



The Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce has a mission “to promote and develop the economic prosperity of the Outer Banks business community through leadership, education, advocacy, relationship development, and innovation.”

The Chamber continues to monitor those issues, local, state and federal, that have an impact on our region and the community we serve.

As most of you are aware we have a huge issue with Oregon Inlet and Hatteras Inlet. Both of these inlets continue to shoal over and cause problems for our commercial fishing fleet, our charter boat captains, and recreational boaters in our area. Currently there is emergency dredging taking place at Oregon Inlet to open the channel allowing boats to pass safely under the Bonner Bridge.

The Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce continues to support the need for a long-term solution to keeping our inlets and waterways navigable. Oregon Inlet alone accounts for approximately 4,348 jobs and an annual benefit of \$548 million.

The Chamber is sending this information out to the membership as an informational document only. The Chamber understands the implications that any one of these solutions has on our business community and therefore, feels an obligation to educating our membership. The Chamber is not advocating for any one solution; we advocate for the importance of finding a solution to the issues at both the Oregon and Hatteras Inlets.

There have been several solutions offered for funding the dredging of our inlets.

- 1) Impose an additional .25% sales tax; this is a solution with a defined endpoint. It also specifies that certain goods would not be included in the additional tax, in particular groceries.
- 2) Utilizing the 2% of occupancy tax allocated to the county and borrowing against anticipated beach nourishment proceeds.
- 3) Utilizing the approximately \$5.5 million that was collected in 2006 when a 1% sales tax was collected for beach nourishment; this tax was only collected for six months before it was suspended. Legislation would need to be amended to allow the county to use this money for dredging. If this money was available it would fund dredging for 2 years giving the county time to determine another funding source based on better information, specifically the status of Bonner Bridge and beach nourishment projects.

Keeping both Oregon and Hatteras Inlets open is critical to our region, to our economy, and to our way of life. The Chamber would encourage you to reach out to your local and state elected officials regarding the need for a long-term solution to this critical issue.