



United States Department of the Interior
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Outer Banks Group
Fort Raleigh National Historic Site | Wright Brothers National Memorial
Cape Hatteras National Seashore

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Manteo, NC 27954



IN REPLY REFER TO:

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OCT 06 2026

US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of Cape Hatteras National Seashore (Seashore), I am pleased to express our support and role as a co-applicant with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) for the Adaptation for North Carolina's Critical Hatteras-Ocracoke Route (ANCHOR, or "the Project") application under the Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation (PROTECT) grant program. ANCHOR represents a vital step toward securing viable, long-term access to the 80 miles of barrier islands that comprise Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

Ferry service is the primary means of access between Hatteras Island and Ocracoke Island, and from Ocracoke Island to the mainland ferry terminals at Swan Quarter and Cedar Island. Its reliable operation is essential to supporting the mission of the Seashore and serves as a lifeline for staff, residents, and hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. Visitors to the Seashore provide a significant economic benefit to the region; National Park Service economists estimate that visitor spending can exceed \$600 million annually, supporting approximately 10,000 jobs.

Ferry service is an indispensable transportation link that enables access to essential services such as off-island medical care and supports key economic activities, including the movement of freight, commercial goods, and service vehicles. However, decades of erosion surrounding the South Dock ferry terminal have created a fragile condition that is highly vulnerable to foreseeable coastal hazards from tropical storms and nor'easters. Wind and wave action has also led to closures and repetitive, costly damage to NC 12 during storm or high-tide events, as well as severe erosion at the South Dock ferry terminal at the north end of Ocracoke Island. Damage at South Dock has already resulted in the loss of vehicle stacking lanes and the destruction of the septic field serving visitor restrooms. Furthermore, N.C. Highway 12, just to the south of the South Dock terminal, is extremely vulnerable. Ocean over wash frequently results in challenging driving conditions and road closures. Therefore, the current transportation system, relying on a ferry terminal located in a rapidly eroding area of the Seashore and a highway now lined with more than a mile of sandbags and highly vulnerable to the ocean, is unreliable and expected to become increasingly so in the future.

The status quo also negatively affects recreational lands and fish and wildlife habitat within the Seashore. Protecting the highway with engineered dunes has disrupted natural, self-renewing overwash processes, and sandbag placement has exacerbated erosion along more than a mile of the island's north end. Rock and sheet pile structures, while necessary for safeguarding the terminal, may worsen downstream erosion and lead to additional loss of supporting infrastructure, recreational areas, and habitat.

To address these urgent concerns, NCDOT and the Seashore are requesting PROTECT funding to complete an alternatives analysis and streamlined environmental review to satisfy National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements. This process will ensure a rigorous, science-based evaluation of potential solutions and provide robust opportunities for public input. Identifying a resilient, long-term, multimodal solution for Ocracoke Island access is a critical milestone, supported by detailed analyses, interagency coordination, and community engagement necessary to advance a viable approach in this complex coastal environment. A successful project will position NCDOT and its federal, state, and local partners to pursue future construction funding and efficiently move toward project delivery.

In addition to working daily with NCDOT to support transportation operations, the Seashore has recently collaborated on two major planning efforts that directly inform the ANCHOR project. The South Dock Feasibility Study (2026) evaluated preliminary terminal stabilization and relocation alternatives and produced conceptual designs, cost estimates, constructability, environmental, and operational analyses. Evaluating the Effects of Adaptation Strategies on Ocracoke Island (2025), a two-year research initiative funded by the Seashore, provided science-based assessments to support decision-making related to transportation and resource management challenges along the east end of Ocracoke Island and access to and from Hatteras Island.

ANCHOR will convene federal and state agencies, local communities, scientists, and stakeholder groups to create a streamlined decision-making framework and advance a resilient, long-term solution for safe and reliable access between Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands. We appreciate the Department of Transportation's review and consideration of the ANCHOR application for PROTECT funding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Hallac', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

David E. Hallac
Superintendent