

DATE: August 15, 2024

To: Mr. David E. Hallac, Superintendent, National Park Service
Cape Hatteras National Seashore
1401 National Park Drive
Manteo, NC 27954

Senator Bobby Hanig
300 N. Salisbury Street, Rm. 629
Raleigh, NC 27603

Congressman Gregory F. Murphy MD
PO Box 1000
Manteo, NC 27954
Email portal

Mr. Robert L. Outten, Dare County Manager & County Attorney
P.O. Box 1000
Manteo, NC 27954

CC. Overton Contracting; Expert House Movers & Lifters

RE: HELP! Imminent Collapse of Dolphins Point - Shorefront Home in Rodanthe NC

We own a beachfront home in Rodanthe, NC (23214 E. Corbina Dr), located on the ocean side of the dune (see Figure 1 below). It has been substantially damaged by the devastating beach erosion in Rodanthe this year (2024) and Hurricane/tropical storm Debby to a level of structural repairs beyond the home's value. We write this letter to seek assistance to mitigate the damage to the seashore through a reduced valuation acquisition (\$220,000) and ownership transfer of 23214 E. Corbina Drive, Rodanthe, NC 27968. Our proposal includes an owner "skin in the game" accountability for shared cost in resolving this public safety/public health issue. This valuation (\$220,000) is less than half of our current homeowner's cost basis and provides timely action to preclude unintended consequences from a sagging oceanfront home.

Figure 1. 23214 E. Corbina Drive located on the shoreline in Rodanthe NC



Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines: The Potential Cost/Benefits of Buyouts in Rodanthe, North Carolina (May 2023)

In the 2023 report, *The Potential Cost/Benefits of Buyouts in Rodanthe, North Carolina* (May 2023), conducted by Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines, Dolphins Point is specifically identified as one of the highly exposed properties, vulnerable to “high profile incidents of homes collapsing into the sea, while septic tanks are exhumed and broken open. cause both environmental harm and a risk to public safety and health (the intertidal beach in this area is a part of Cape Hatteras National Seashore). Clearly, doing nothing is the worst option.”

Furthermore, *The Rodanthe Sand Needs Assessment Dare County, North Carolina* (Coastal Science and Engineering, 2023) states “the oceanfront shoreline of Rodanthe, NC where Dolphins Point is located has one of the highest erosion rates on the U.S. East Coast (recently upwards of 20 feet per year).” The data indicates no foreseen relief from the constant flooding, beach erosion, and possible loss of life if unexpectedly struck by another natural disaster such as a hurricane or pressure system surge. Hurricane/tropical storm Debby made the situation worse and future storms are likely.

In a December 2022 news article, one contractor hired to clean up collapsed homes in Rodanthe stated, “Once it’s down, it’s considerably more difficult. It’s cheaper, easier and more efficient to tear down a house. Cleanup, which is not covered by insurance, is as much as four times more expensive.one had to file bankruptcy.” The article further describes the frustrations experienced by owners very similar to ours, “Although many fault the owners of the threatened or doomed beachfront houses, there is plenty of blame to go around: inconsistent real estate disclosure rules; outdated local zoning laws and building codes; gaps in state regulations; ineffective federal policies; escalating climate change impacts; inaccurate flood maps; and overall government inaction.” (Coastal Review, coastalreview.org, Dec 2022, <https://coastalreview.org/2022/12/myriad-problems-led-to-rodanthes-doomed-beach-houses/>).

Based on Mr. Outten’s presentation at the 1/18/23 Rodanthe Erosion public meeting, we acted quickly to purchase a nearby vacant lot on the sound side of Rodanthe as a contingency for future house relocation. We made recent structural/pilings repairs that were compromised by Debby. Finally, we asked contractors to provide us with an estimate for the cost of relocating our home but expect estimates well over the value of our home. We expected to have several more years, and now realize that will not happen.

It is widely known in the outer banks’ community, and possibly the state of North Carolina, how devastating the 2024 shoreline erosion has been. For example, we were notified on July 26, 2024, from Midgett Realty that they no longer will renew the property management agreement for Dolphins Point. We contacted the other local property management company, Surf or Sound Realty, and they said they will not be managing properties like ours either due to location. Abandonment from the local property management services becomes a logistics issue for most owners because we no longer have real-time monitoring of property conditions.

