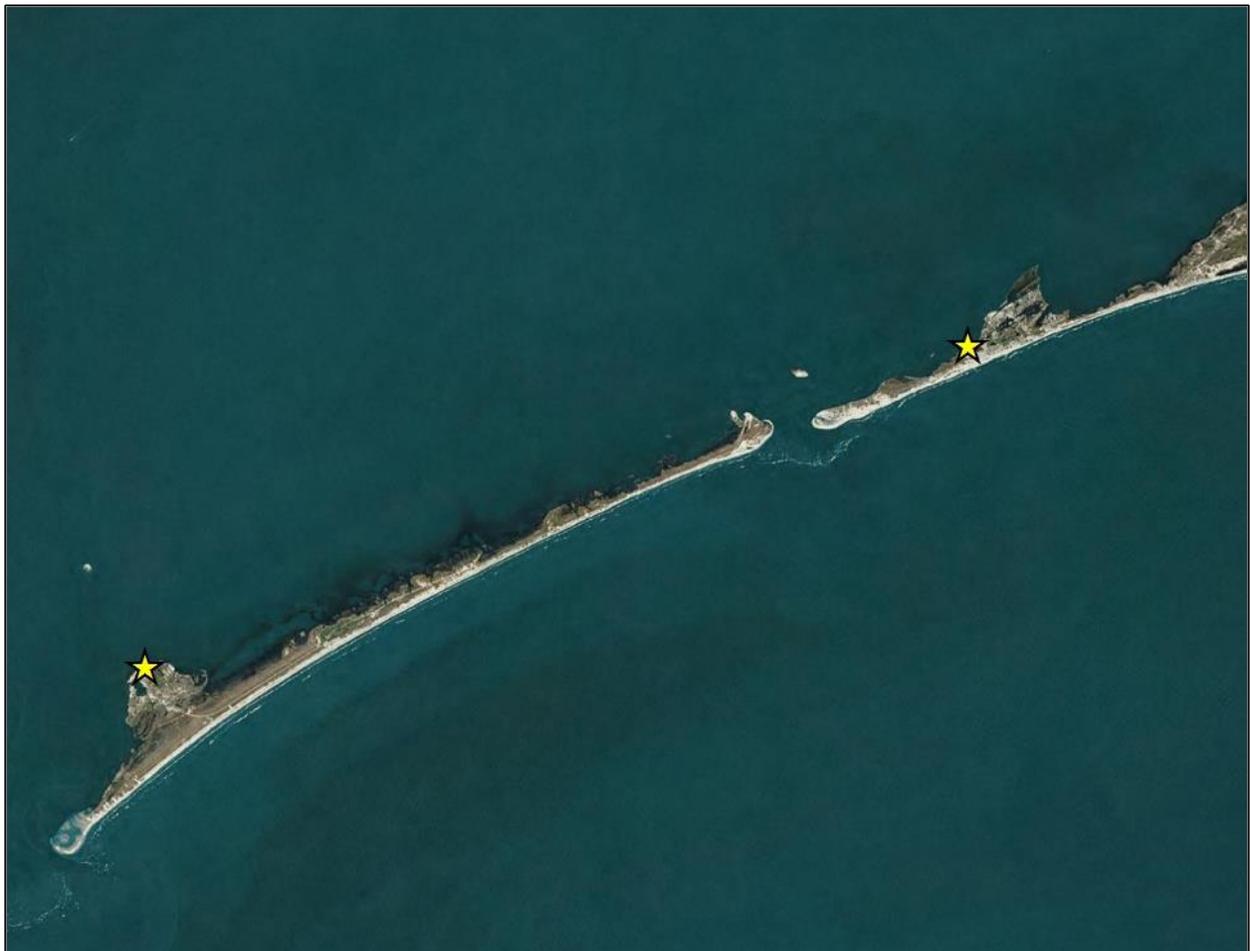




# Improvements to Support NCDOT Hatteras-Ocracoke Passenger Ferry Environmental Assessment June 2017



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# CHAPTER 1: PURPOSE AND NEED

## Purpose and Need for Action

The State of North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) is requesting a special use permit (SUP) from the National Park Service (NPS) to construct several facilities within the boundaries of Cape Hatteras National Seashore (Seashore) (Fig. 1 and 2) to support the operation of a new passenger ferry system. NCDOT has been a partner with the NPS in providing transportation services and facilities for park visitors and the communities on both Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands for several decades. A change in the vehicle ferry route has increased the travel time between Hatteras and Ocracoke Island and reduced the frequency of vessel trips. The ensuing increased vehicle ferry wait times have resulted in a decline in ferry ridership which has also resulted in a reduction in the number of visitors that can travel to the Seashore and Village on Ocracoke. These issues have been documented in the recent Ocracoke-Hatteras Passenger Ferry Feasibility Study (Volkert, Inc. 2016).

The Hatteras-Ocracoke Passenger Ferry project would help provide another option for transportation service to the Seashore and may alleviate some of the vehicle congestion and wait time experienced during the peak tourist season from May through September. This new passenger ferry service would encourage riders to park their cars on Hatteras Island when they visit Ocracoke Island thereby helping to reduce traffic congestion on Ocracoke Island and create a more sustainable transportation service between the two islands. The new ferry system would include two 100 person capacity ferries and make up to eight trips a day between Hatteras and Ocracoke. This ferry service is exclusively dedicated to passenger transit; no vehicles would be transported on this ferry. Establishing the new passenger ferry service would require improvements at both the Hatteras Terminal and the Ocracoke Terminal within several areas of the Seashore.

All proposed improvements would be within the footprint of the existing facilities and disturbed areas on Seashore property. Minor improvements which would allow for appropriate levels of parking, safe and adequate docking facilities and provide for appropriate shelters for passenger ferry users would enhance the passenger ferry service for park visitors and the two communities on the islands.

The federal action analyzed in this environmental assessment (EA) is for the Seashore to decide whether or not to issue a SUP to NCDOT. The SUP would authorize NCDOT to construct the improvements and for long-term maintenance of the passenger ferry system within Seashore boundaries. The decision to authorize the operation of the NCDOT passenger ferry system itself is outside the scope of this EA.

