DONALD G. DAVIS
FIRST DISTRICT, NORTH CAROLINA

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

November 24, 2026

The Honorable Kevin J. Lilly
Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW, MIB-3345
Washington, DC 20240

RE: Comments in Support of the North Carolina Department of Transportation's Proposed Realignment of N.C. Highway 12 at the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center

Dear Secretary Lilly:

I am writing to express strong support for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT) proposal to realign N.C. Highway 12 near the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center. I also support Governor Josh Stein's call for immediate repairs and long-term solutions for this highway. I respectfully ask that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) approve NCDOT's right-of-way application as quickly as possible under the law.

In January 2027, Dare County, including Hatteras Island, will become part of North Carolina's First Congressional District. As the only road into the villages of Rodanthe, Waves, Salvo, Avon, Buxton, Frisco, and Hatteras, N.C. 12 is essential to the lives of the residents, workers, and businesses on the Outer Banks as well as to emergency responders and families evacuating for a storm.

This road is very fragile. For example, according to USFWS, in late September and mid-October of 2026, nor'easters damaged approximately 1,200 feet of pavement, causing the road to be closed to Hatteras Island for several days each time. The Rodanthe to Stumpy Point emergency ferry was used during these times. On October 22, 2026, Governor Stein declared a state of emergency in Dare and Hyde counties and requested emergency relief from the Federal Highway Administration. NCDOT is currently installing temporary sandbags along the damaged section of road while traffic is routed on a one-lane signalized detour. Temporary measures such as this are

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not sufficient for the island families, small businesses, and first responders who are affected by each closure.

NCDOT's proposal provides a near-term solution to the road's current problems. According to USFWS, the proposal would move approximately 0.63 miles of the existing two-lane N.C. 12 roadway about 180 feet west of the current alignment. A dune approximately 15 feet high would be constructed along the current alignment, the old road and sandbags would be removed, and the Pea Island Visitor Center and related facilities would be rebuilt or relocated as necessary. The realignment would substantially reduce the need for emergency repairs and provide more reliable access to the Refuge. In the long term, solutions such as bridges are being evaluated as part of the Solving Access for N.C. 12 in Dare County (SAND) Planning and Environmental Linkages study currently being conducted by NCDOT for the Pea Island corridor.

I also want to recognize the strong partnership between USFWS, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, and NCDOT on N.C. 12 in the past. As USFWS has noted, it has not denied any NCDOT request to move the highway near known hotspots. I urge USFWS to act promptly on NCDOT's November 2, 2026, application and to complete the environmental review and compatibility determination with the urgency the situation demands so that the project can qualify for emergency funding and be built as soon as possible while preserving the visitor facilities and public access to the Refuge.

N.C. 12 is essential to the residents, business owners, and first responders of Hatteras Island, and I will continue to listen to their concerns. We cannot afford another season of washouts.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Sincerely,



Donald G. Davis
Member of Congress

cc:
Dr. Jennifer M. Archambault, Acting Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services, Raleigh Field Office
Rebekah Martin, Coastal North Carolina National Wildlife Refuge Complex Project Leader, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
The Honorable Josh Stein, Governor of North Carolina
The Honorable Daniel Johnson, Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Transportation
David Hallac, Superintendent of Cape Hatteras National Seashore
Dare County Board of Commissioners