One unanticipated issue is the recent (August 10/11, 2024) social media interest and personal assumptions about owners’ due diligence to our community. For example, one post on Planet Rodanthe targets Dolphins Point with a posted video with escalating public opinion comments that are both disturbing and distressing: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/850553448432867/> Today’s climate for public opinion is more divided than it’s been in the past 20 years, encouraging reactive views in personal and negative ways impacting Cape Hatteras tourism and safety.

We experienced damage in late March 2024 and contracted Overton Contracting & Expert House Movers & Lifters to complete repairs including 18ft shoreline pilings and structural supports. Repairs were completed, and we began using our home in July 2024. Then, in August 2024, Hurricane/tropical storm Debby compounded the beach erosion devastation resulting in Dare County declaring the property as unsafe due to the structural damages and loss of septic

system. Dare County also informed us of protective measures for ocean and beach clean-up in the event of structural collapse. Dolphins Point is in imminent danger of collapse. Photos of shoreline baseline and current state of Dolphins Point are attached as an appendix.

- Your letter dated 6/5/24 noted the March 2024 damage and requested we inform you of our plans to protect the Seashore from harm during the current or potential future damage to our home. We replied on 6/11/24. Our contractor completed repairs on 7/12/24, which slowed Dolphins Point from collapsing into the ocean.
- Your 6/5/24 letter also recommended we take action to move our home in advance of continued erosion to mitigate threats to Seashore lands and waters. Based on our efforts with the local experts, the cost to move our home is well beyond its value.
- On 8/6/2024, Dare County's assessment via letter from Mr. Noah H. Gilliam stated that the house and decking show signs of structural failure, pilings have been damaged and destroyed, means of ingress/egress have been destroyed, and possible damage to septic system. This communication included detailed protocols for structural collapse, protective measures, and debris clean-up.

We need everyone's help. Specifically, we are requesting the National Park Service consider an acquisition of our home at a reduced valuation and take ownership of 23214 E. Corbina Drive. We welcome financial assistance from the county, state, and federal levels. We don't see waiting until our home collapses into the ocean and collecting insurance as a benefit to anyone. Throughout a 44-year career in the Navy and government, we've developed a true love and respect for the ocean and Seashore.

Our resources for completing the home relocation are exhausted. In 2023 the National Park Service purchased two Rodanthe homes that were similarly challenged by beach erosion. Funds may not be specifically identified for this purpose this year. However, if funds can be made available from any source, we ask that you consider our request for your assistance with our home and protection of the Seashore.

Thank you for your consideration. We are available at [REDACTED] if you have any related questions or have other recommendations you feel may help.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Appendix

Photos of Shoreline and Baseline of Dolphins Point in Rodanthe, NC

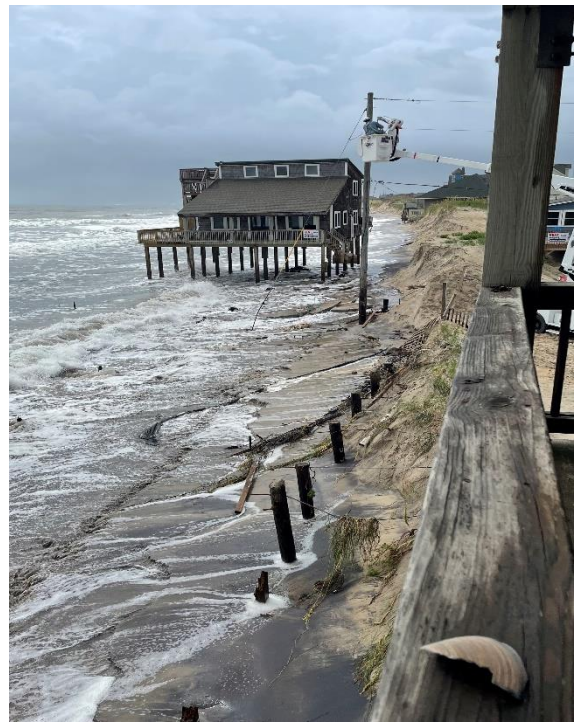
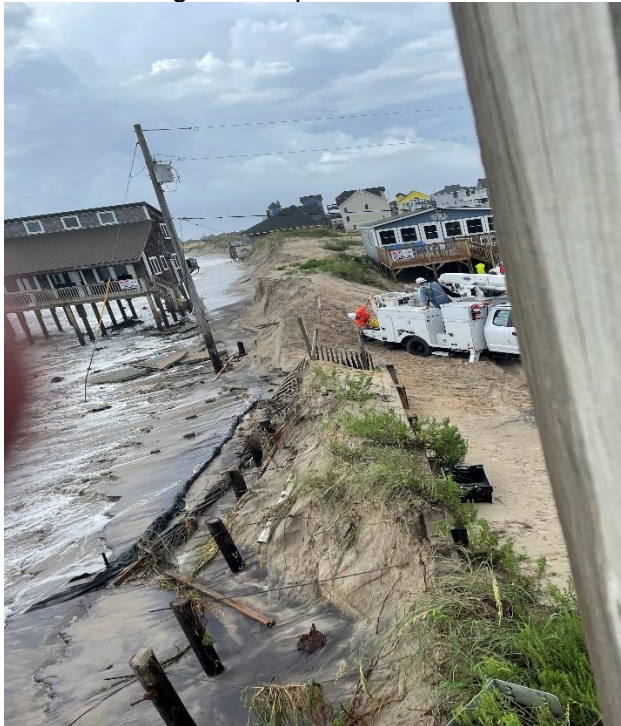
August 8, 2024