Figure 1: Proposed Hatteras Ferry Terminal Improvements

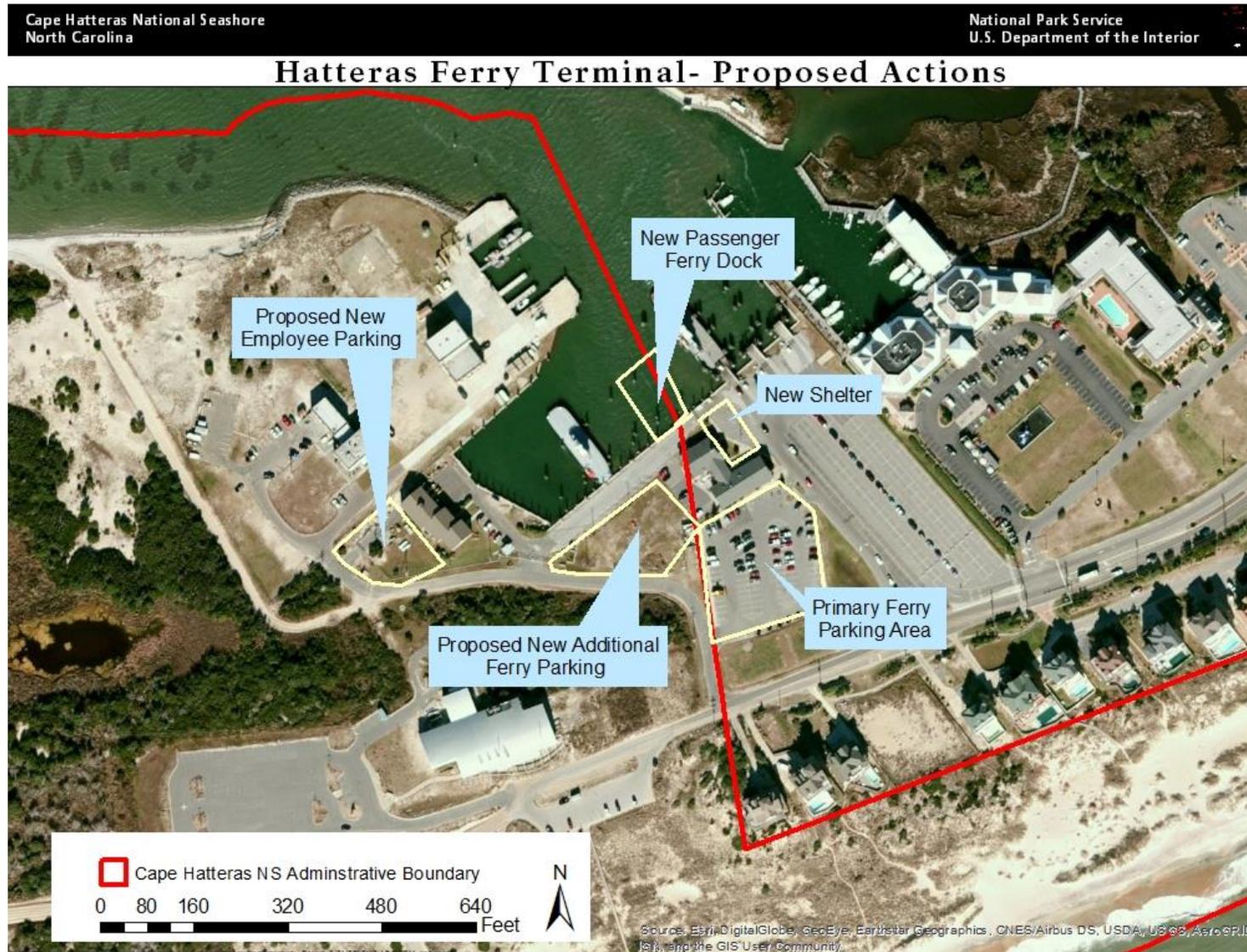
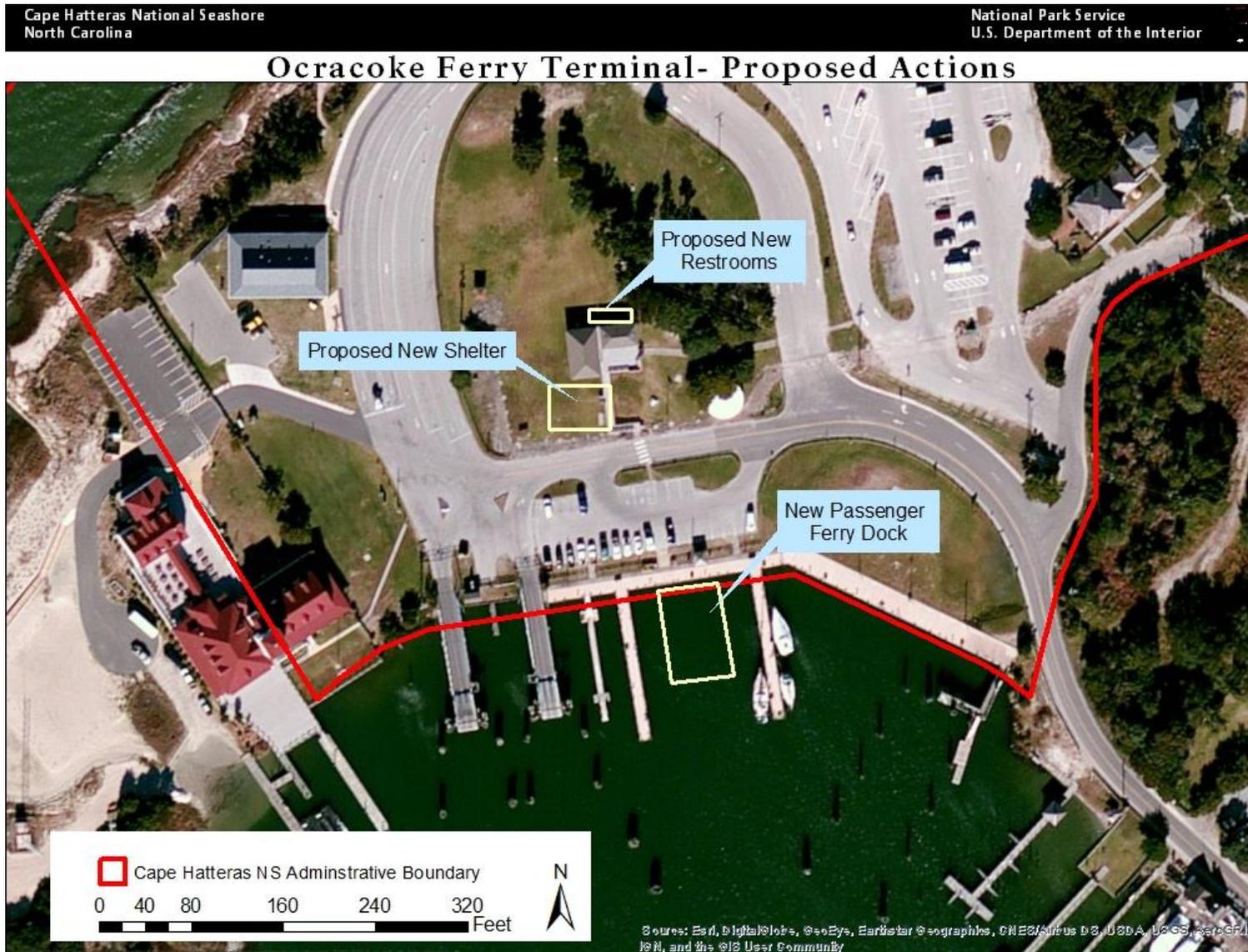


Figure 2: Proposed Ocracoke Ferry Terminal Improvements



## Impact Topics Retained for Further Analysis

The following topics are carried forward for further analysis in this EA:

- Visitor Use and Experience
- Socioeconomics

## Impact Topics Dismissed from Further Analysis

The following topics are dismissed from further analysis in this EA for the reasons provided. Unless otherwise noted, no impacts are associated under the no action alternative.

### Air Quality & Green House Gas Emissions

Cape Hatteras National Seashore is located in an area classified by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as being in attainment for all six criteria air pollutants under the Clean Air Act (CAA), meaning, this area is protected under several provisions of the CAA including the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) and the Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) of Air Quality Program.

The project would result in a limited increase of Green House Gas emissions (GHGs) from the use of construction equipment. Construction related activities would result in a localized increase of vehicle exhaust, emissions, and fugitive dust throughout the eight month construction period. Periodic use (i.e. hourly) of various types of equipment (excavators, backhoes, pavers, and material delivery trucks) over the eight month period would produce emissions that are very small relative to those produced from visitor and local transportation within the park, and would make an inconsequential contribution to the park's overall emissions profile. Any increase in GHGs would cease once construction is complete; therefore no long-term contribution of GHGs would occur under either Alternative discussed in this EA.

### Archeological Resources

The proposed location of a passenger ferry shelter is within one of the Seashore's archeological sites, identified as CAHA-51 Ocracoke Naval Amphibious Training Station. On January 16, 1944, a former Navy anti-submarine patrol base was converted to a Naval Amphibious Training Station with as many as 500-600 men on station, and in 1945 served as a Combat Information Center. The naval station was closed in 1946, and many of the building materials left behind were salvaged by the local residents who considered it abandoned property. On July 14, 1953, the nearly 22 acres of the former Amphibious Training Station and all remaining improvements thereon were transferred to the Department of the Interior for inclusion within Cape Hatteras National Seashore. Today, the only known structure that still remains from the Naval Amphibious Training Station is a large circular metal cistern (water tank) located facing the parking lot near the Visitor Center. On March 16, 2017, archeological monitoring and testing was performed by Timothy J. Brock of WSP/Parsons Brinckerhoff in conjunction with the geotechnical boring that was conducted for the proposed shelter that is requested for construction next to the Ocracoke Island Visitor Center. Further shovel testing at the site was performed by the Southeast Archeological Center (SEAC) on April 10, 2017. From the available data that currently exists from the archeological testing for this project, it is clear that the proposed shelter would to some degree impact the remains of the World War II era Ocracoke Naval Amphibious Training Station (CAHA-51) that are present within the area of potential effect. These remains are primarily in the form of building rubble along with a few

miscellaneous artifacts are greatly disturbed in nature and evidently combined with layers of fill deposits with little likelihood that any significant archeological information associated with this WWII facility would be lost by the construction of a shelter at this location. Below the WWII era deposits lies a roughly two foot thick layer of sterile sand, and below this at a depth of roughly 3.5 feet there appears to be the remains of an earlier historic occupation of an unknown time period and quite possibly also brought in as fill material. According to the SEAC archaeologist, the construction of the shelter next to the Ocracoke Island Visitor Center is unlikely to cause any substantial impact to the apparent historic remains that lay buried some three feet below the surface and can thus be allowed to proceed without further archeological investigation. The NPS has determined that the project would have No Adverse Effect as a result of implementing either Alternative discussed in this EA (NPS 2017a). The NPS has submitted this project to the State Historic Preservation Office for their concurrence.

### **Historic Structures**

The project falls within the National Register-listed Ocracoke Historic District. A Historic Architecture and Landscape Assessment of Effects form was completed by a state historic architectural technician in December 2016 in which they determined the project would not introduce anything incompatible with the historic district and made a No Adverse Effect determination to the State Historic Preservation Office in January 2017. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with this determination. This project would have No Adverse Effect on the District as a result of implementing either Alternative discussed in this EA. (Appendix A).

### **Cultural Landscapes**

According to the NPS Director's Order-28: *Cultural Resource Management Guideline*, a cultural landscape is a reflection of human adaptation and use of natural resources, and is often expressed in the way land is organized and divided, patterns of settlement, land use, systems of circulation, and the types of structures that are built. A cultural landscape report for the Ocracoke Light Station was completed in 2016 and provides further information regarding the area surrounding the Ocracoke Visitor Center. From 1939 to 1940, a USCG Station was built on the southern end of Ocracoke Island. During World War II, the U.S. Navy operated a Section Base (1942–1944), Amphibious Training Base (1944–1945), and Combat Information Center (1945) just across Silver Lake Harbor from the lighthouse. The area around Silver Lake has always been a hub of activity on Ocracoke Island; however, it is not a designated cultural landscape that is maintained by the Seashore. The only NPS maintained cultural landscape on Ocracoke Island is the Ocracoke Light Station landscape, which is outside of the area of potential effect for this project (NPS 2016). The NPS has determined that the project would have No Adverse Effect as a result of implementing either Alternative discussed in this EA.

