



## **SHORELINES – December 2007**

*As presented to the Island Review magazine.*

### **Inlet Hazard Areas – Old and New?**

When you think about it, there are generally two types of shorelines along Bogue Banks and many other Atlantic and Gulf States barrier islands - **(1) oceanfront shorelines** whose configuration and evolution (i.e., geomorphology) rely predominantly on factors such as sand supply, sea level, and storms, and **(2) inlet shorelines** that are more dependent upon factors including *tidal prism* (difference of water volume between low & high tide), *tidal amplitude* (difference of height between low & high tides), *tidal dominancy* (the differential in water flow through an inlet at low vs. high tide), and channel orientations.

The State's Division of Coastal Management (DCM) has long recognized these differences in shoreline behavior and coined the term ***Inlet Hazard Areas*** (IHAs) in 1977, which have been designated for many inlets and their adjacent shorelines in North Carolina. The regulatory definition and development stipulations for IHAs can be found in Title 15A, Subchapter 07H, sections .0304 & .0310 of the State's Administrative Code. In reality however, development allowed in IHAs is very similar to that along the oceanfront – the setback requirements are the same although it is difficult to build a structure exceeding 5,000 square foot according to the current rule. However changes are likely underway.

After a several years of analyses, DCM has developed long overdue and new boundaries for the IHAs. New maps depicting current and proposed IHAs will soon be accompanied by a series of new rules aimed to re-formulate coastal development guidelines within the IHA. Issues such as setbacks, sandbags, and building constraints could (or could not) be included in these new, yet to be developed rules for IHAs.

There is a great deal of agreement that the current IHAs boundaries don't truly capture the areas of shorelines impacted by inlet processes, but the sticking points in the regulatory process could be two-tiered; (1) agreeing with the new, expanded IHA geographic boundaries themselves, and (2) agreeing with the new rules guiding coastal development and protection within the IHAs. The proposed IHAs and accompanying rules are scheduled to be presented to the State's Coastal Resources Commission in the early part of next year for their approval to begin the public hearing process. See the accompanying figures for the Bogue and Beaufort IHAs.

A fair argument could probably be levied that the development rules should be drafted first before expanding the IHAs boundaries. So while this may result in a "What came first? The chicken or the egg?" debate regarding this approach, at least there is recognition and a public debate avenue for shoreline processes and development along the more dynamic or "volatile" inlet shorelines. Stay tuned and informed to this important issue!