Dolphins Point view from the south



August 9, 2024

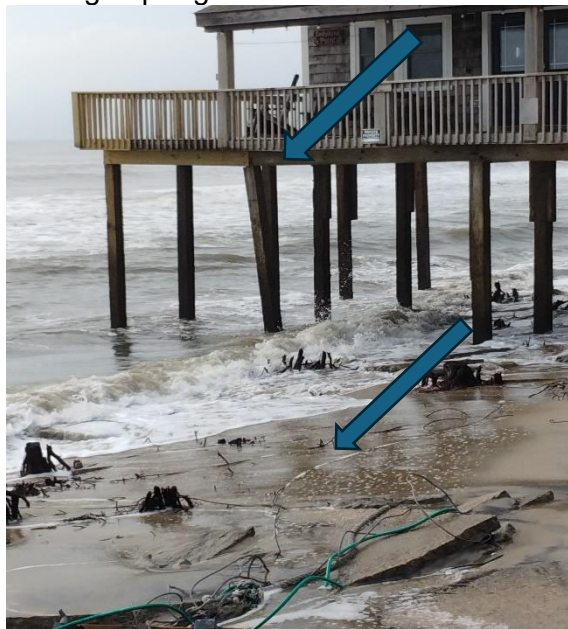
Disconnecting Power, pole removal, and debris (view from north) both photos



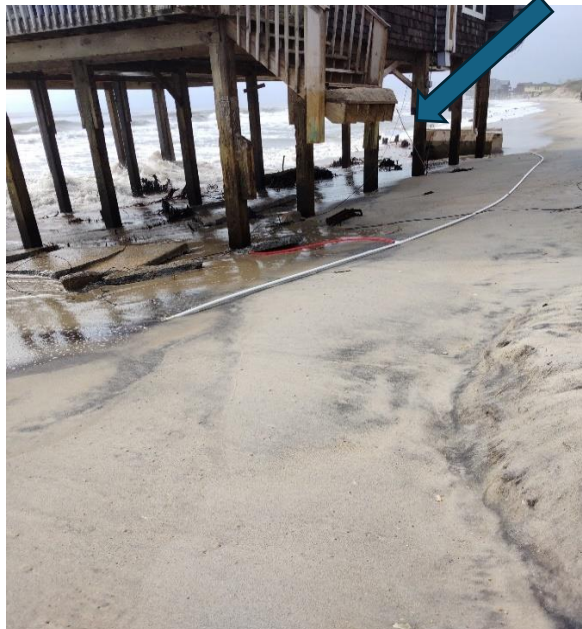
August 10, 2024
Dolphins Point and Beach Debris



Damaged piling and debris



Access Removed – stairs broken



Summer 2023
Loggerhead Sea Turtle Nest (both photos)



2023
Aerial view of shoreline with Dolphins Point circled from *Rodanthe Sand Needs Assessment* (May 2023)

