



North Carolina General Assembly Senate

SENATOR HARPER PETERSON
9th District

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COMMITTEES

Appropriations-Agriculture, Natural and
Economic Resources
Agriculture/Environment/Natural Resources
State And Local Government
Select Committee on Prison Safety

May 20, 2020

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Chairman

The Honorable Sam Graves
Ranking Member

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves:

Let me begin by sincerely wishing you and your families the very best in health. These are challenging times. I write on behalf of my constituents here in NC 9th District of New Hanover County, home of the NC State Ports.

It is my understanding that you will be considering the authorization of the NC State Ports' (NCSP) Wilmington Harbor Navigation Improvement Project in this year's Water Resource Development Act legislation.

If this is the case, I have serious concerns that the environmental review process (NEPA) has been incomplete and inadequate; specifically, for a project of this magnitude. Therefore, I respectfully ask that you postpone the authorization of this project.

As a resident of New Hanover County for the past 50 years, as a former Mayor of Wilmington and now as a State Senator, I appreciate the great economic benefits, good paying jobs and pride that the NC State Ports has brought to our state. I also appreciate the attention that has always

been given to protecting our natural resources and coastal ecosystems, which also drive and define our economy and quality of life.

This has been a fragile, and for the most part, successful balance between economic, cultural, and environmental interests. With dramatic growth projected over the next 20 years I fear this balance could be irreparably disrupted if this process continues without the public's participation and the requisite NEPA environmental and economic impact study.

I personally participated in the "stakeholder" meetings sponsored by the Wilmington District US Army Corps Office between December, 2019 through March, 2020, to review the NCSP's initial draft Section 203 feasibility study. This was a valuable "first step" for all; the NCSP's consultant, environmental interest's groups, representatives from surrounding municipalities and civil engineering groups.

A broad range of important concerns and questions were raised by participants and the Corps representatives gave repeated assurances that these concerns and questions would be fully addressed by a subsequent and comprehensive NEPA study. I am assuming that this is your understanding as well and a full NEPA study will be in order.

In conclusion, I would ask again that you postpone at this time your consideration and potential authorization of this matter until:

- the public has had an opportunity to review the 203 study
- the Army Corps completes the NEPA study with a full environmental impact statement
- a thorough economic evaluation has been completed, especially in consideration of the short and long term impacts of Covid-19 pandemic

Again, thank you for receiving and considering my request. Your service to our country is continually held in my highest regard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "H. Peterson", followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Senator Harper Peterson
9th District