



Cape Fear Sail & Power Squadron

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America's Boating Club®



NORTH CAROLINA OCEAN INLETS

Listed in order of location north to south

Oregon Inlet Outer Banks. Northern-most ocean inlet in NC. Located at the north end of Hatteras Island. Provides access to Pamlico Sound. **Federally maintained.*** See [Corps of Engineers survey](#)¹

Hatteras Inlet Outer Banks. Located between Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands. Provides access to Pamlico Sound. Once inside the inlet itself, the passage of a lengthy inshore channel is required to access the harbor or navigable portions of Pamlico Sound.

Ocracoke Inlet Outer Banks. Located at S end of Ocracoke Is. Provides access to Pamlico Sound. Once inside the inlet itself, the passage of a shifting inshore channel named *Teaches Hole* is required to access the harbor or navigable portions of Pamlico Sound. Buoyed & lighted as of June 29, '19. See Corps of Engineers surveys¹ ([for the inlet](#)) and ([for Teaches Hole](#)).

Barden Inlet Located off Harker's Is. At end of Lookout Bight inshore of Cape Lookout. In April 2019 buoys were removed due to shoaling. See [Corps of Engineers survey](#)¹

Beaufort Inlet Off Morehead City and city of Beaufort. Accesses ICW northbound (Adams Creek Canal) near ICW Mile 200 to Oriental & Neuse River (New Bern). **Federally maintained.*** See [Corps of Engineers survey](#)¹

Bogue Inlet Located at the west end of Emerald Isle off Swansboro near ICW Mile 230. See Corps of Engineers surveys at ([outer inlet](#)) and ([inshore part](#))

New River Inlet Located at the north end of Topsail Island off Camp Lejeune Marine Corps Base near ICW Mile 245. Jacksonville is up the New River. See [Corps of Engineers survey](#)

New Topsail Inlet Near ICW Mile 270. As of July 7, '20, the inlet was routinely passable by medium and small vessels at higher states of the tide. However, buoys were removed in 2017 due to shoaling, so the channel is currently unmarked. See [Corps of Engineers survey](#)

Little Topsail Inlet Located ½ N.M. SW of New Topsail Inlet. Not normally passable and does not currently connect to navigable channels inshore.

Rich Inlet Located between Topsail and Figure 8 Islands near ICW Mile 275.

Mason Inlet Located between Figure 8 Island and Wrightsville Beach island near ICW Mile 280. Dredged in 2019 but not buoyed as of July 31, '20.

Masonboro Inlet Located between Wrightsville Beach barrier island and Masonboro Island. Access ICW near Mile 285. **Federally maintained.*** See [Corps of Engineers survey](#). Dredged, buoyed & lighted as of July 7, '20.

Carolina Beach Inlet Near Mile 295 and Snows Cut on the ICW. Buoyed, lighted, and routinely passable as of July 29, '20. See [Corps of Engineers survey](#).

New Inlet Former ocean inlet near S end of Cape Fear, now closed over. Located about 2½ NM S of Federal Point, approx... 33°55'N, 77°56.5'W.

Cape Fear Slue Nearshore channel running roughly East-West across Frying Pan Shoals, located approx..1,300 yards from the southeast tip of Bald Head Island (i.e. southern end of Cape Fear). Seaward entrance is approx.. 33°52'N, 77°57'W.

¹ The government website referenced has other more detailed survey charts of this inlet.

(Continued)

Four Mile Slue Channel running roughly East-West across Frying Pan Shoals, located approx. 5 NM from the southeast tip of Bald Head Island (i.e. southern end of Cape Fear).

Frying Pan Shoals Slue Channel running roughly Northeast- Southwest across Frying Pan Shoals, located 11½ NM from the southeast tip of Bald Head Island (i.e. southern end of Cape Fear). Shown as buoyed and lighted in NOAA chart 11520 as of 2014.

Bald Head-Shoal Ship Channel (Cape Fear Inlet) Commercial channel from the Atlantic Ocean into Cape Fear River. Runs roughly N-S parallel to and west of Frying Pan Shoals. **Federally maintained.*** Buoyed and lighted, with range lights at inshore (north) end. Separate lanes for inbound and outbound vessels are in effect and shown on NOAA charts 11520 and 11537. See Corps of Engineer surveys at ([Reach 1](#)), ([Reach2](#)), and ([Reach3](#)).

Cape Fear River Bald Head Island harbor entrance. Inshore of Frying Pan Shoals. Buoyed as of Aug. 2018.

