse Assembly of God on NC 12 in Buxton holds a service at 6 o'clock.

Cape Hatteras Baptist Church on NC 12 in Frisco holds a service at 5:30 Christmas Eve.

The Hatteras United Methodist Charge has three services:

At Buxton United Methodist, a Children's Nativity Service starts at 6 o'clock.

Little Grove United Methodist in Frisco has a candlelight service starting at 7:15.

In Hatteras Village, a Christmas Eve Communion Service starts at 8:30.

At Our Lady of the Seas Catholic Church on NC 12 in Buxton, Christmas Eve Mass will be celebrated starting at 7 o'clock. On Christmas Day, Mass will be celebrated starting at 9 o'clock.

## **It's Christmas time and a lot of nice things are happening on the island.**

On Wednesday, December 18, all of Hatteras Island Meals recipients were gifted with treats from local business, organizations and people with big hearts. Hatteras Island Pizza-Gingerbread House served each recipient a piece of yummy gingerbread cake with lemon sauce. Thank you to many good folks at the Hatteras Village Library for the most awesome Christmas cards for our recipients and Hatteras Island Meals thanks Michelle the branch manager. Generous and good hearted, Pat Thatch, created pretty festive pine cone Christmas Trees. Lovingly and beautiful decorated felt trees were designed by the good folks at Hatteras Island Quilters. And volunteer Cosmo Ricchuiti cut and painted adorable old fashioned bulb lights for each recipient. Thank you to all.

Lots of people donated food items. Remember the on-going food drive. The food pantry in Buxton is busiest in the winter.

Santa visited our island villages. Fire departments hosted visits. Thanks to volunteers hosting all those visits.

Community tree lightings were held in Hatteras village, Rodanthe and Frisco.

We hope you are enjoying the station's Christmas stories. Starting Christmas Eve, Radio Hatteras will play Christmas music throughout Christmas Eve and Christmas Day and listen for special features.

**We are grateful for your support this past year. Be safe. Tune in next Sunday at the same time, 5 o'clock. This is Radio Hatteras.**