

Surf City Coastal Storm Risk Management Project

Project Overview and Public Communication Strategies

NCBIWA Annual Conference | 2026
Town of Surf City, North Carolina

Outline

The Project

History, scope, design & long-term investment

The Challenge

Reintroducing a long-planned project to a changing community

Our Approach

Public education, marketing, and construction readiness



The Project

How We Got Here

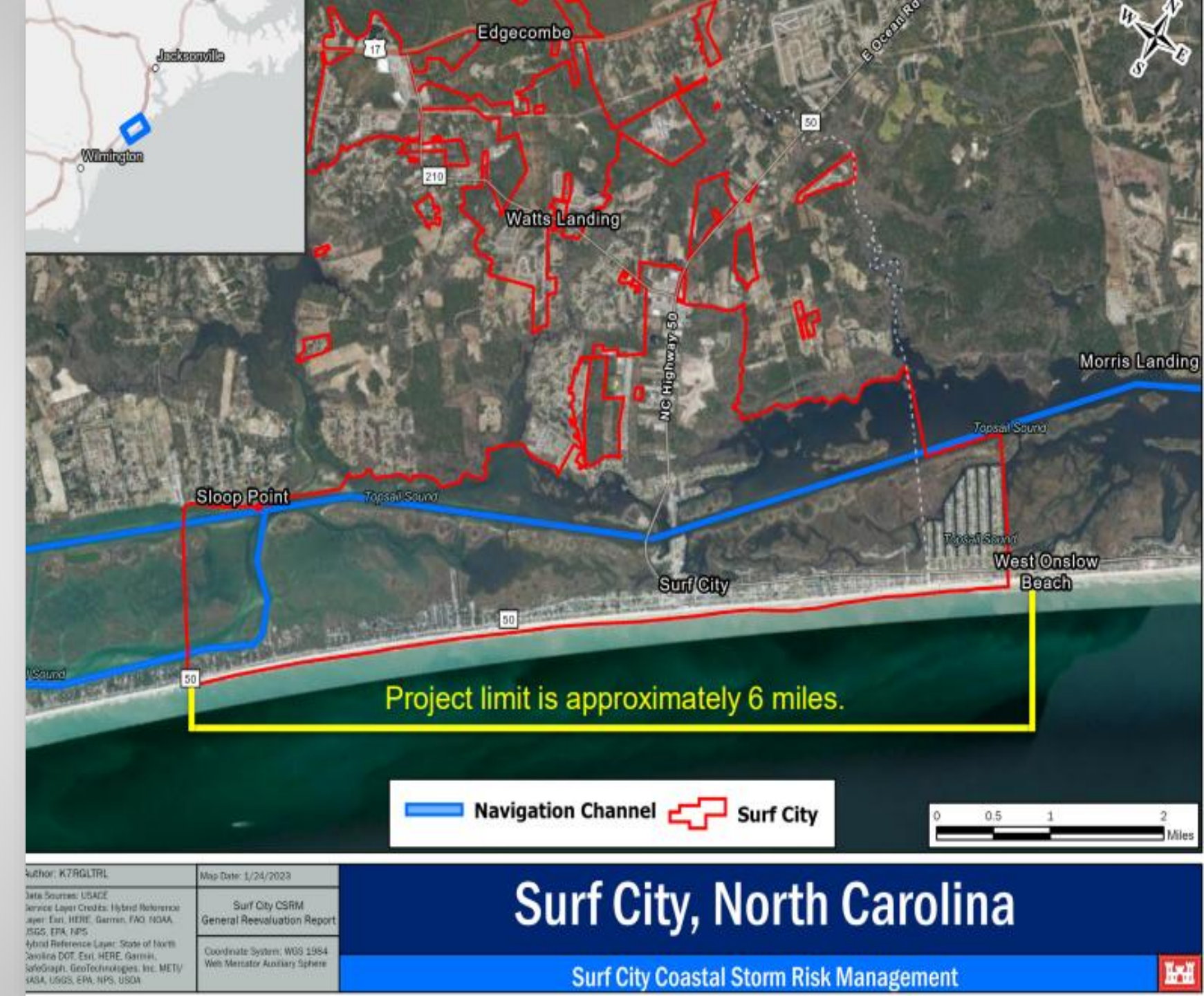
1980's	Conversations Started
1990's	Hurricane Bertha, Fran & Floyd
1999	Federal Resolution supporting a project
2010	Completed Chief's Feasibility Report
2019	Disaster Relief Act: Funding of Design
2021	NTB withdrew from Project
2023	DRA Funding approved for new GRR
2025	Updated Chief's Report released
2026	Project Partnership Agreement Signed