### **Ethnographic Resources**

The NPS defines ethnographic resources as any "site, subsistence, or other significance in the cultural system of a group traditionally associated with it" (Director's Order-28). From the earliest times of permanent settlement, fishing was a primary occupation on the Outer Banks. The use of small boats and local modifications in gear became Outer Banks folkways, largely because of the shallowness of the sounds. Light keepers and lifesavers became increasingly important after the Civil War, and this was especially true on Ocracoke Island, which has both a light station and a lifesaving station (later a Coast Guard station). In 2002, the NPS conducted an ethnographic and ethnohistorical study of the neighboring communities along Cape Hatteras National Seashore. The intent of the study, entitled *Ethnohistorical Description of the Eight Villages Adjoining Cape Hatteras National Seashore and Interpretive Themes of History and Heritage*, was to better understand the social, cultural, and economic histories of communities

affected by its policies and actions. According to the general management plan (NPS 1984) and the NPS Cultural resource staff to date no ethnographic resources within the park have been determined eligible for listing in the National Register.

### **Indian Trust Resources and Sacred Sites**

Trust resources are those natural resources reserved by or for Indian tribes through treaties, statutes, judicial decisions, and executive orders, which are protected by fiduciary obligation on the part of the United States (NPS 2006). There are no Indian trust resources in the Seashore. Sacred sites are those places having established religious meaning and as locales of private ceremonial activities (NPS 2006). Through consultation efforts (see Ethnographic Resources), the park has not been made aware of any Indian sacred sites at or near the project site.

### **Environmental Justice**

In accordance with the Department of the Interior Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance (OEPC) Environmental Compliance Memorandum 95-3, Hatteras and Ocracoke were assessed to contain both minority and low-income populations. However, this environmental assessment demonstrates that the impacts that could result from implementation of the alternatives would be few and would not be disproportionately high with regard to human health or environmental impacts on minorities or low-income populations. The passenger ferry system would remain available for use by all people regardless of race or income, and any construction workforces would not be hired based on race or income. Furthermore, the park staff and planning team actively solicited public participation as part of the planning process and gave equal consideration to all input from persons regardless of age, race, income status, or other socioeconomic or demographic factors. In summary, environmental justice would not be impacted as a result of implementing either Alternative discussed in this EA.

### **Soundscape**

Natural sounds (e.g. flowing water, wind blowing through trees, birds calling) predominate the Seashore, where visitors have opportunities throughout most of the park to experience natural sounds in an unimpaired condition. The sounds of civilization (mechanical and other human-created sounds) are generally confined to developed areas of the Seashore. Within the project areas, which are highly developed sites, visitors and residents regularly experience the sounds of vehicles, ferries, motorized equipment, and other people that at times interfere with the natural sounds of the Seashore. Construction projects, often geared toward visitor use improvements and infrastructure and developments for island residents, occur both periodically and sporadically throughout each project area. Periodic use (i.e. hourly) of various types of equipment (pavers, tampers, rollers, bobcats, power drills, etc.) over the eight month period would produce sounds that are comparatively isolated to those produced from visitor highway transportation within the park, and would make an inconsequential contribution to the park's overall soundscape profile (see Best Management Practices). Any increase in construction noise would cease once construction is complete; therefore no long-term impact to the soundscape would occur under either Alternative discussed in this EA.

### **Vegetation and Soils**

The vast majority of the 4.7 acre project area occurs in existing footprints of developed areas. Less than 0.80 acres of the project area is vegetated and primarily with non-native turf grasses such as a hybrid Bermuda grass (GIS 2017b). The vegetative areas within the project area are maintained as lawns for public use and have been highly manipulated (NPS 2017c, pers. comm.).

Predominate soils within the project sites are eolian sands, specifically a Newhan fine sand at the Ocracoke project area and a Corolla fine sand and Newhan-Corolla Complex sand in the Hatteras area (NRCS 2017). These soils are moderately to excessively well drained soil types. Each of these project areas have been previously disturbed and compacted from the construction of all the facilities within both project sites. Any soil excavated during the project would be backfilled to the original location or removed out of the Seashore. Project actions would reduce the soil permeability within specific areas which would then create surface runoff from rain events.

Approximate 0.76 acres of non-native vegetation and eolian soils would be impacted from the installation of the open air shelter, sidewalks, ramp and construction of parking areas. Following construction, this area would be revegetated by seeding and/or planting it with similar turf grasses. Ropes, stakes, and signs would be installed to deter visitors from tramping newly seeded/ revegetated areas. The small scale of the permanently impacted area (approximate .64 acres) would have both short-term and long term impacts but would be less than minor within these two developed project areas, therefore no significant impacts to vegetation and soils would occur under either Alternative discussed in this EA.

### **Wildlife and Special Status Species**

The Seashore provides nesting, resting, foraging, and feeding habitat for a diverse assemblage of wildlife species, including many that are not federally or state-listed species. Several common bird species, reptiles, and mammals (such as seagulls, ducks, geese, rabbit and squirrels) inhabit or are transient to the proposed project areas. The Seashore is also home to migratory bird species, protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, that use habitat at the Seashore during the winter or migration. In 1999, the American Bird Conservancy designated the Seashore as a Globally Important Bird Area in recognition of its value in bird migration, breeding, and wintering (American Bird Conservancy 2005). Construction related activities and noise may cause wildlife to completely avoid the project area for up to eight months; however, species utilizing the area are acclimated to high volumes of vehicle and visitor use as a result of the nearby developments in the area. As previously mentioned in the vegetation and soil section above, there would be .76 acres of general wildlife habitat disturbed from the construction of the proposed actions, but this area is frequently disturbed by visitors and the habitat is not ideal for most of the Seashore wildlife species.

An official federal species list was obtained from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) Information for Planning and Conservation (IpaC) website (<https://ecos.fws.gov/ipac/>). As of November 10, 2016, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Services list seventeen federally protected species for Dare County and sixteen federally protected species for Hyde County (Table 1). Species with the federal classification of Endangered, Threatened, or Proposed for such listing are protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.).

Table 1: Species with Federal Classification of Endangered, Threatened, or Proposed for Listing

Common Name	Scientific name	Federal Status	Dare	Hyde	Suitable Habitat Present	Effect Determination
<b>Mammals</b>						
<b>American alligator</b>	<i>Alligator mississippiensis</i>	T(S/A)	X	X	No	N/A
<b>Bald eagle</b>	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	BGPA	X	X	No	No Take
<b>Green sea turtle</b>	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>	T	X	X	No	No Effect
<b>Hawksbill sea turtle</b>	<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>	E	X	X	No	No Effect
<b>Kemp's ridley sea turtle</b>	<i>Lepidochelys kempii</i>	E	X	X	No	No Effect
<b>Leatherback sea turtle</b>	<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>	E	X	X	No	No Effect
<b>Loggerhead sea turtle</b>	<i>Caretta caretta</i>	T	X	X	No	No Effect
<b>Northern long-eared bat</b>	<i>Myotis septentrionalis</i>	T	X	-	No	No Effect
<b>Piping plover</b>	<i>Charadrius melodus</i>	T	X	X	No	No Effect
<b>Red knot</b>	<i>Calidris canutus rufa</i>	T	X	X	No	No Effect
<b>Red wolf</b>	<i>Canis rufus</i>	EXP	X	X	No	No Effect
<b>Red-cockaded woodpecker</b>	<i>Picoides borealis</i>	E	X	X	No	No Effect
<b>Roseate tern</b>	<i>Sterna dougallii dougallii</i>	T	X	-	No	No Effect
<b>West Indian manatee</b>	<i>Trichechus manatus</i>	E	X	X	No	May Effect but Not Likely to Adversely Effect

Fish						
<b>Atlantic Sturgeon</b>	<i>Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus</i>	E	X	X	No	No Effect
<b>Shortnose Sturgeon</b>	<i>Acipenser brevirostrum</i>	E	X	X	No	No Effect
Plants						
<b>Sensitive joint-vetch</b>	<i>Aeschynomene virginica</i>	T	-	X	No	No Effect
<b>Seabeach amaranth</b>	<i>Amaranthus pumilus</i>	T	X	X	No	No Effect

Habitat for northern long-eared bat, piping plover, red knot, red wolf, red-cockaded woodpecker, roseate tern, seabeach amaranth, and sensitive joint-vetch does not occur within the project area.

Habitat for marine species, including Green sea turtle, Hawksbill sea turtle, Kemp's Ridley sea turtle, Leatherback sea turtle, Loggerhead sea turtle, Atlantic sturgeon, and short-nose sturgeon are not expected to occur since project activities would take place within highly developed marinas and on land where historically, according to park annual reports, these species are not found within the project area. As previously described, the vast majority of the project area occurs within the existing footprint of developed areas. The project area occurring outside of the parking lot consists of compacted dirt and non-native vegetation. Neither of the project areas provides the appropriate habitat for any of the species indicated above.

