

Weekly News Summary for Sunday, September 8, 2024.

There is frustration aimed at the Corps of Engineers over the former U.S. defense site in Buxton and; the weather is tearing up beach. For the entire week, red rip current warnings were out for the beaches on Hatteras Island. Shore break of at least six feet, a very strong longshore current, and rip currents as far as the eye could see. One beach lover wrote: “Don't even think about it!”

This past week, a high pressure interacted with a stalled frontal boundary producing strong northeasterly winds. Those winds slammed into the Buxton Beach, eating away at the land and exposing infrastructure remnants on the beach and sending petroleum and solvent odors further south. Three houses lost septic system drain fields and were shut down. Instructions were provided to owners and agents for pumping out septic tanks.

The result was the closing of another quarter mile of beach, encompassing the original lighthouse location and the lifeguarded beach area. The closure was announced September 5. Now, roughly a half mile of the CHNS beach is closed in Buxton.

Meanwhile on September 3, the DCBoC convened its regularly scheduled monthly meeting. Appearing before the commissioners was U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Colonel Ronald J. Sturgeon from the Savannah Georgia district.

Expected were reports on soil samples collected May 13-14, and geophysical work accomplished June 24-28. Those reports were not delivered. Sturgeon said the soil sample report was not finalized and the geophysical work was under internal review. He did report that preliminary reporting showed soil samples with petroleum “above state levels.” Also, he said that the ground penetrating radar showed “no underground storage tanks that we are able to locate.”

Sturgeon said recommendations called for comprehensive site-wide sampling. A comprehensive testing contract will be let in October. Sturgeon also announced the formation of a Restoration Advisory Board. The first step is ascertaining the level of concern in the community.

Dare's commissioners led the way on questioning and expressing displeasure with the lack of progress. Almost 20 people watched the proceedings from the Fessenden Center Annex in Buxton, and 4 people offered public comment. Wendy Munden said “we can't wait any longer.... We need immediate action.”

Another person lobbied to “stabilize the beach.” Brian Harris said the north wind is “eating the beach up. It's only going to get worse.”

Sturgeon indicated he would be visiting the Buxton site on Tues. As Sturgeon left the Manteo meeting room, he was accompanied by Dave Hallac, Superintendent of the NParks in Eastern NC, which includes the CHNS.

All power to Hatteras Island blinked at 6:15 Sat morning. Electric power quickly resumed in Avon, Buxton, Frisco and Hatteras. Not so in Rodanthe, Waves and Salvo. Cape Hatteras Electric Cooperative dispatched crews to the Waves substation. Power was restored in the island's northern villages around 9:30 Sat morning. North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation, in partnership with the Cape Hatteras Electric Cooperative and ElectriCom Inc., will begin work to install a new fiber line running from Nags Head to Buxton.

The first phase of the project will begin the week of Sept 16 and will include fiber installation in the villages of Rodanthe, Waves, Salvo, Avon and Buxton. This phase of construction is expected to take about 18 weeks. The new fiber will be installed in the NC Dept of Transportation's right-of-way and will be bored under driveways, side roads, and wetlands and trenched in areas that allow it. Cape Hatteras Electric will have taps installed into the Waves and Avon substations.

Project planning started after several communication outages affected HI due to the volatile nature of the island's current and only fiber line. This new fiber w/greatly improve the reliability of statewide cooperative's communications with its generation plant in Buxton and Cape Hatteras Electric's communication with its substations and the mainland.

Areas in Rodanthe and Buxton are shut down to swimming. State recreational water quality officials issued a precautionary advisory Thurs, Sept 5, warning the public against swimming in ocean waters near Corbina Dr in Rodanthe and near Cottage Ave and Tower Cir in Buxton. The advisory is due to public health risks resulting from septic drain fields being exposed due to extensive erosion caused by constant NE winds. Signs will be placed near the public accesses once field conditions are safe to do so. The signs that will be posted read as follows: WARNING. WASTEWATER SPILL. SWIMMING IS NOT ADVISED IN THESE WATERS BECAUSE OF THE INCREASED RISK OF ILLNESS. OFFICE OF THE STATE HEALTH DIRECTOR. The risk of exposure is temporary and should be resolved once the septic tank is emptied and the system is no longer being used. The state is working with the NPS and DCo officials to determine when the risk of exposure is no longer a concern.

Wastewater discharges increase the risk that contamination is present in the ocean and nearby tidal pools. Adverse health effects such as diarrhea, abdominal cramps and skin infections could occur if people swim in these areas, and the public is advised to avoid bodily contact with these waters. State officials are monitoring the situation and w/lift the advisory when bacteriological test results come back within state and federal stds and the exposure risk is no longer a concern. Dare Co Environmental Health workers gave notice to owners and agents of 3 houses in the areas last week that septic drain fields were compromised.

Dredging is underway at Rodanthe Harbor. A 3-person crew from Northeastern Marine Construction Co., Kitty Hawk, is working to dredge a small section of Rodanthe Harbor. "It's yucky stuff," says Drew Creef, as a bucket of the "nasty silt" was scooped out of a bigger bucket on a barge. The scooped up stuff was unloaded into a dump truck, which hauled the stuff to the sediment pond on the southside of the harbor. The stuff will be dried out, dug out and hauled off.

The dredging is a DCo proj to make sure the Rodanthe Harbor and the emergency ferry route to Stumpy Pt can be used during Hurr season. The crew estimates the job w/be finished early this wk. The contract cost is \$84K.

The First Lighthouse Labor Day 5K run drew 125 runners and walkers. At the very first Labor Day CH Lighthouse 5K Race, 125 runners and walkers ran and walked a course starting close to the old Lighthouse location out to Loran Rd and back again. Nearly 35 vols showed up, some at 5:30 in the morning, to set up tents and route signs. Others showed up later. Volunteers directed traffic, prepared food, set up after-race water, cold towels and participation medals.