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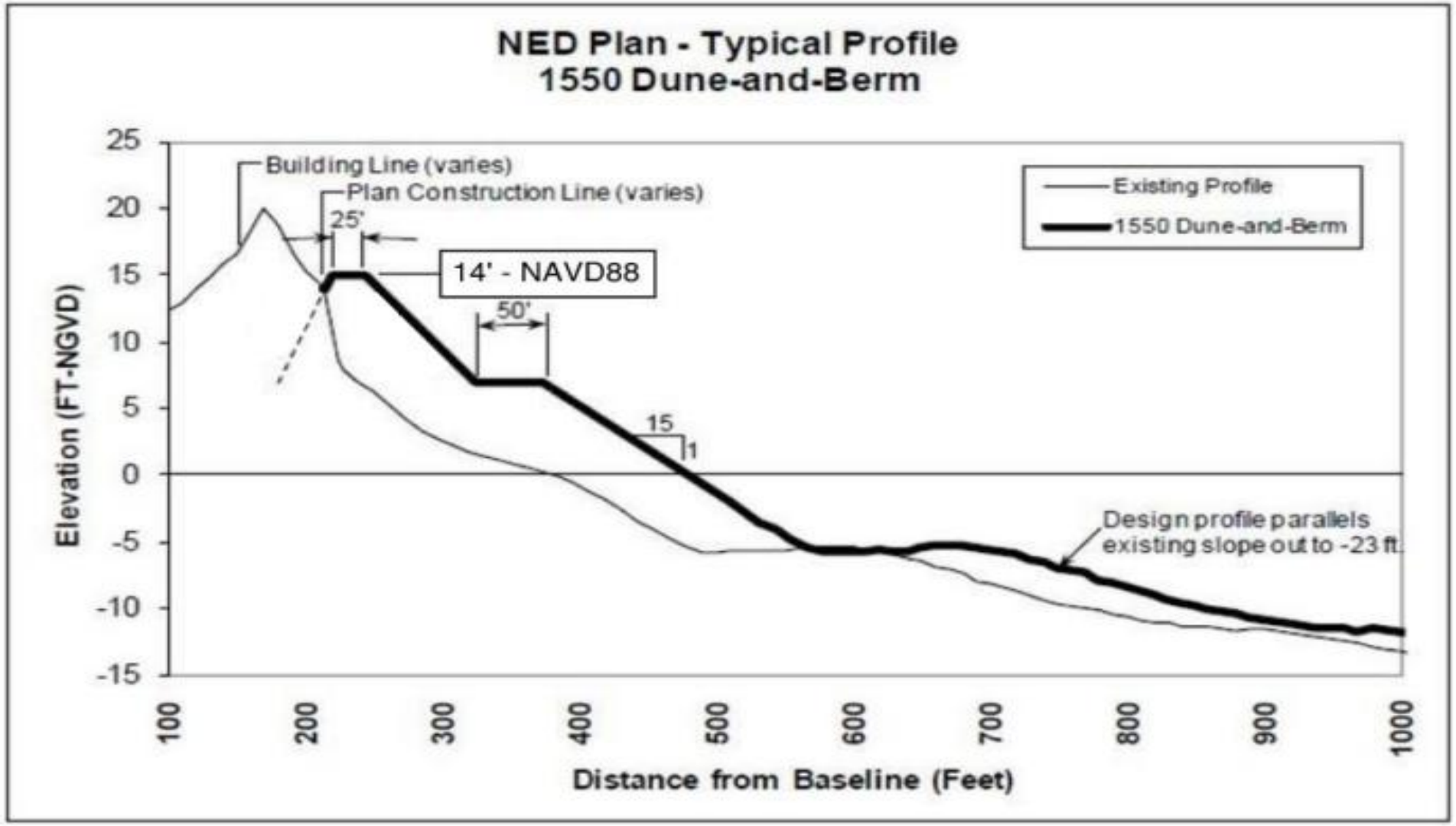
Year History

