



NoPort News

A newsletter of the North Carolina International Terminal

All the news that prints to fit.

April 15, 2010

Reconnaissance Revealed

L'environnement! C'est une chose trop grave pour la confier à des militaires.

Faithful readers will recall our anxiety about the secret nature of the reconnaissance study being conducted by the Wilmington District of the Corps of Engineers for the channel dredging for the proposed North Carolina International Terminal (a.k.a NC Global Transport). Not even Mike McIntyre could persuade the District to expose the study to the public eye.

We found out why. The District is ashamed of it. We have obtained a draft report from February that had been provided to an agency of the State of North Carolina, and thereby became subject to the Public Records law. And a horrid piece of work it is.

The District's draft report is without compeer in awfulness—shallow, incomplete, bearing no resemblance to orderly scientific inquiry. The Corps of Engineers has *Principles and Guidelines* for such studies; had those been followed, the results would have been very different.

It is axiomatic in any problem-solving exercise that a comprehensive statement of the problem is essential, and indeed often suggests the solution. The Wilmington District's report does not do that. Perhaps that is because there is no problem to describe—the container terminal at the Port of Wilmington is struggling to attract container traffic of half of its capacity, and there is no reason whatever for another container terminal at the Cape Fear.

And in the Corps tradition, benefits are overstated and costs are understated to achieve the desired result—a fat feasibility study to feed from for years. Ten million dollars worth.

There are some snippets of useful information in the report, some evidence of competent workmanship. A reasonable estimate of the cost of the dredging: \$1.2 billion. A listing of the environmental effects: every one negative. A compendium of agency and public comments.

The Wilmington District has presented this dreadful job to the State of North Carolina with a request to sign a letter of intent to provide \$4.7 million for more study. We have urged the cognizant officials to conduct their own review first. We shall see.

Take a look for yourself. Go to www.noportsouthport.org. In the menu, click on *Corps of Engineers Studies*, then *Reconnaissance Study*. The Corps draft report is the first link listed, our review the second, and our own version of a proper study is below that.

Public Meeting

On Thursday evening, May 6, at 7:00 p.m., we shall have another public meeting of at the Brunswick County senior center in Smithville Crossing on North Howe Street in Southport.

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