NCDOT sent a letter to the USFWS dated January 23, 2017 indicating that the proposed passenger ferry dock installation *may effect but likely to adversely affect* to only one federally listed species, the West Indian manatee (*Trichenchus manatus*). The NCDOT has agreed to implement the USFWS Guidelines for Avoiding Impacts to the West Indian Manatee: precautionary measures for construction activities in North Carolina Waters (Appendix B). The NPS submitted a request to the USFWS to use the concurrence documentation submitted by the NCDOT as Section 7 consultation. The USFWS informally concurred with the NPS's determination that the proposed project *may affect but is not likely to adversely affect* the West Indian manatee and will have *no effect* on red knot, piping plover, roseate tern or any other federally listed species under jurisdiction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

### **Water Resources, including Floodplains and Wetlands**

The Clean Water Act establishes the basic structure for regulating discharges of pollutants into the waters of the United States and for regulating water quality standards for surface waters. The purpose of the Clean Water Act is to "restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters." 2006 *Management Policies* requires protection of water quality consistent with the Clean Water Act and also states that NPS would perpetuate surface waters and groundwaters as integral components of park aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. Parking areas can affect the condition of water resources through alteration of

surface runoff and drainage patterns, alteration of associated hydrologic and geomorphic processes, and by introducing compounds from construction activities, road materials, or motor vehicles that may contribute to water contamination (Trombulak and Frissell 2000). The proposed action involves constructing new parking areas, shelters and sidewalks, all of which would increase the spatial extent of .67 acres of impermeable surfaces and increase the generation of runoff. Overall, the incremental changes in surface runoff would be small relative to effects of the existing developed area, and additional long-term effects on hydrologic processes would be less than minor. Short-term effects of construction activities on sedimentation and water quality also would be minor or less due to implementation of best management practices.

The open waters comprising the estuarine system within the Silver Lake Harbor and Austin Creek are considered to be high quality habitat and have been designated as Areas of Environmental Concern (AECs) by the N.C. Coastal Resources Commission and regulated by the N.C. Division of Coastal Management (NCDCM). Impacts to AECs, including dock construction and placement of fill for parking areas and other upland improvements at both harbor locations, require a permit from the NCDCM pursuant to the Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA). The installation of the new boat docks are outside of NPS boundaries and the NPS boat docks would not be removed for this project. It was for these reasons water resources was removed from analysis in this EA.

Executive Order 11990 *Protection of Wetlands* requires federal agencies to avoid, where possible, adversely impacting wetlands. Further, §404 of the Clean Water Act authorizes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to prohibit or regulate, through a permitting process, discharge or dredged or fill material or excavation within waters of the United States. National Park Service policies for wetlands as stated in 2006 *Management Policies* and Director's Order 77-1 *Wetlands Protection* strive to prevent the loss or degradation of wetlands and to preserve and enhance the natural and beneficial values of wetlands.

Executive Order 11988 *Floodplain Management* requires all federal agencies to avoid construction within the 100-year floodplain unless no other practicable alternative exists. The National Park Service under 2006 *Management Policies* and Director's Order 77-2 *Floodplain Management* would strive to preserve floodplain values and minimize hazardous floodplain conditions. Although the parking areas, a shelter and sidewalk locations are within a 100-year floodplain "entrance, access, and internal roads to or within units of the NPS" as well as unoccupied structures are exempted from the requirements specified in the *National Park Service Floodplain Management Guidelines* (NPS 1993). The proposed new improvements would not modify the existing floodplain systems in any way. In summary, no water, floodplain or wetland resources would be impacted as a result of implementing either Alternative discussed in this EA.

### **Lightscapes**

In accordance with 2006 *Management Policies*, NPS endeavors to preserve natural ambient lightscapes, which are natural resources and values that exist in the absence of human caused light (NPS 2006). The park strives to limit the use of artificial outdoor lighting to that which is necessary for basic safety requirements. The park also strives to ensure that all outdoor lighting is shielded to the maximum extent possible, to keep light on the intended subject and out of the night sky. No outdoor lighting is proposed as part of this project and no night work would occur that would affect the night sky. In summary, no lightscapes would be impacted as a result of implementing either Alternative discussed in this EA.

## CHAPTER 2: ALTERNATIVES

Two alternatives, action and no action, are carried forward for evaluation in this EA. A number of suggestions and alternate designs were also considered and dismissed (see the Alternatives Considered and Dismissed section).

### Alternatives Carried Forward

#### Alternative A – No Action

Under the no action alternative, the NPS would not issue a Special Use Permit to NCDOT to authorize the construction of improvements or the long-term maintenance of the passenger ferry system within NPS boundaries. There would be no new option to help transport visitors to and from Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands beside the existing vehicle ferry system.

Without the Seashore's authorization to construct improvements for a new ferry system, the NCDOT has stated they would not be able to operate the passenger ferry system at all (NPS 2017d, per.comm). NCDOT would not be able to continue to move forward with all other actions required for the passenger ferry system regardless unless they received a SUP from the NPS for improvements on property. These actions would not include the construction of two new passenger ferries, the construction of one floating dock at the Hatteras Ferry Terminal and one at the Silver Lake Ferry Terminal, the construction of an open air shelter at the Hatteras Ferry Terminal, and construction of parking areas.

Visitors and locals would only be able to visit the Seashore on Ocracoke Island by the existing vehicle ferry system.

Under this alternative, The Seashore would continue to conduct business as usual and provide limited visitor services at the Ocracoke visitor center. Maintenance and cleaning of the NPS restrooms would remain the same.

#### Alternative B – Issue a Special Use Permit for the Construction of Improvements to Support the NCDOT Passenger Ferry (Proposed Action and NPS Preferred)

Under this alternative, the Seashore would authorize the construction of several improvements, within Seashore boundaries, for the NCDOT Hatteras-Ocracoke Passenger Ferry project through a Special Use Permit.

The following improvements are proposed within the Seashore:

- Existing Hatteras ferry terminal space would be converted into two additional parking lots to accommodate passenger vehicles and NCDOT ferry division employees (approximately 0.2 & 0.4 acres in size to create an additional 65 parking spaces) (Fig 3).
- A new open air passenger waiting facility (~1500 sq.ft.) would be constructed in front of the Ocracoke visitor center to shelter passenger ferry users from the sun and rain (Fig 4).

- Sidewalk improvements to connect the passenger waiting area to the Ocracoke visitor center and ferry dock would be constructed to create safe passage ways for travelers (Fig 4).
- A transit pullout area in front of the Ocracoke visitor center would be constructed to allow for safe pick-up and drop-off of passenger ferry users (Fig 4).
- Three new restroom (one male, one female and one family/gender neutral) facilities would be constructed behind the Ocracoke visitor center on the existing permit trailer foundation to augment the NPS's existing restroom facilities (Fig 4).
- Relocation of the existing boardwalk/ramp at the visitor center.

