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Governor Pat McCrory
Office of the Governor
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Dear Governor McCrory:

First and foremost, we want to convey that we stand with you and all North Carolinians in expressing our concern and sympathy for the residents and businesses on Hatteras Island that have experienced significant hardship as a result of the closure of Bonner Bridge on December 3. This abrupt closure without any warning has caused difficulties for all affected, but it has resulted in more serious challenges for those facing medical situations and separations from family members. Our first hope is to see the bridge reopened as quickly as possible.

In the midst of such a serious challenge, however, we find it disingenuous and irresponsible that you have chosen to aggressively, publicly, and inaccurately blame environmental organizations for this bridge closure. As a result of your urging, we have been at the receiving end of multiple threats based on misinformation you have provided. Rather than continue with these irresponsible public attacks, we encourage you to provide the leadership required to resolve the closure as quickly as possible and to focus on developing a long term solution to replace Bonner Bridge that ensures safe and dependable transportation to Hatteras Island.

The purpose of the Bonner Bridge project from the outset has been to replace the aging bridge and to provide a dependable transportation route to Rodanthe and the remainder of Hatteras Island. As you are well aware, Highway 12 through Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge has been subject to frequent overwash, new inlets, closures, and constant maintenance. The current “plan” for Highway 12 south of the bridge is no plan, but to remain at the mercy of the ocean and storms, endure closures, and attempt to respond in some undetermined ways.

Former Governor Easley and Secretary of Transportation Lyndo Tippett worked to achieve a consensus on a plan to replace the bridge. Under their leadership, all state and federal agencies reached a

regulatory agreement in 2003 that a longer bridge crossing Oregon Inlet and bypassing the eroding areas and future inlets on Pea Island was the best alternative. If objections from the Dare County Commission and local political leaders had not derailed that proposal, construction was scheduled to begin in 2006 with completion of a new bridge three years ago in 2010. The current bridge problem would have been avoided, and a long range solution in place.

We have supported and continue to support the longer bridge as a solution to safe and dependable access to Hatteras Island and the environmentally preferred alternative. The N.C. Department of Transportation (NCDOT) has opposed this alternative, claiming it would cost \$1.1 billion and funding is infeasible. Yet, just last year NCDOT staff estimated the actual cost of the bridge at half this amount. We sought legislation in the North Carolina General Assembly to provide a funding source for the longer bridge, but this was not supported by NCDOT. To us, highway funding is a matter of priorities and a long term solution to providing safe and reliable access to Hatteras Island is a state priority.

The transportation funding overhaul passed by your administration in 2013 rightly focuses on better prioritizing our transportation spending. Almost half the money in the future will be set aside for projects of "Statewide" importance. But the section of NC 12 that connects Hatteras Island is specifically barred from that funding. You have not made Hatteras Island a priority.

When NCDOT acts contrary to the law, we will continue to seek compliance through the courts. We have appealed the decision of the U.S. District Court to uphold the environmental impact statement for the Bonner Bridge project to the U.S. Court of Appeals. As I expect you are aware, we recently appealed another decision by the U.S. District Court to uphold an environmental impact statement for the proposed Monroe Bypass project near Charlotte. In 2012, a panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit reversed the decision of the District Court and unanimously ruled that NCDOT actively misled the public in its environmental analysis of the proposed Monroe Bypass.

We are disappointed you did not contact us directly before launching your public assault on our clients, our supporters, and our organizations. We have been working toward a positive solution to this serious issue since 2003. We would welcome the opportunity to sit down with you and your staff to provide our perspectives on the project, and listen to yours.

Sincerely yours,



Derb S. Carter, Jr.
Director, North Carolina Offices