



# NoPort News

A newsletter of the North Carolina International Terminal

*All the news that prints to fit.*

May 1, 2010

## ***What's the Harm in a Study?***

It only money. In our conversations with elected and appointed officials about the obvious flaws in the proposal for a huge container terminal on the Cape Fear River, just downstream from one that is operating at half its capacity, we often hear that a full feasibility study would be useful. At the Federal level, it is just a matter of putting a few million dollars in an appropriation request for several billions. Just another barrel of pork.

But at the state level, it is very different. The Wilmington District of the Corps of Engineers is asking the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources to commit to providing \$4.7 million for approximately half the cost of a feasibility study. This from a budget that was cut substantially in the Governor's recent message. That would be only the beginning; a similar project at the Savannah River has reached a cost of \$40 million.

There are substantial hidden costs. The budgeted amount would pay the salaries and expenses of the Corps personnel and service a large cadre of consultants (that's what it's all about, eh?). But the study would require extensive participation by State and Federal agencies. The various divisions of the State Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Department of Cultural Resources, the Coastal Resources Commission, the Wildlife Resources Commission, the Department of Transportation. At the Federal level, US Fish & Wildlife Service, NOAA Fisheries Service, the Environmental Protection Agency and others must be involved from the beginning to the end of the process. The cost of that participation must come out of agency budgets, taking away from more useful endeavors.

In 1986, Congress recognized that some projects did not deserve the full feasibility analysis, and adopted section 905(b) of the Water Resources Development Act to weed those out. The statute urges examination of a specific problem and potential solutions to determine whether there is a "Federal interest" in proceeding. The Wilmington District did a study under that law. But the District stated this purpose: "to determine whether there is a Federal (Corps) interest in participating in a cost shared Feasibility Phase Study... ."

So there's the signal of the bias in the study—the "(Corps)" inserted to qualify "Federal." The District was looking for reasons why the study would be good for the Corps, not determining whether it would be good for the country. The report itself—a superficial and unsupported promotional piece for a feasibility study—demonstrates that. It's on our Web site.

## ***Public Meeting***

On Thursday evening, May 6, at 7:00 p.m., we shall have a public meeting at the Brunswick County senior center in Smithville Crossing on North Howe Street in Southport (next to the Wingate). Doug Springer, the Cape Fear Riverkeeper, will join us.

**NO PORT Southport NC, Inc.**

**Post Office Box 10062**  
[www.noportsouthport.org](http://www.noportsouthport.org)

**Southport, NC 28461**