Figure 3: Conceptual Diagram of Proposed Actions at Hatteras Terminal

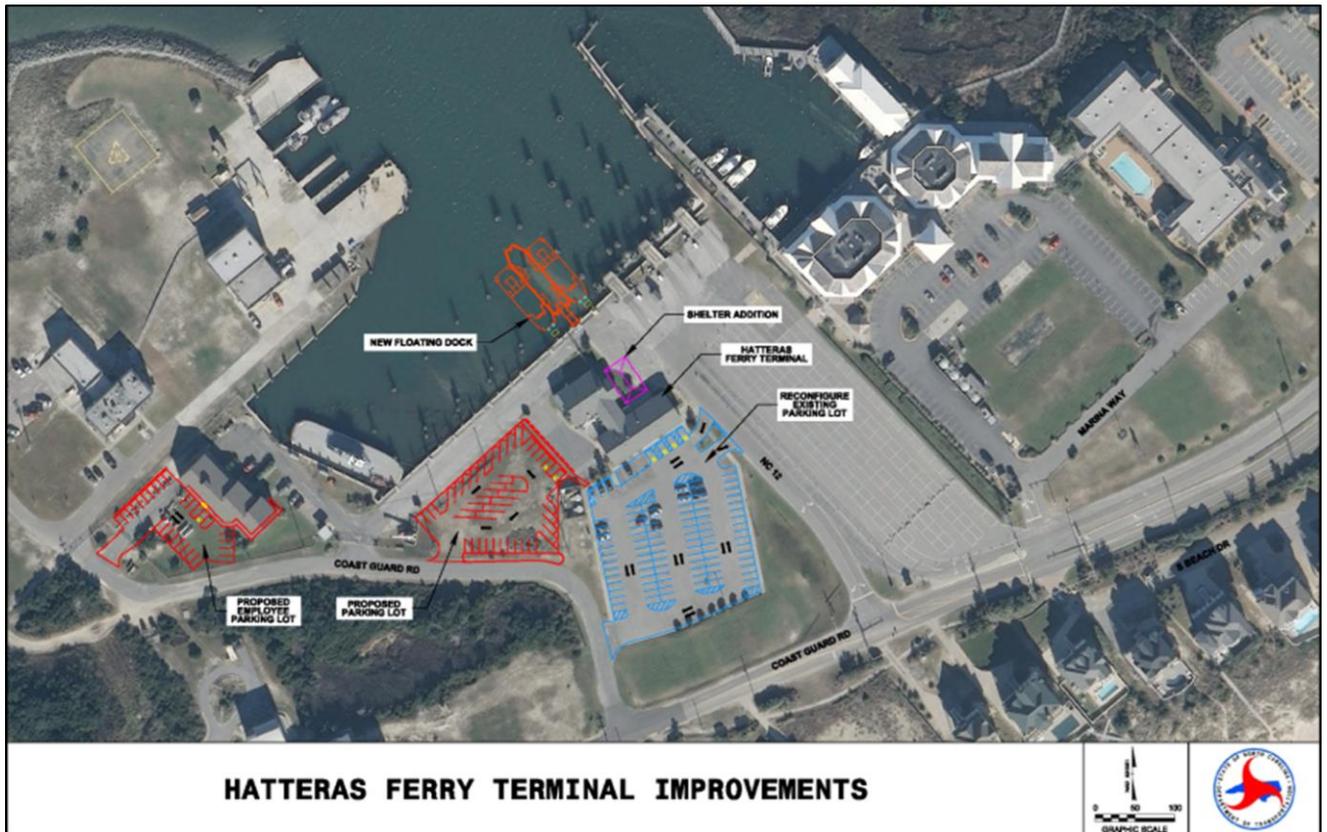
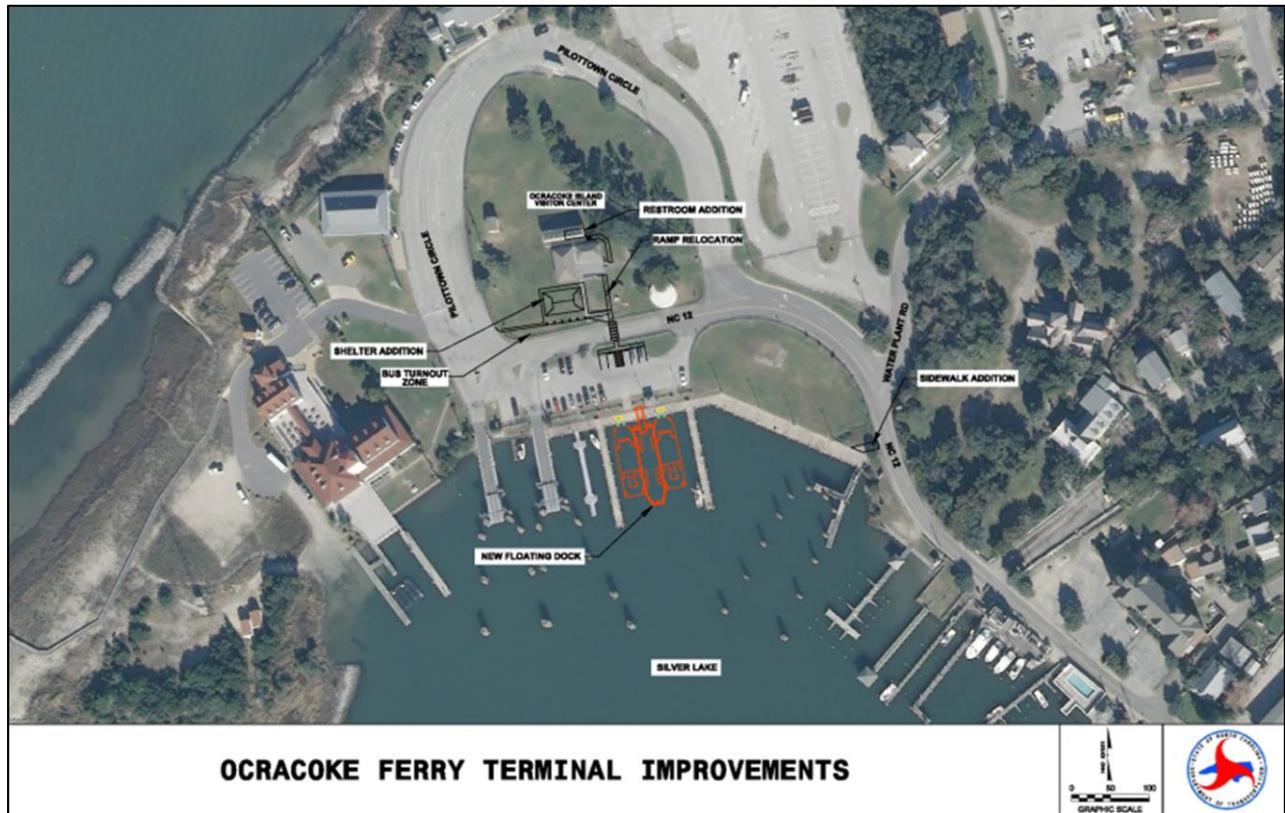


Figure 4: Conceptual Diagram of Proposed Action at Ocracoke Terminal



A SUP issued by the NPS would allow NCDOT and its contractors conditional authority to begin construction on the proposed improvements on NPS property outlined above. The duration of the permit would be until all construction, rehabilitation, and restoration work has been completed. Construction is estimated to last eight months over the off season and restoration is estimated to take up to a year.

The SUP would also authorize NCDOT the use of NPS land for the long-term maintenance of the project within NPS boundaries. Conditions for construction and best management practices would be included in the permit.

## Alternatives Considered and Dismissed

As described in Table 2, the following suggestions and alternative locations for the project were considered but dismissed from further consideration. These include suggestions from public scoping, as well as the project planning team.

Table 2: Suggestions and alternative locations dismissed from further consideration

Suggestions/Alternative Locations Dismissed	Reason for Dismissal
<b>Create improvements to the South Dock terminal</b>	This alternative would require a SUP for terminal expansion and improvements at Hatteras and South Dock on Ocracoke Islands. A trial run performed by NCDOT from Hatteras to South Dock made it clear that this ferry route did not meet the objectives for improving transportation for the NCDOT. This alternative would require a longer transit route to connect passengers with Ocracoke Village and create additional complexities in terms of safety and efficiency. A transit system would need to be in place to move passengers into Ocracoke village. This alternative would have greater environmental impacts to providing improvements at the South Dock area than at the more developed Ocracoke area within NPS boundaries and would not meet the NCDOT objectives for improving transportation service to Ocracoke village.
<b>Construction of improvements within other areas of NPS boundaries.</b>	Several locations for shelter and parking lot placement were considered within NPS boundaries. One option was to expand the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum parking area in Hatteras to accommodate passenger ferry user's vehicles. This expansion would have adversely impacted (.40 acres) an undisturbed wetland area and the visitor experience and operations at the museum. In Ocracoke, the floating dock and open air shelter were proposed to be located on the east side of the visitor center in a less developed area. This would have required the NPS boat docks to be relocated and reconfigured. The shelter was proposed to be constructed in an open area which would have impacted the overall viewshed of the site and have a greater environmental and operational impact to the NPS than the proposed action alternative.

## Best Management Practices

The following best management practices (BMP's) would minimize the degree and/or extent of adverse impacts and would be implemented during the project. NPS would ensure that these BMP's would be included in the SUP:

### *General Construction*

- Building and site design would be as compatible as practicable with the existing architectural characteristics of the park facilities through similar architectural features, materials, and color.
- All construction generated debris would be removed from the park to an approved landfill.
- Any park infrastructure impacted during construction, including but not limited to paved and unpaved roadways, walkways, turf, shall be restored to pre-construction conditions upon completion of the project.

- Construction materials shall be chosen so as to cause as little impact to the site as possible. Treated lumber and any other materials which might cause detrimental leaching shall be avoided.
- Construction Zone shall be clearly marked. Fencing or other type of NPS approved temporary barriers shall be installed.
- Project activities shall allow reasonable access for visitors, partners, and employees commuting to/from local communities. Important not to unreasonably deter visitor access to park facilities.
- Additional standard conditions within the Special Use Permit shall be adhered to.
- Project applicant would forward a copy of all other agency permits related to the undertaking of the project. Copies would be forwarded to the park's compliance office for inclusion in the project's administrative record.
- Dock construction and placement of fill for parking areas and other upland improvements at both harbor locations require a permit from the NCDCM pursuant to the Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA).

#### *Soils and Vegetation*

- Project limits of disturbance (LOD) would be clearly marked and verified prior to any construction work. No work shall be conducted beyond the marked LOD.
- At completion of action/project, area used is restored in a timely manner to pre-action or better condition (e.g. all temporary marking/fencing/flagging is removed). Follow-up monitoring may be required if area not restored to the satisfaction of the Superintendent.
- Fueling of any type, whether equipment or vehicles, must be done either on non-pervious surfaces such as concrete or asphalt, or deploy a spill containment pad.
- Equipment must be free of any fluid leaks (fuel, oil, hydraulic fluid, etc.) upon arrival to the work site and would be inspected at the beginning of each shift for leaks. Leaking equipment would be removed off site for necessary repairs before the commencement of work.
- Parking of personal vehicles would be within designated areas only. Only company/government vehicles are permitted on site.
- The project shall include a pre-construction meeting and a final inspection meeting, in addition to regularly scheduled project meetings and site visits.
- Contractor must be required to maintain fence lines once they have been installed and/or repaired.
- Construction materials staging areas would be restricted to previously disturbed sites.
- Project leaders, during project planning, shall develop erosion control design elements. This erosion plan shall be reviewed and approved by the appropriate federal, state, local review authorities.
- Construction activities shall be restricted during saturated soil conditions or severe weather conditions to avoid damage to soils and vegetation.
- Ground surface treatment would include grading to natural contours, topsoil and topsoil mantle replacement, seeding, and planting. This work would occur as soon after the completion of construction as possible.
- Soil and fill material must be weed-free and from a source approved by the National Park Service.
- To minimize the amount of ground disturbance, staging and stockpiling areas shall be located in previously disturbed sites, away from visitor use areas to the greatest extent possible. All staging and stockpiling areas shall be returned to pre-construction conditions following construction.

