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Hyde County Press Release

Dredging Project Requires Temporary Hatteras - Ocracoke Ferry Schedule Adjustments

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Recently, the NC Ferry Division announced temporary schedule adjustments on the Hatteras – Ocracoke route to accommodate a critical dredging project in Sloop Channel (federal designated channel). The temporary changes affect two early morning departures and three late evening departures each day.

This dredging project is being conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers through a private contractor and represents a significant investment in maintaining and improving one of the most important transportation corridors serving Ocracoke Island.

For many years, Sloop Channel has been maintained at a width of approximately 100 feet. Through the collaborative efforts of Hyde County and the Ocracoke Waterways Commission, permits were secured to expand the channel to 200 feet. This wider channel will improve navigation, provide additional room for vessels to safely pass, and help deliver longer-lasting dredging results.

To make this expansion possible, Hyde County successfully secured North Carolina Shallow Draft Navigation Channel Dredging Funds to pay for the additional non-federal portion of the project.

The USACE contractor is utilizing a hydraulic pipeline dredge, which is widely recognized as one of the most effective methods for removing large volumes of sediment and restoring channel depth and width. While this method provides the best long-term results, it requires significant workspace within the channel while operations are underway. It is also important to note that it has been quite a while since the area has been addressed with this type of equipment. There was no pipeline dredging performed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in the Hatteras ferry channels between 2013 and 2026. Since then alternative dredging vessels like Sidecaster and Shallow-Draft Hopper Dredges, like the Ms. Katie, have been utilized.

After evaluating several alternatives, including more extensive ferry service interruptions, it was determined that the current amended schedule would provide the least disruption to residents, businesses, workers, and visitors while still allowing the dredging contractor sufficient time to complete the work safely and efficiently. Full daily shutdowns of the route were considered but would have created substantially greater impacts to the traveling public.

The amended schedule also serves an important safety purpose. The northern end of Sloop Channel is extremely narrow, and providing dedicated dredging windows reduces the potential for ferry vessels to come into contact with dredging pipelines, anchors, floating equipment, or other project infrastructure, a challenge that has occurred during previous dredging operations in Rollinson Channel, while also improving safety for passengers, crews, contractors, and equipment.

While the timing of the project coincides with the beginning of the tourism season, the dredging contract was awarded and scheduled through the federal process, limiting local flexibility regarding construction timing. Recognizing the importance of this work, local, state, and federal partners have worked together very closely over the past two weeks to identify the most practical approach for balancing transportation needs with long-term channel improvements.

Hyde County appreciates the patience and understanding of residents, businesses, commuters, and visitors during this temporary inconvenience. The benefits of this project will extend well beyond the construction period, helping ensure safer, more reliable ferry operations and a more resilient transportation connection between Hatteras and Ocracoke for years to come.

Hyde County remains committed to partnering with state and federal agencies to maintain and improve the transportation infrastructure that is vital to the communities and economy of Ocracoke Island.

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