This inaugural event was organized by the Barrier Island Group led by Tom Amatucci, Jenny Ash and Laurie Amatucci, in cooperation with the NPS. Sponsoring this race and walk were Surf or Sound Realty, Cottages at the Cape, the Cape Hatteras Electric Cooperative, Outer Banks Health, Ocean Atlantic Rentals and Salvo Produce.

The event raised funds for 3 Outer Banks charities: HI Meals, Outer Banks Buddies, and the Buxton-Frisco Pathway Project. The OBX Running Company set up the timing and reported these results: The top 3 male winners are from HI, including first place 14 year old Max Syrrist from Buxton, Pablo Marquez from Frisco and Stephen King from Buxton. Two female winners are from the same Manassas Virginia family: placing 1st was Sita Ewell followed by her daughter Riley Ewell. 3rd place winner was Marie Carney from Richmond.

Labor Day weekend signaled the end of summer and the last, for the season, of the Hatteras Village Community Fish Fry, a local tradition since 1940.

Linda O'Neal sends a big thank you to the 50 volunteers. Those volunteers used 540 pounds of cabbage, 32 dozen eggs, 240 lemons, 32 gallons of mayonnaise, 950 pounds of potato salad, 240 pounds of corn meal, 120 pounds of sugar and 120 pounds of pancake mix along with the 6,300 fish filets that were washed, salted, breaded and fried to serve visitors and local residents each Saturday evening.

Visitors, including 158 first time attendees, represented 25 states, Germany, Canada and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Enrollment is up at the College of The Albemarle. The College started the fall semester with 2,934 students — its highest enrollment in five years. The fall 2024 enrollment figure is a 9.7% increase from 2019 and 11.2% increase from last year, according to Tammy Sawyer, communications and marketing director for the community college.

COA Pres Jack Bagwell noted that the 2,934 figure doesn't include "late-start" students who are still enrolling for classes that start the middle of next month, so COA's final curriculum enrollment could grow even higher. Bagwell also noted that COA's curriculum enrollment increase this fall also doesn't include the college's continuing education enrollment.

A little Radio Hatteras news: The RH tech team installed a new Nautel VX1 transmitter for radio station 99.9 FM in Waves. The new transmitter replaces one 17yrs old, has a modern interface and tests remotely. No change on the broadcast tower was required and no change in coverage will result from the new transmitter, which cost \$7K. The RH volunteer tech team members are Mike Hennessey, Lou Browning, Brian Wharton and Ted Cywinski. Radio Hatteras also broadcasts on 101.5 FM to cover Avon, Buxton, Frisco and Hatteras.

SOME EVENTS THIS WEEK:

A Class on communicating w/deaf and hard of hearing is to be held in Avon tomorrow evening. The HI Community Emergency Response Team is hosting a state expert at the Avon Fire Dept, Mon, Sept 9 (that's tomorrow), to provide training. The class starts at 6pm and runs for 2hrs. The event is free & open to the public.

Eagle Pass Road closes tomorrow for resurfacing and drainage improvement. The NC Dept of Trans contractors are closing Eagle Pass Rd in Hatteras Village on Sept 9 for drainage improvements and resurfacing. The road will be open to local traffic only during the closure. All through traffic will be diverted to NC12, with barricades at both north and south intersections.

The temporary closure w/allow for 2 cross pipe replacements to be completed, as well as the resurfacing of the entire road. Work is expected to end by Sept 16. Drivers should remain alert through the area and follow all posted traffic and detour signs during the closure. This closure precedes the work to replace the Slash Creek Bridge, which will close down NC12, diverting traffic to Eagle Pass Road.

Dare County Schools will roll out new Weapons Detection Systems at the CH Secondary school athletic events this week. Plan to arrive a few minutes earlier than usual to the games to allow for any delays until everyone gets accustomed to this new process. As a reminder, any items brought into these events are subject to search. Do not bring the following items to school athletic events:

Weapons, guns and knives; Eyeglasses cases; Tin boxes, for example altoids cans; Bags with metal chains, hooks or loops; Compact umbrellas; Laptops and Chromebooks; and Three-ringed binders.

Have a question about your phone, computer, email, or other technology? Stop in at a DCo Library for 1-on-1 assistance with a librarian. Be sure to bring your device, logins and passwords. 2-4pm at the Hatt Library, 3rd and 4th Wednesdays, is Tech time, w/answers to questions about phones, computers email + other technology.

Traffic on the U.S. 64 Washington Baum (Pirate's Cove) Bridge between Manteo and Nags Head will be reduced to one lane in each direction beginning Sept 15, as the second half of a \$21.3M bridge rehabilitation project proceeds.

The project is improving rideability on the bridge and extending its lifespan. The bridge is scheduled to return to four lanes by May 2025. Work includes correcting bumps on the existing bridge deck, replacing bridge joints and bearing pads, and repairing concrete in the structure.

Play Bingo September 11 at the Cape Hatteras Anglers Club in Buxton. That night, all Bingo proceeds go to Hatteras Island Meals, a group of volunteers delivering noontime meals to folks who need the service. The Anglers Club is at 47271 Light Plant Road, Buxton. Doors open at 6 o'clock with Bingo starting at 7 o'clock.

The Tri Villages Market in Waves is open weekly on Wednesdays through September 25. Vendors are located inside and outside the soundside conference center at the Camp Hatteras RV Resort. The market is open from 9 to 1. The Camp Hatteras Campground address is 24798 NC 12.

And don't forget the Old Trent Market, Thursday, from 9 to 2 at the Frisco Woods Campground in Frisco.

That's it for this week. Have a fabulous week and be safe out. This is RH.