



TOWN OF ORIENTAL

RESOLUTION 2026-13

RESOLUTION OPPOSING THE PROPOSED EXPANSION OF TRAINING ACTIVITIES AND RESTRICTED WATER AREAS WITHIN THE MCAS CHERRY POINT RANGE COMPLEX

- WHEREAS,** the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality, Division of Coastal Management (DCM), has received a Federal Consistency Determination concerning proposed changes to training activities and operations within the Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Cherry Point Range Complex; and
- WHEREAS,** the United States Marine Corps has proposed expanding water-based restricted boundaries and training activities, including aircraft, unmanned systems, and watercraft operations, near BT-9 at Brant Island Shoals and BT-11 at Piney Island, including establishing a permanent 500-foot safety buffer around BT-11; and
- WHEREAS,** the Board is particularly concerned with the proposed restricted water area between BT-9 and BT-11, as restricting this intervening area would close the mouth of the Neuse River, interfering with a vital corridor within North Carolina's public trust waters used by commercial and recreational fishermen, local and interstate boaters, commercial traffic, NCDOT ferry traffic and other mariners traveling through the Pamlico Sound and accessing the Neuse River, Intracoastal Waterway, inlets and State Port in Morehead City; and
- WHEREAS,** the proposed expansion of the intermittent Use Water Restricted Area does not include any information on the frequency of activation and waterway closures, and such restriction of public trust waters is counter to CAMA's stated goal to protect public rights for navigation and recreation and
- WHEREAS,** the proposed expansion of the intermittent Use Water Restricted Area does not include any information on the frequency of activation and waterway closures, and such restriction of public trust waters is counter to CAMA's stated goal to protect public rights for navigation and recreation and
- WHEREAS,** Town Of Oriental and its coastal communities are deeply rooted in maritime heritage and recognize the importance of MCAS Cherry Point to national defense and the regional economy, while depending upon access to public waterways for livelihoods, commercial and recreational fishing, shrimping, crabbing, oystering, transportation, and coastal commerce; and
- WHEREAS,** the Board is gravely concerned that restricting the waters between BT-9 and BT-11 and expanding restrictions surrounding those ranges would reduce access to valuable fishing grounds, displace local mariners from customary channels onto more exposed and potentially hazardous alternative navigation routes, interfere with traditional uses of coastal waters, and adversely affect the County's residents and local economy; and
- WHEREAS,** expanding federally restricted areas within historic marine corridors could expose local water users to enforcement actions and applicable penalties for entering waters previously available for customary navigation and fishing; and
- WHEREAS,** a permanent restriction around BT-11 would limit public access even during periods when training activities are not occurring, warranting careful consideration of less restrictive alternatives; and
- WHEREAS,** given the substantial economic, navigational, and public safety implications of this proposal, affected residents must have a transparent and accessible opportunity to present

their concerns directly to state regulatory authorities through a public hearing within Town Of Oriental and

WHEREAS, the Board believes that military training needs should be addressed through meaningful consultation with affected local governments and water users and through measures that protect public safety while preserving the greatest practicable public access;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Of Oriental Mayor and Board of Commissioners unequivocally opposes the proposed expansion of training activities and restricted water areas within the MCAS Cherry Point Range Complex as submitted, with particular opposition to the proposed restriction of waters between BT-9 and BT-11, the expansion of restricted boundaries surrounding those ranges, and the permanent 500-foot safety buffer around BT-11, because of their potential effects on public access, customary navigation routes, fishing activities, and the livelihoods of Oriental residents.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board formally requests that the North Carolina Division of Coastal Management conduct a public hearing within Pamlico County before finalizing its federal consistency review, ensuring that local mariners, commercial and recreational fishermen, business owners, and residents have a full opportunity to provide public testimony, and extend the written comment period as necessary to accommodate that hearing and meaningful public participation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board requests that the Division of Coastal Management fully evaluate the proposal's effects on public access, navigation, commercial and recreational fishing, coastal resources, public safety, and the economies of surrounding communities, with particular attention to the proposed restricted water area between BT-9 and BT-11, and object to the Federal Consistency Determination to the extent the proposal is inconsistent with the enforceable policies of North Carolina's Coastal Management Program.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board demands that the United States Marine Corps preserve public access through the waters between BT-9 and BT-11, protect safe navigation within these traditional coastal waters, refrain from implementing the proposed restrictions as submitted, and pursue alternatives that minimize additional water restrictions, limit closures to periods reasonably necessary for safety, avoid disproportionate economic impacts on local fisheries, address navigational hazards, and provide clear and timely notice to affected water users.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town Manager is authorized to submit this resolution as the County's formal public comment and official objection and hearing request to the North Carolina Division of Coastal Management before the October 15, 2026, deadline, and transmit copies to MCAS Cherry Point, the County's state legislative delegation, and its congressional representatives.

ADOPTED this 13th day of October, 2026, by the Town Of Oriental Mayor and Board.

Sally T. Belangia
Mayor

Attest:

Diane H. Miller
Town Manager