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“Keep Shack Wild” was an effort to build a coalition of influencers to alter the plans of two powerful and influential federal agencies.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

The National Park Service

After parties had agreed on a 20-year, 369-page plan to make dredge material available for beach restoration instead of dumping it off-shore, the NPS requested the option to place some of the material on Shackleford Banks.



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Shackleford Banks is managed by the NPS as a wilderness area.



- Dec. 6, 2013, the Army Corps of Engineers announced a public meeting for January 15th, 2014, to “collect input” on the project.
- Dec. 16, the Carteret County Beach Commission retained MDPR to spearhead public response.
- Dec. 19, the client approved our plan.
- Social media started Dec. 31.
- Website was online Jan. 4.
- First Newspaper Ad ran Jan. 5.
- Direct Mail hit Jan. 7.



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Our Plan

- Create a coalition of concerned parties to oppose any plan involving dredge material disposal on Shackleford Banks.
- Mobilize citizens and knowledgeable influencers to attend the public meeting.
- Maximize written comments by the Feb. 3rd deadline.
- Implement a “quality contact” program of influencers to communicate with Congressional and Executive Branch decision-makers.

Our Tactics

An aggressive effort to educate and rally the public to attend the meeting and submit comments:

- Direct Mail targeted at beach property homeowners
- Email Newsletter
- Social Media
- Website
- Newspaper Ads
- Grass-Tops influencers (radio appearances, newspaper articles, letters to the editor, in-person meetings, word of mouth.)

What we accomplished

- Built a coalition numbering 184 individuals and organizations
- Turned out a standing-room-only crowd of an estimated 350 people.
- Ninety-one percent of the 235 written comments opposed the NPS option.
- Every municipality on Bogue Banks passed a resolution opposing the plan.
- Secured letters opposing the plan from Cong. Walter Jones, Sen. Kay Hagan, and local and state officials.

What was the disinformation?

From the beginning, we anticipated disinformation. Some of the misstatements we faced and were forced to counter were:

- NPS wants to combat an erosion problem at Shackleford.
- The federal agencies are only putting the sand back where it came from.
- Disposal of dredge material will help preserve Shackleford and provide ecological and recreational benefits to the island.
- Federal agencies are relying on the best available science.
- Bogue Banks just wants the sand for themselves.

How we countered it.

Key to countering the disinformation were our allies from the scientific, environmental, and recreational communities. Among them were:

- Dr. Orin Pilkey, Duke University
- Pete Peterson, UNC Institute of Marine Sciences
- Stephen Fegley, UNC Institute of Marine Sciences
- Michael Orback, Duke University
- John T. Wells, William & Mary College – Institute of Marine Sciences
- National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA)
- North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries
- Surf Rider Foundation
- Recreational fishing advocates

How we countered it.

Allies helped us create a “Fact or Fiction” document that was the basis for countering myths about the plan.

- Posted on the website.
- Disseminated to all coalition members.
- Created social media posts on each point repeatedly.
- Distributed it at the public meeting.
- Shared with news media outlets.
- Continued communicating with coalition members following the comment period.

The Result

Four months after the Public Comment Period ended (Feb. 3), the NPS officially withdrew its request to place dredge material on Shackleford Banks.