



Resolution #25-1202.01

A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTHPORT BOARD OF ALDERMEN URGING ROBUST MITIGATION, LONG-TERM MONITORING, AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT FOR THE WILMINGTON HARBOR 403 PROJECT

WHEREAS, the City of Southport is located at the confluence of the Cape Fear River and the Atlantic Ocean, a uniquely sensitive estuarine environment that supports diverse wildlife, coastal communities, and natural systems; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Wilmington Harbor 403 Project seeks to deepen, widen, or otherwise modify the federal navigation channel, changes that may significantly alter hydrodynamic patterns, sediment transport, and shoreline stability in the Lower Cape Fear River region; and

WHEREAS, these alterations have the potential to increase erosion risk to sensitive shorelines, marsh platforms, and riverfront areas, and increase the likelihood of subsidence of adjacent riverbed and shoreline areas into the dredge prism, particularly within and adjacent to the City of Southport, threatening natural buffers that protect homes, public spaces, cultural resources, and community infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, the region's barrier and estuarine islands—including Battery Island, Shellbed Island, and others—play a critical ecological role in supporting fisheries, marsh nurseries, colonial waterbirds, and migratory shorebirds; and

WHEREAS, Battery Island in particular is recognized as one of the most significant colonial waterbird nesting sites on the East Coast, and in total all bird nesting islands on the Lower Cape Fear River provide habitat for approximately 30% of North Carolina's nesting coastal waterbird population, and are highly vulnerable to erosion, sea level rise, and habitat loss that may be exacerbated by channel deepening activities; and

WHEREAS, the environment surrounding Southport is an essential part of the city's core values, contributing to residents' quality of life, recreational enjoyment, cultural heritage, and long-standing community identity rooted in conservation and stewardship; and

WHEREAS, the economic resilience of Southport is directly connected to the integrity of its surrounding natural resources, with tourism, recreation, waterfront businesses, and property values all depending on a healthy, stable coastal environment; and

WHEREAS, any federal navigation project that increases environmental risk must include robust mitigation, long-term monitoring, and adaptive management measures proportionate to both the scale of the project and the sensitivity of the affected ecosystems and communities; and

WHEREAS, the billion-dollar Savannah Harbor Expansion Project (SHEP) spent approximately 500 million on mitigation and included funding for post-construction monitoring and adaptive management, ensuring that resources would be available to modify or enhance mitigation if environmental conditions changed unexpectedly; and

WHEREAS, the non-federal sponsor for SHEP, acting through the Georgia Ports Authority, agreed to set aside, in advance, their cost-shared portion of the monitoring and adaptive

management funds in an escrow account upon approval of the project, guaranteeing rapid response capability and honoring the principle that those benefiting from the project must share responsibility for preventing or repairing environmental harm; and

WHEREAS, projects such as the Wilmington Harbor 403 effort must match or exceed this level of commitment by establishing a dedicated and adequately funded adaptive management program that extends over the full period of environmental risk, not only the construction phase or initial years of project operation; and

WHEREAS, safeguarding Southport's environment, wildlife habitats, and economic well-being requires that mitigation and monitoring measures be both enforceable and financially secure before any project authorization or construction proceeds;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Southport urges state and federal decision-makers, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the North Carolina General Assembly, to require a **comprehensive, long-term, and fully funded environmental mitigation and adaptive management plan** for the Wilmington Harbor 403 Project, modeled on or exceeding the commitments made in the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Southport calls for the establishment of a **dedicated adaptive management fund**, placed in escrow prior to construction and sized proportionally to the project's potential impacts, ensuring that corrective actions, ecological restoration, and shoreline protections can be implemented promptly whenever monitoring indicates environmental degradation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Southport urges all agencies and project sponsors to protect Battery Island and the surrounding Cape Fear River islands as irreplaceable ecological assets, ensuring that mitigation measures fully safeguard the habitats supporting 30% of North Carolina's coastal shorebird population; and


BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that copies of this Resolution be forwarded to the North Carolina General Assembly, the North Carolina Congressional Delegation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality, the Brunswick County delegation, and other relevant agencies, urging their support in ensuring that environmental protection, community values, and economic resilience remain at the forefront of all decisions related to the Wilmington Harbor 403 Project.

Approved and adopted by the City of Southport Board of Aldermen on this 2nd of December 2025.



Mayor, City of Southport

ATTEST:



City Clerk, City of Southport