- Soil disturbance shall be minimized to the greatest extent possible to reduce disturbance to native plants and reduce the potential for the introduction or spread of invasive non-native plant species.

#### *Archeological Resources*

- Should construction unearth cultural resources, work would be stopped in the area of discovery and the park would consult with the State Historic Preservation Officer and the in accordance with §36 CFR 800.13, Post Review Discoveries. In the unlikely event that human remains are discovered during construction, provisions outlined in the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990) would be followed.

#### *Visitor Use and Experience*

- The park's Public Affairs Team shall be notified at least two weeks in advance of scheduled work and/or when start date has been established by contract, so that a news release may be prepared and sent to the public.
- A public information program to warn of temporary closures, delays, and road hazards during construction shall be implemented. This program would help convey appropriate messages to the public and aid in mitigating potential impacts on visitors' expectations and experiences
- Provide the public with the project schedule as soon as it is known and provide periodic updates of project work.
- To the extent practical, work shall be scheduled to avoid construction activity and construction related delays during peak visitation times. No holiday or night time work shall be allowed. Weekend work (Friday through Sunday) shall not be allowed unless authorized in writing by the park's Superintendent.
- No amplified artificial music (stereos, smartphones, etc.) would be allowed while conducting construction activities within visitor use areas such as the Ocracoke visitor center area.
- To reduce noise and pollution emissions, construction equipment would not idle any longer than is necessary for safety and/or mechanical reasons.

Superintendent may revoke the permit and stop the construction project, should any of the permit conditions and best management practices be violated.

## CHAPTER 3: AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This chapter describes the affected environment (existing setting or baseline conditions) and analyzes the potential environmental consequences (direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts or effects) that would occur as a result of implementing the alternatives.

Cumulative impacts are defined as “the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions” (40 CFR 1508.7). In order to determine the cumulative impacts it was necessary to examine past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions at Cape Hatteras National Seashore. Cumulative impacts are considered for the no action and the preferred alternative. The following projects were identified for the purpose of conducting the cumulative effects analysis:

### ***Past Actions***

- 1939 – US Coast Guard Station was built on the southern end of Ocracoke Island at Silver Lake.
- 1940’s - US Navy established a Section Base (1942-1944), an Amphibious Training Base (1944–1945), and Combat Information Center (1945) on the southern end of Ocracoke Island near the Coast Guard Station
- 1953 – NPS acquired 22 acre site of old Navy base in Ocracoke village
- 1956 – Construction of NPS marina and parking lots at Ocracoke’s Silver Lake
- 1957 – Opening of NPS visitor center converted from old harbor building at Silver Lake, Ocracoke
- 1957 – State of North Carolina began to provide a free ferry service from to Ocracoke Island from Hatteras village
- 1963 – Two-story modern brick Coast Guard Station Hatteras Inlet opened in Hatteras
- 1986 – Construction of new NPS Visitor Center in Ocracoke
- 2002 – Opening of the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum within NPS boundaries in Hatteras

### ***Present Actions***

- Repair of Ocracoke boat ramps
- Issuance of special use permits to conduct various special events around the Ocracoke Visitor Center.

### ***Foreseeable Future Actions***

- Site planning for housing and office space – a need to identify appropriate design and locations for long-term park operations and housing facilities within NPS boundaries of Ocracoke Village.
- Ocracoke Sanitary District Water Plant expansion – The Ocracoke Sanitary District is interested in replacing the water tower tank at the Ocracoke water plant facility within five

years. Their tank is within NPS boundaries and the district would be seeking a Special Use permit to expand and construct a larger tank.

- Transit system –Hyde County and NCDOT are interested in establishing a transit system to shuttle visitors from the passenger ferry into and around Ocracoke Village and to the Seashore.
- Transit system –Dare County and Hatteras Village are interested in establishing a transit system to shuttle visitors around Hatteras Village and to the Seashore.
- Issuance of Commercial Use Authorizations for the commercial operation of tours and transportation within Seashore boundaries.

## Visitor Use and Experience

### Affected Environment

The Seashore is managed according to NPS *Management Policies 2006*, which state that park resources and values are to be enjoyed presently and in the future by the people of the United States, and that NPS is committed to providing appropriate high-quality opportunities for all visitors (NPS 2006). Accordingly, there are a number of visitor use opportunities at the Seashore. Recreational activities include shelling, birding, kayaking, canoeing, windsurfing, camping, fishing, hunting, swimming, auto touring, lighthouse climbing, biking, hiking, horseback riding, stargazing, surfing, kite boarding, and wildlife viewing.

Annual visitation to the Seashore over the last 10 years has ranged from 1.9 million to 2.4 million visits, with the lowest count occurring in 2011 and the highest in 2016 (NPS 2017e). Visits are highest in June, July, and August with more than 350,000 visits in each of those months in 2016 (NPS 2017e).

Ocracoke Island has no roadway accessibility and can only be reached by air or water. The NCDOT Ferry System makes travel to Ocracoke much more accessible for visitors. The increased ease of access provided by the ferry system to this otherwise remote coastal North Carolina islands has allowed tourism to thrive. Currently visitors travel via vehicle ferry from Hatteras Island to Ocracoke Island, Cedar Island to Ocracoke Island and Swan Quarter to Ocracoke. Recent ferry counts reflect that on average 38,000 visitors access Ocracoke during the peak season from the three ferry routes (NCDOT 2017).

A recent passenger ferry survey indicated that approximately 97 percent of the rides in the peak demand periods were visitors to Ocracoke with 83 percent of those visitors taking a day trip to the island (Volkert, Inc 2016). Twenty five percent were visitors on a day trip from Hatteras and spent time solely in Ocracoke Village. In contrast, visitation to Ocracoke Island has decreased (NCDOT 2017) over the last few years due to the change in ferry route. In 2013, shoaling in the Hatteras Inlet required the NCDOT to use a longer, deeper route between Hatteras and Ocracoke which increased crossing times from 40 minutes to one hour. According to NCDOT, this new route has decreased the number of ferry crossings in each direction by 47%. This reduction of ferries has created longer wait times and reduced number of visitors to Ocracoke by either by unmet travel demand or those visitors abandoning their trip to Ocracoke all together due to long queues of vehicles waiting for a ferry. According to the Ocracoke-Hatteras Passenger Ferry Feasibility study, a vehicle waiting 60<sup>th</sup> in the queue could expect to wait 45 minutes. A vehicle waiting 100<sup>th</sup> in the queue line could wait 80 minutes to board a ferry. During the sampling day during peak hours, 398 vehicles were present from 8:55am to 2:25pm and 37 vehicles, almost 10% of vehicles for that day, turned around and left the ferry terminal. Over the

course of the peak season in 2014, 57,428 vehicles traveled to Ocracoke from Hatteras. It was estimated that 2.2% of the total vehicles abandoned their trip based on data collected which then resulted in approximately 1,273 vehicles not making the trip.

The visitor center at Ocracoke is a small 1,100 square foot building that is co-located with the NPS partner Eastern National, the company that runs the gift shop within the building. According to visitation statistics, visitation to the NPS visitor center/gift shop in Ocracoke has averaged 7551 monthly visitors from May through September. Peak daily visitation has reached up to 395 visitors a day during the summer season but on average 245 visitors come to the park visitor center/gift shop (NPS 2017f).

Restroom facilities at Ocracoke visitor center are located next to the visitor center/ gift shop. These facilities consist of one male and one female restroom and are sufficient for the current level of visitation the visitor center receives. The NCDOT Ferry Division operates a ferry terminal within 100 yards of the vehicle ferry dock and 75 yards from NPS facilities.

NPS boat dock facilities are available for public use and consist of 17 slips with electricity and water. These slips are quite popular and are consistently being used during the peak season. During the weekends the boat slips are regularly occupied (NPS 2017g, per comm.). On average 175 boats use the boat docks during the months of May through July (NPS 2017f). The boat docks are located within Silver Lake marina in front of the Ocracoke visitor center and next to the existing NCDOT vehicle ferry dock for the Cedar Island and Swan Lake routes. One floating kayak slip is also available for the public to use within this project area.

### **Impacts of Alternative A—No Action**

Under Alternative A, the NPS would not issue a SUP to NCDOT to allow for the construction of improvements required for a passenger ferry system, therefore NCDOT would not move forward with the implementation of a new passenger ferry system. Seashore visitors would continue to come to Ocracoke via the various vehicle ferry routes. Travel to and from Hatteras to Ocracoke islands would only occur with the current vehicle ferry system. Although visitation is increasing overall at the Seashore, visitation to Ocracoke would continue to decline due to the current vehicle ferry system route which has caused a reduction of ferry trips and increased wait times. If visitation continues to increase to the Seashore so would unmet visitor demand to Ocracoke. This alternative would not be able to meet the unmet demand to the Seashore and would have a long-term negative affect.

