

## Public Water Access

Public water access is priority for Carteret County. The Carteret County Board of Commissioners created an Advisory Council in 2006 called the Carteret Public Water Access Committee, which advises the commissioners regarding public water access locations and facilities to serve Carteret County citizens. The committee was the first of its kind for county government in North Carolina. The group is composed of thirteen members, eight of which vote on issues. The other members represent the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, Carteret County Marine Fisheries Advisory Board, NC Department of Transportation, and county government. The Carteret County Commissioners have also shown their commitment to improve public water access by allocating \$500,000 into the annual budget for water access projects.

The county has utilized grant programs to secure monies at up to three times the initial investment of county resources. One project funded in such a manner is the complete renovation of the West Beaufort public access sight, where several boat ramps will be constructed and parking spaces increased. That project was made possible by a \$523,000 grant from the NC Public Beach and Coastal Waterfront Access program with an additional commitment of \$215,000 from the Wildlife Resources Commission.

Carteret County also committed \$100,000/year for five years to help fund a public water access project on Newport River sponsored by Morehead City. There will be four to six boat ramps, an extension of an existing fishing pier and eighty to one hundred parking places. The total cost of the project is 2.3 million dollars with most monies coming from grant sources.

The county and Morehead City are also pursuing a traffic flow realignment for the existing Wildlife Resources Commission boat ramp at the Morehead City Visitor's Center public access sight. The new traffic flow will allow motorist to safely exit the site by using a stoplight west of the current exit point. Other sites in the county are currently being evaluated and grant applications have been submitted for other projects. The committee holds meetings once a month which are open to the public. Public input is welcomed. Contact the Carteret County Board of Commissioners office for times and place of meetings and further information.