



He said his Department, recognizing the bigness of the effort to appraise the effects, has offered to assist the Corps of Engineers in organizing and conducting the necessary studies.

Open waters in Pamlico Sound are as much as 20 feet deep, less than half the depth needed for the proposed channel. The seven alternate routes range from 50 to 97 miles in length. Construction of the various routes would involve removal of 120 million to 233 million cubic yards of spoil materials from channel areas of 3,800 to 7,300 acres. Spoil disposal easement sites would range from 19,800 acres to 35,300 acres. A variety of jetties and breakwater structures would be needed to stabilize the inlets and reduce channel shoaling. Project construction would require about four years, and annual maintenance dredging would be required. The five inlets under consideration for the channel's ocean end are Oregon, Hatteras, Ocracoke, Swash and Beaufort. Except for the Beaufort Inlet, all the others are through either the Cape Hatteras National Seashore or Cape Lookout National Seashore, both administered by Interior's National Park Service.

Secretary Udall said the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife advised him:

"Evaluation of the probable effects of the seven proposed channel routes on fish and wildlife resources is impractical owing to the limited amount of available engineering, hydrological, and biological data. However, it is obvious from the magnitude of the proposed project that sizable damages could occur."

Secretary Udall said the Bureau's preliminary estimates indicate that initial channel construction activities will result in the direct destruction of fish and wildlife habitat and sessile organisms in the area of channelization and spoil deposition. These damaged areas will range from 22,000 to 42,600 acres, depending on the route selected. However, potentially greater damages can result from the alteration of existing salinities, currents, and turbidity levels. These factors play sizable roles in governing the total ecology of the Pamlico Sound estuarine complex as it exists today.

In its offer of assistance to the Corps, the Department said:

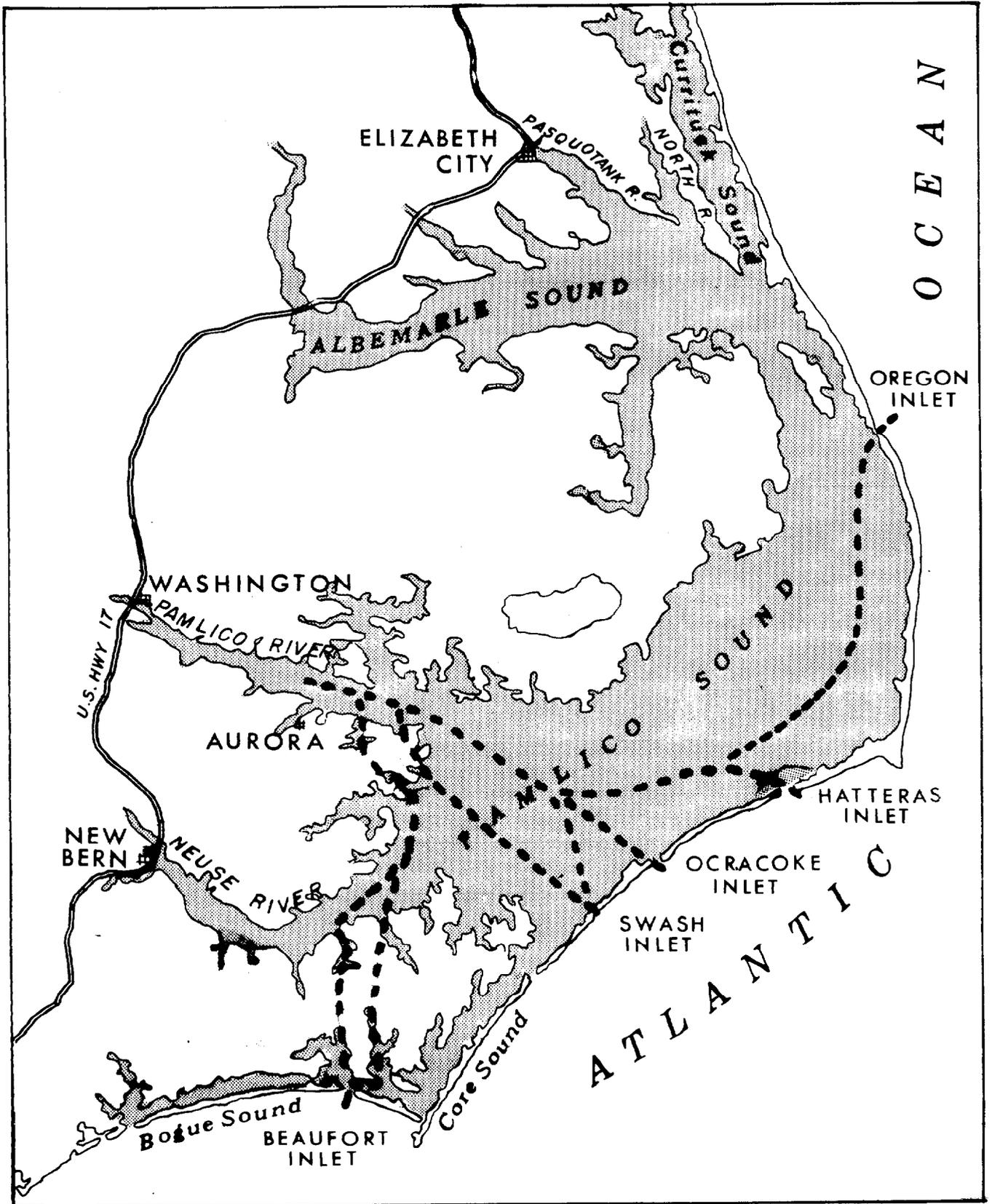
"The ecology of this area is governed to a large degree by the fresh-water inflow from four major river systems mixing with salt water encroaching through the several inlets. To this are added a variety of bottom types, tidal and wind currents, nutrients from the upland, and many other elements. These basic ingredients contribute to the immense biological productivity of the area.

"The Pamlico-Albemarle Sound complex contains over 1.6 million acres, which represents about 90 percent of the total estuarine area in North Carolina. Many fishes, such as fluke (summer flounder), croaker, and weakfish (spotted sea trout) utilize the area as a nursery and migrate to other areas as distant as Massachusetts.

"A variety of wildlife species also contribute to the total fauna. The most evident of these are the flocks of migratory waterfowl that over-winter here. Multitudes of shore and marsh birds add to the variety and abundance. The plentiful food supply, diversity of habitats, and relative remoteness of the area combine to make it of outstanding value to aquatic birds and animals. Further importance is reflected by the fact that three State wildlife management area and four National wildlife refuges have been established in the area.

"Commercial and sport fishing and hunting do not represent the total natural value of these North Carolina estuaries and Outer Banks. Of possibly even greater value are the enormous recreational uses from boaters, campers, nature enthusiasts, swimmers, and others. The focal points for many of these activities are the Outer Banks areas of the existing Cape Hatteras National Seashore Area and the newly authorized Cape Lookout National Seashore Area. These areas possess outstanding scenic, historic and recreational values. Cape Hatteras National Seashore Area had 1,133,000 visitors in 1966 and comparable use is expected at Cape Lookout National Seashore Area when it is developed."

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Dotted lines indicate alternate channel proposals under study by Corps of Engineers