Under this alternative, no change is expected to restroom or boat dock facilities. The existing restroom facilities at the Ocracoke visitor center/gift shop would be sufficient for the current visitor use they receive. All 17 slips on the NPS boat dock facilities would continue to be available to the public.

Overall, this alternative would have long-term, direct adverse impacts to Seashore visitor's traveling to and from Hatteras to Ocracoke Islands. While Alternative A would pose some moderate inconveniences such as waiting for the vehicle ferry or leaving due to the long vehicle ferry wait, impacts to visitor use and experience overall would be adverse and long-term.

### **Cumulative Effects**

Past actions such as construction of buildings, park roads, parking lots and other facilities have had direct adverse effects on visitors experience because of the inconvenience of possible off-limit areas, and from construction noise and dust. Ultimately, however, these actions would have a beneficial effect on visitor use and experience because of long-term improvements to the

human health and safety aspects to the visitor; the visual and natural environment of the resources; and functionality of the park. The foreseeable future actions related to site planning, transit systems and issuance of Commercial Use Authorizations for transportation tours could have a direct beneficial long-term effect on visitor use. Overall, past, present, and future activities have resulted in a mix of beneficial and adverse effects to visitor use and experience, all of which, cumulatively, are less than significant. The current proposed actions of Alternative A would not noticeably change the impacts that are already occurring and would be less than significant.

### **Impacts of Alternative B— (Proposed Action and NPS Preferred)**

Under Alternative B, a SUP would be issued to authorize the construction of improvements for a new passenger ferry and its long-term maintenance.

The Ocracoke-Hatteras Passenger Ferry feasibility study estimated the operation of two 100 passenger ferries, travelling eight times a day during the peak seasons of May through September would create an annual ridership of 74,800 visitors. Prior to 2013, visitation to Ocracoke averaged 88,000 visitors, 56% more visitors than last year in 2016. The additional visitors who may use the new passenger ferry system could increase current visitation by 52%. The new passenger ferry system would return Seashore visitation levels to those prior to 2013 when shoaling of the inlet occurred and would create a direct, long-term benefit to visitors accessing Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands.

The feasibility study also determined parking estimates by using a ridership of 580 people, on peak day and peak month. Although current daily visitation to Ocracoke visitor center is estimated to be 274 visitors the additional 300 visitors a day would require additional facilities. In the short term, the visitor experience would be directly adversely impacted by construction activities required to construct the shelter, parking areas and restrooms during their stay within the project areas over the eight month construction period. The introduction of construction noise would occur where it is common for visitors to periodically experience noise from a variety of mechanical and other human-made sounds (see Impact Topics Dismissed From Further Analysis: Soundscape section) and would be a minor inconvenience within project areas.

In the long-term, the quality of the visitor experience would improve with the availability of the new facilities when visitors travel to Ocracoke from Hatteras Island. Under this alternative, a shelter would be constructed to provide an area for passenger ferry users to wait out of the sun or inclement weather, a loading and unloading area next to the shelter would be created allowing visitors to safely wait for transportation. Sidewalks and crosswalks would be constructed to create safe passages for visitors debarking or accessing the ferry.

Visitor use and experience would have direct adverse and beneficial impacts as a result of improvements to support a passenger ferry. While Alternative B would pose some minor temporary inconveniences during construction activities from temporary closures and sounds the long-term improvements to provide parking, shelters and restrooms would have a moderate benefit to visitors to the Seashore.

### ***Cumulative Effects***

Past actions such as construction of buildings, park roads, parking lots and other facilities have had adverse effects on visitors experience because of the inconvenience of possible off-limit areas, and from construction noise and dust. Ultimately, however, these actions would have a beneficial effect on visitor use and experience because of long-term improvements to the human health and safety aspects of the visitor; the visual and natural environment of the

resources; and functionality of the park. The foreseeable future actions related to site planning, transit systems and issuance of Commercial Use Authorizations for transportation tours, however, could have a beneficial effect on visitor use. As previously described in this EA, the direct and indirect impacts of Alternative B on visitor use and experience would introduce temporary construction noise, delays, and area closures but would also provide increased visitor accessibility as well as a safe and convenient facilities. When the impacts of the proposed actions are combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future impacts, the total cumulative impact on visitor use and experience would have temporary adverse impacts but would result in long-term benefits on visitor use and experience. The incremental impacts of Alternative B would noticeably contribute to the impacts that are already occurring but overall, cumulatively, are less than significant.

## **Socioeconomics**

### **Affected Environment**

Visitation to the Seashore contributes to the local economy in several ways. First, it provides jobs to park employees, including seasonal, term, and permanent full- or part-time positions. Seashore employees spend their income and wages in local communities, which support additional jobs and income in these communities. The Seashore may also support the local economy if local vendors are utilized, through contracted construction services or purchases of supplies and materials, for example. Seashore visitors also spend their money in local gateway communities, which supports jobs, income, sales and tax revenues in those communities.

The NCDOT Ferry Division provides employment for 150 employees working the Hatteras to Ocracoke Ferry route. The NCDOT has been a partner to the NPS for several decades in providing transportation routes along the Seashore for visitors and the local communities.

According to a 2017 NPS Visitor Spending Effects Report, in 2016, park visitors spent an estimated \$153.8 million in local gateway communities while visiting the Seashore. These visitor expenditures supported a total of 2,000 jobs and generated \$55.7 million in local labor income. The total economic output to local gateway communities as a result of park visitors spending was \$162.8 million and a cumulative benefit to the state economy of \$191,709,500 (NPS 2015o). Visitor spending at restaurants, hotels, and retail establishments supported local jobs, sales and incomes. The report stated most park visitor spending was for lodging (31.2 percent) followed by food and beverages (27.2%), gas and oil (11.7 percent), admissions and fees (10.2 percent), souvenirs and other expenses (9.7 %), local transportation (7.4 %), and camping fees (2.5%).

According to the Ocracoke-Hatteras Passenger Ferry Feasibility Study (Volkert, Inc 2016), visitors using the Hatteras-Ocracoke route were surveyed to estimate how ferry service supports economic activity. This survey data was paired with NCDOT ridership data and input into the Transportation Economic Development Impact System to estimate the economic activity at the county level supported through tourism expenditures. During peak season (June through August), food, lodging and general merchandise expenditures were estimated to be approximately \$38.9 million. For those visitors who abandoned their trip after arriving at Hatteras Terminal planning to go to Ocracoke and seeing the long wait lines, this equated to approximately \$370,000 loss in tourism expenditures over the course of a season (Volkert, Inc 2016).

**Impacts of Alternative A—No Action**

Under Alternative A, the NPS would not issue a SUP to NCDOT to allow for the construction of improvements required for a passenger ferry system, therefore NCDOT would not move forward with the implementation of a new passenger ferry system. Direct adverse impacts of this alternative are expected to occur to retail, recreation, lodging and food service. Businesses, including NCDOT, would continue to operate as they currently do although they may face some decrease in output and employment through indirect and induced impacts of this alternative. Although visitation is increasing overall at the Seashore, visitation and potentially revenue to Ocracoke would continue to decline. There would be no additional revenue coming into Ocracoke from unmet visitor demand as described in the previous Visitor Use and Experience section. As stated above, this equates to \$370,000 loss in annual tourism expenditures on Ocracoke.

Under this alternative, the construction of facilities would not occur and would not provide employment and revenue benefits to the local communities from local contracted labor, building materials and supplies. This action would have a marginal impact to the local economies since most material and supplies come from outside the Islands, due to availability.

No change to socioeconomics is expected to occur from not constructing park restrooms or reconfiguring boat dock facilities. These facilities are NPS owned and would have a no net effect to the local economics.

Overall, this alternative would not be able to improve the socioeconomic benefits from increased visitation or employment. This alternative would have long-term negative impacts directly to the local communities from the no build actions to the reduction in visitors traveling to and from Hatteras to Ocracoke Islands.

***Cumulative Effects***

Past actions such as construction of buildings, park roads, parking lots and other facilities have directly benefitted socioeconomics and local communities on Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands. These actions have also indirectly benefitted other local communities, because construction improvements help maintain the seasonal and permanent workforce necessary to undertake those operations. The foreseeable future actions related to site planning, transit systems and issuance of Commercial Use Authorizations for transportation tours could have a direct beneficial long-term effect on socioeconomics of local communities by creating new business opportunities and employment. Overall, past, present, and future activities have resulted in beneficial effects to socioeconomics. This alternative could possibly diminish the benefits of the no action alternative. But while benefits could continue in the future, they alone would not be enough to remedy the current expenditure shortage in the local communities. While Alternative A would pose some direct loss in revenue to local communities, impacts to socioeconomics overall would be less than significant.

**Impacts of Alternative B— (Proposed Action and NPS Preferred)**

Under Alternative B, a SUP would be issued to authorize the construction of improvements for a new passenger ferry and its long-term maintenance. This alternative would support the partnership with NCDOT and could help to sustain local economies near the project area. Direct beneficial impacts of this alternative are expected to occur to local retail, recreation, lodging and food service businesses. Businesses and locals could see some increases in revenue and employment through direct and induced impacts of this alternative. NCDOT would employ an additional 10 people to operate the new passenger ferry between Hatteras and Ocracoke

Islands. This alternative would have a direct benefit improve unmet demand and reduce tourism expenditure loss.

