



## **SHORELINES – September 2008**

As presented to the *Island Review Magazine*

### **2008 Coastal Report Card Revisited**

In late June, the N.C. Beach, Inlet, & Waterway Association (NCBIWA) released their annual report for the coast that grades the tricky subjects of; (1) Beaches, (2) Inlets, (3) the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway, (4) Public Access to Beaches, and (5) Public Accesses to Coastal Waters. The report card is available on-line at <http://www.ncbiwa.org/2008ReportCard.pdf>. A month later, Dr. Jim Leutze, best known as chancellor emeritus at UNC-Wilmington, and a member of the governor-appointed Coastal Resources Commission, provided his own audit-style review of the report card for the *Metro Magazine* (see <http://www.metronc.com/article/index.aspx?id=1655>). So taking a cue from these two efforts, we're throwing caution into the wind this month by grading Bogue Banks and the waterways in Carteret County using the same 5 categories NCBIWA did for the entire State.

**Beaches (A-)** – NCBIWA gave this an “incomplete” because challenges remain to make restored beaches last longer. I would give ourselves an A-. Just under a decade ago, we were licking our sandy wounds after a spate of hurricanes in the 1990s impacted Bogue Banks – namely *Bertha, Fran, Bonnie, Dennis, and Floyd*. Since then, we've placed roughly 10 million cubic yards of sand along the island at a total cost of close to \$80 million, formed a management system in the Beach Commission & Shore Protection Office, and are continually learning from any shortcomings to build a better mousetrap for next time. Unprecedented achievements and the beaches/frontal dunes look great by just about anyone's standards. The only glitch (and an important one) is the management of sand resources at the Morehead City Harbor Project. There has been legal action filed against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding this topic. Otherwise, the grade for beaches would have been higher at this juncture. There are big challenges ahead however.

**Inlets (B)** – This is tough one. If we're looking at inlets from a navigational bent, then we're in pretty good shape. Beaufort Inlet is maintained (dredged) at ~45 feet below mean low water under the guise of the Morehead City Harbor Navigation Project. It's funded each and every year by the Federal government because of the inlet's importance to shipping commerce. Bogue Inlet on the other hand has seen its share of Federal funding woes, but recently has taken a turn for the better in this regard. There are just a few “pinch points” in the channel that can be addressed with relative ease. If we're discussing inlets in the nexus of shoreline behavior, then we're in OK/decent shape. The shoreline at the Point in Emerald Isle is rebounding nicely now after a couple of hiccups after the Bogue Inlet Channel Realignment Project was completed in 2005. The Ft. Macon shoreline remains a chronic problem thanks in large part to shoreface changes that have occurred in response to deep and continuous dredging at Beaufort Inlet. Considering the cards we have been dealt, I think a “B” is a fair grade.

**The Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway (D)** – I'm taking the liberty to change the game for this subject. While there was maintenance conducted along the “AIWW” earlier this year in Bogue Sound, and the waterway as a whole is in relatively good shape within Carteret



County waters; any channels leading into the waterway and other shallowdraft channels have been problematic to say the least. Places like Beaufort Harbor, Atlantic Harbor, Barden Inlet, the Atlantic Beach Channels, etc. have been woefully underfunded for years on end, or more likely - not funded at all. These are projects that have been authorized by the Federal government and there really hasn't been a dialogue between "the Feds" and their customers (i.e., State & Local governments) to how the rules of disengagement have been crafted in the first place and/or how the transfer of dredging responsibility should progress. State and Local governments are doing their best, but the situation deserves a "D".

**Public Access to Beaches (B+)** – Is the glass half full or half empty? Bogue Banks is approximately 25 miles long and the notion that accesses with parking can simply be constructed anywhere so visitors and residents can get to anyplace on the beach they want to at anytime is a distant cousin from reality. It will never be perfect, but if improvement is what you're looking for, then the past decade has seen some incredible strides – Pine Knoll Shores had zero public accesses at the turn of the decade – they now have 5. Little ol' Indian Beach constructed 3 new accesses with parking just a few years ago, Atlantic Beach is working hard to get a new regional public access at the site of the former Triple S fishing pier, and Emerald Isle has made very conscious efforts to go "bigger and better" with huge improvements to their Eastern and Western Regional accesses, and a new access/parking facility off Coast Guard Road. The State deserves a lot of credit for furnishing important grant money to make these accesses, parking spaces, and amenities a reality. Plus, the State is planning to construct an oceanfront concrete pier in Emerald Isle. Sure there are some weak spots along Bogue Banks that need to be addressed but again, if we couple this with all the improvements, then a "B+" grade makes a lot of sense.

**Public Accesses to Coastal Waters (B+)** - Akin to the grade for public beach access, public access to coastal waters also deserves a B+ because the initiative is there. Granted there are many, many needs, which weigh down the grade. Carteret County has been on the forefront of this subject by funding initiatives and creating the Public Water Access Committee. On the State level, the Waterfront Access and Marine Industry Fund was created with an infusion of \$20 million. These two funding sources/groups weren't even in our vocabulary a few years ago. The N.C. Division of Coastal Management and N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission also provide access dollars in the form of either grants or actual construction. Again, it's not perfect but improving.

**Overall Grade (B)** – The mark for the AIWW provides a slight downward drag for the overall grade - otherwise the grade would have been a B+. There's heightened awareness of coastal issues in general, lots of vigor in the air, and in most cases we're doing the best we can with the resources available.

Obviously these are all subjective calls and yes, we're guilty of grading ourselves in many instances. However; hopefully this provides some food for thought while having a little fun as we discuss some very important topics that touch our daily lives.