Note on Links Above The hotlinks above are to surveys on the U.S. Corps of Engineers website which is identified below. When a survey has updated the link in this table may no longer work. If one of these links fails to connect to a survey, or if the survey, which will be dated, is over 90 days old, the viewer should disregard it and find a more recent one on the website identified below as [Ocean Inlet Surveys](#).

Inlet Conditions Generally. Certain North Carolina inlets have been sufficiently dredged and otherwise maintained by Federal agencies to be more-or-less continuously passable in recent years. These are marked here as *Federally Maintained*, and as of July 2020 include Oregon, Beaufort, Masonboro, Cape Fear, and Little River Inlets. The other inlets listed are occasionally dredged and buoyed, but for significant periods in recent years have not been passable to normal traffic.

* **Federally maintained** means the U.S. Corps of Engineers and/or U.S. Coast Guard regularly service and relocate buoys as necessary, and dredge shoaling in the inlet, so that in recent years it has remained continuously passable to most vessels, except for brief periods after major storms.

Prudent Navigation. Ocean inlet geography tends to concentrate wave action and currents, so that wave periodicity in them are generally higher and steeper than immediately offshore, and currents stronger. Like all tidal waters in North Carolina, ocean inlets incur frequent shoaling and shifting especially during storms. Even when recently dredged and accurately buoyed, ocean inlets must be treated with caution. Before attempting to negotiate an ocean inlet, the prudent mariner will confirm its condition with one or more knowledgeable local sources, such as towing services, marina operators, or commercial fishermen, and consider other factors that may affect his ability to pass it safely. These include the state of the tide, tidal currents, sea state, wind direction, and vessel draft and maneuverability.

Cape Fear River Southport harbor entrance. Inshore of Frying Pan Shoals. Accesses ICW near Mile 309. Buoyed and lighted

Lockwood's Folly Inlet At the east end of Holden Beach near ICW Mile 321. The U.S. Coast Guard issued an "urgent bulletin" to mariners, warning the inlet was as shallow as two feet at mean low tide. The Coast Guard also removed remaining navigational buoys, stating that they no longer offered realistic assistance to boaters. See [Corps of Engineers survey](#).

Shallotte Inlet At the east end of Ocean Isle Beach near ICW Mile 330. Town of Shallotte NC on Hwy 17 is approx. 5 NM up Shallotte River

Tubbs Inlet At the east end of Sunset Beach near ICW Mile 336, approx. 4 NM east of SC state line

Little River Inlet At SC state line. Accesses ICW near Mile 341. **Federally maintained.*** Buoyed and lighted. See [Corps of Engineers survey](#).

Additional Links to Current Navigation Information For Above Inlets

(Within the links below click on the location of the Inlet you wish to research)

Buoy Data:

<https://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/maps/Southeast.shtml>

Tides:

<https://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/gmap3/index.shtml>

NOAA Now:

<https://www.nowcoast.noaa.gov/>

Tides & Currents:

<https://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/noaatidepredictions.html?id=8658163&legacy=1>

NOAA Marine Weather Information:

<https://www.weather.gov/ilm/marine>

NOAA Wind:

<https://marine.weather.gov/MapClick.php?map.x=286&map.y=119&marine=0&site=ILM&zmx=1&zmy=1&FcstType=graphical&lat=&lon=>

Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Service:

<https://water.weather.gov/ahps2/index.php?wfo=ilm>

The University of North Carolina Wilmington's Coastal Ocean Research and Monitoring Program (CORMP):

http://www.cormp.org/?quality=Off&units=English&duration=3%20days&maps=storm_tracks&legend=Off&forecast=Point&hti=&nhc=undefined&sst=¤t=&datum=MLLW&windPrediction=wind%20speed%20prediction®ion=&bbox=-78.52478027343751,33.980947501499635,-76.93588256835938,34.65919277297457&iframe=null&mode=home&skipState=undefined

Ocean Inlet Surveys:

<https://www.saw.usace.army.mil/Missions/Navigation/Hydrographic-Surveys/Inlets-Crossings/>

Corp of Engineers Hydrographic Surveys & River Projects:

<https://www.saw.usace.army.mil/Missions/Navigation/Hydrographic-Surveys/>

USCG Notice to Mariners

<https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/?pageName=lnmMain>

This information is not to be used for navigation. Consult the latest charts and Local Notices to Mariners and use prudent seamanship. Conditions may change. Any person or entity that uses this information in any way, as a condition of that use, agrees to waive and does waive and also hold authors harmless from any claims which may arise from or be related to this use.