Under this alternative, the construction of facilities would occur and could provide employment and revenue benefits to the local communities from local contracted labor, building materials and supplies. This action would have a minor beneficial impact to the local economies since most material and supplies come from outside the Islands, due to availability.

No change to socioeconomics is expected to occur from not constructing park restrooms or reconfiguring boat dock facilities. These facilities are NPS owned and would have a no net effect to the local economics.

Overall, this alternative would be able to improve the socioeconomic benefits from increased tourism and employment. This alternative would see long-term beneficial impacts directly in the local communities from the proposed actions. There would be an increase in visitors traveling to and from Hatteras to Ocracoke Islands which would increase tourism expenditures for the long-term.

### ***Cumulative Effects***

Past actions such as construction of buildings, park roads, parking lots and other facilities have had beneficial effects on socioeconomics because of the need for contracted local labor and materials required. The foreseeable future actions related to site planning, transit systems and issuance of Commercial Use Authorizations for transportation tours would also have a beneficial effect on local businesses. As previously described in this EA, the direct and indirect impacts of Alternative B on socioeconomics would introduce temporary need for construction labor and materials but would provide increased visitor accessibility as well as safe and convenient facilities. The proposed alternative would increase beneficial impacts of past, ongoing, and future actions to improve tourism, and the cumulative effects to socioeconomics would be positive. The incremental impacts of Alternative B would noticeably contribute to the impacts that are already occurring but overall, cumulatively, are less than significant.

## CHAPTER 4: CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

This “Consultation and Coordination” chapter describes the public involvement and agency consultation used during the preparation of the EA. A combination of activities, including internal and public scoping, helped guide NPS in developing this EA. This chapter provides a detailed list of the various consultations initiated during the development of the EA.

### Public Involvement

This document has been prepared in accordance with NEPA, as amended; regulations of the CEQ (40 CFR 1500–1508); and Director’s Order 12 (NPS 2015) and its accompanying NEPA handbook (NPS 2015a). Pursuant to Director’s Order 12, NPS has made a diligent effort to involve the interested and affected public in this NEPA process. This process, known as scoping, is initiated at the beginning of a NEPA project to identify the range of issues, resources, and alternatives to address in the EA. Typically both internal and public scoping is conducted to address these elements. State and federal agencies were contacted to identify any additional planning issues and to fulfill statutory requirements, as described in the following sections. The planning process for the proposed action was initiated during the internal scoping efforts in October 2016.

The internal scoping process for the project began in December 2016, when representatives from the Seashore and NCDOT, met to discuss the purpose and need of the project, potential alternatives that could meet these needs, and resource conditions and issues within the project area. The group also initiated plans for public scoping activities.

In March 2017, NPS held two public scoping meetings for the EA at the following locations:

- March 29, 2017, at the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum, Hatteras Island, North Carolina
- March 30, 2017, at the Ocracoke Community Center, Ocracoke Island, North Carolina

These meetings were held to obtain public feedback on the initial purpose, need, objectives, issues and concerns, and preliminary alternative concepts and elements for improvements for a passenger ferry.

In addition, the Seashore posted the newsletter on the PEPC project website; e-mailed individuals, businesses, agencies, and organizations on the Seashore’s e-mail mailing list; and issued a news release inviting the public to comment on the EA. The public comment period would be open from June 5, 2017 through June 19, 2017.

### List of Agencies Contacted

Name	Title, Agency
Renee Gledhill-Earley	Environmental Review Coordinator North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office
	North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality Division
John Hammond	Fish and Wildlife Biologist, US Fish and Wildlife Service

## List of Preparers and Agency Participants

Name	Title, Agency
Sabrina Henry	Environmental Protection Specialist, Outer Banks Group Parks
Dave Hallac	Superintendent, Outer Banks Group Parks
Mark Dowdle	Deputy Superintendent, Outer Banks Group Parks
Jami Lanier	Cultural Program Manager, Outer Banks Group Parks
Jami Hammond	NEPA Specialist, NPS SERO Planning and Compliance Division
Beth Byrd	Regional Section 106 Compliance Coordinator, NPS SERO
	Cultural Resources Division
Edward Timoney	NCDOT Division 1 Ferry Division
Jed Dixon	Interim Director NCDOT Ferry Division
William Letchworth	Project Manager, WSP, Contractor for NCDOT Ferry Division

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2017c. Discussion with Jocelyn Wright, Lead Biological Science Technician to Sabrina Henry, NPS Environmental Protection Specialist. April 25, 2017, regarding grass species around Ocracoke Visitor Center.

2017d. Discussion with Edward Timoney, NCDOT Ferry Division Project Manager, to Sabrina Henry, NPS Environmental Protection Specialist. May 5, 2017, regarding operation of new passenger ferry.

2017e. Cape Hatteras National Seashore Visitation. Figures provided by Outer Banks Group Parks Visitor and Resource Protection Fee Program. Accessed May 2, 2017. Unpublished data.

2017f. Ocracoke Visitor Center Daily Visitation Statistics. Figures provided by Eastern National. Accessed December 15, 2016. Unpublished data.

2017g. Discussion with William Letchworth, Project Manager, WSP Parsons Brinkerhof, to Sabrina Henry, NPS Environmental Protection Specialist. May 5, 2017, regarding ferry ridership

2017f. 2016 National Park Service Visitor Spending Effects: Economic Contributions to Local Communities, States and the Nation. Natural Resource Report NPS/NRSS/EQD/NRR-2017/1421

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As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering wise use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historic places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The department also promotes the goals of the Take Pride in America campaign by encouraging stewardship and citizen responsibility for the public lands and promoting citizen participation in their care. The department also has major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

June 2016

United States Department of the Interior – National Park Service

# Appendix A

Project Tracking No. (Internal Use)

15-11-0024



## HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPES ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS FORM

This form only pertains to Historic Architecture and Landscapes for this project. It is not valid for Archaeological Resources. You must consult separately with the Archaeology Group.

### PROJECT INFORMATION

<b>Project No:</b>		<b>County:</b>	Hyde & Dare
<b>WBS No.:</b>	16SP.3914.1	<b>Document Type:</b>	PCE
<b>Fed. Aid No:</b>		<b>Funding:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> State <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Federal
<b>Federal Permit(s):</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>Permit Type(s):</b>	National Park Service
<b>Project Description:</b> Passenger Ferry Service: temporary & final terminal facilities, parking area expansion, new docking areas, additional rest rooms, sidewalk improvements, as well as signage for bus stops and procurement of transit vehicles for proposed bus route with stops throughout Ocracoke.			

### SUMMARY OF HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPES REVIEW

<b>Description of review activities, results, and conclusions:</b> Project falls within the National Register-listed Ocracoke Historic District (HY 0634) and within the National Parks Service's Cape Hatteras National Seashore. Project meeting held 12/06/2016 to discuss the ferries, terminals, parking, and bus route. They have decided to scale back the bus route and only provide signage at the stops (no shelters or benches) and stops west of Creek Road will likely be eliminated because the roads are too narrow to accommodate the transit vehicles. National Park Service included in the meeting and have since issued a letter that states they do not object to the project.
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### ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS

<b>Property Name:</b>	Ocracoke Historic District	<b>Status:</b>	NR
<b>Survey Site No.:</b>	HY0634	<b>PIN:</b>	
<b>Effects</b> <input type="checkbox"/> No Effect <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Adverse Effect <input type="checkbox"/> Adverse Effect			



# Appendix B



## United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Raleigh Field Office  
Post Office Box 33726  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27636-3726

January 25, 2017

Clay Willis  
North Carolina Department of Transportation  
113 Airport Drive, Suite 100  
Edenton, NC 27932

Dear Mr. Willis:

This letter is in response to your letter of January 23, 2017 which provided the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) with the biological conclusion of the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) that the proposed passenger ferry dock installation in Silver Lake Harbor on Ocracoke Island in Hyde County may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the federally endangered West Indian manatee (*Trichechus manatus*). These comments are provided in accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531-1543).

The NCDOT has agreed to implement the Service's **GUIDELINES FOR AVOIDING IMPACTS TO THE WEST INDIAN MANATEE: Precautionary Measures for Construction Activities in North Carolina Waters**. Based on this commitment, and given the fact that the West Indian manatee is only an occasional visitor to North Carolina waters, the Service concurs with your conclusion that the proposed project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the West Indian manatee. We believe that the requirements of Section 7(a)(2) of the ESA have been satisfied. We remind you that obligations under Section 7 consultation must be reconsidered if: (1) new information reveals impacts of these identified actions that may affect listed species or critical habitat in a manner not previously considered in this review; (2) these actions are subsequently modified in a manner that was not considered in this review; or (3) a new species is listed or critical habitat determined that may be affected by these identified actions.

The Service appreciates the opportunity to review this project. If you have any questions regarding our response, please contact Mr. Gary Jordan at (919) 856-4520 (Ext. 32).

Sincerely,

  
for Pete Benjamin  
Field Supervisor

Electronic copy:

Bill Biddlecome, USACE, Washington, NC  
Travis Wilson, NCWRC, Creedmoor, NC