

Mysterious effort to remove 'The Rocks' from river concerns Bald Head, Southport



The Rocks

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Mysterious effort to remove 'The Rocks' from river concerns Bald Head, Southport By Lee Hinnant and Jason Tyson, Staff Writers

The Village of Bald Head Island is strongly opposing language in the state Senate's draft budget that calls for removal of The Rocks, a century-old dam that closed off New Inlet from the Cape Fear River.

Southport's board of aldermen is also considering a resolution of opposition.

Wilmington Sen. Michael Lee's Senate Bill 160 originally raised the idea, but that bill has languished in a House committee. Last week, however, language that would accomplish the same goal was included in the Senate's version of the budget.

Both houses will now name conferees and work out a compromise budget. Bald Head Island officials are asking residents and property owners to voice their opposition to removal of The Rocks.

The project is dubbed "removal of navigational obstructions for ecosystem restoration and protection of navigational safety" in the legislation. Bald Head Island leaders have said the project could cause serious harm to their beaches and subject the Southport area to damage from storm surges. A white paper by engineer Erik Olsen stated that the project could increase the base flood elevation and subject some current structures to greater risk and higher flood insurance rates.

Chris McCall, assistant village manager on Bald Head Island, said it's unclear where state or federal boundaries govern any effort to remove The Rocks.

Bald Head Island's village council passed a resolution against the proposal last week.

"It's going to affect many different things," McCall said.

(For more on this story, see this week's edition of The State Port Pilot.)