Project Scope

- Approx. 6.3 miles
- Beach Berm, Elevated Dune System, and Native Vegetation for stabilization
- 1,000-foot northern transition berm extending into North Topsail Beach
- 40 Public Beach Walkovers



Project Design: An Engineered Beach and Dune System



Surf City, NC, 2010 Chief's Report, Section 7

Project Investment & Long-Term Nourishment Program

2025 CHIEF'S REPORT · 2024 PRICE LEVELS

$560.9 million

Estimated total project investment across the 50-year planning period

Initial construction $198.6M

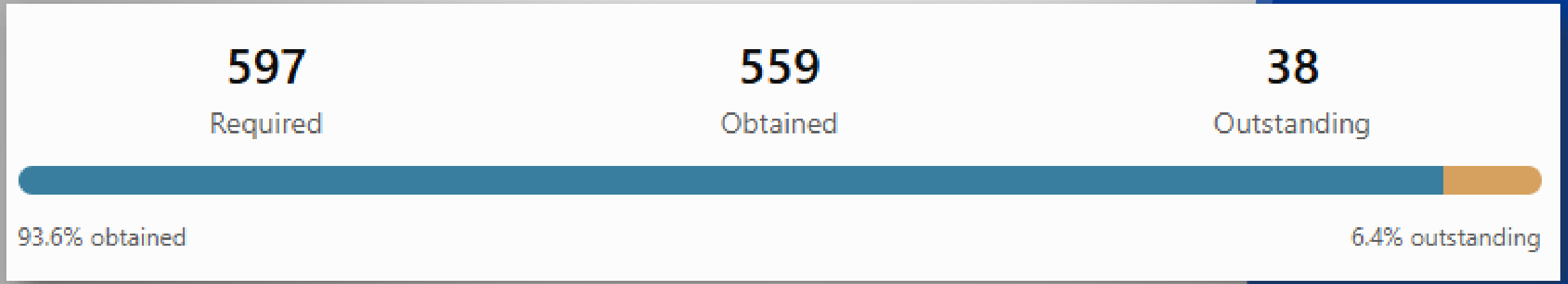
Future renourishment $362.3M

Initial construction: 35.4% of total

Future renourishment: 64.6% of total

50 Years	7	~6 Years
Project analysis period	Planned nourishment events	Approximate nourishment interval

Easement Acquisition & Project Readiness



Remaining steps

- Continue voluntary acquisition and direct owner coordination.
- Complete required legal review and notices.
- Pursue condemnation proceedings for unresolved easements, as authorized and necessary.

Completing Easement Acquisition: The Path Forward

1. Property Appraisals

Engage an appraiser to evaluate properties with outstanding easements.

2. Voluntary Acquisitions

Continue property-owner outreach and seek negotiated easement agreements.

3. Legal Proceedings

Pursue condemnation proceedings where necessary, subject to applicable legal requirements.

Objective

Secure the required property interests to support USACE real estate certification and construction readiness.



The Challenge

Changing Community

New owners may be unfamiliar with:

- Project History
- Scope
- Property-related Requirements



Seasonal & Transient Populations



Permanent Residents



Vacation Rental Property Owners



Second-Home Owners



Visitors

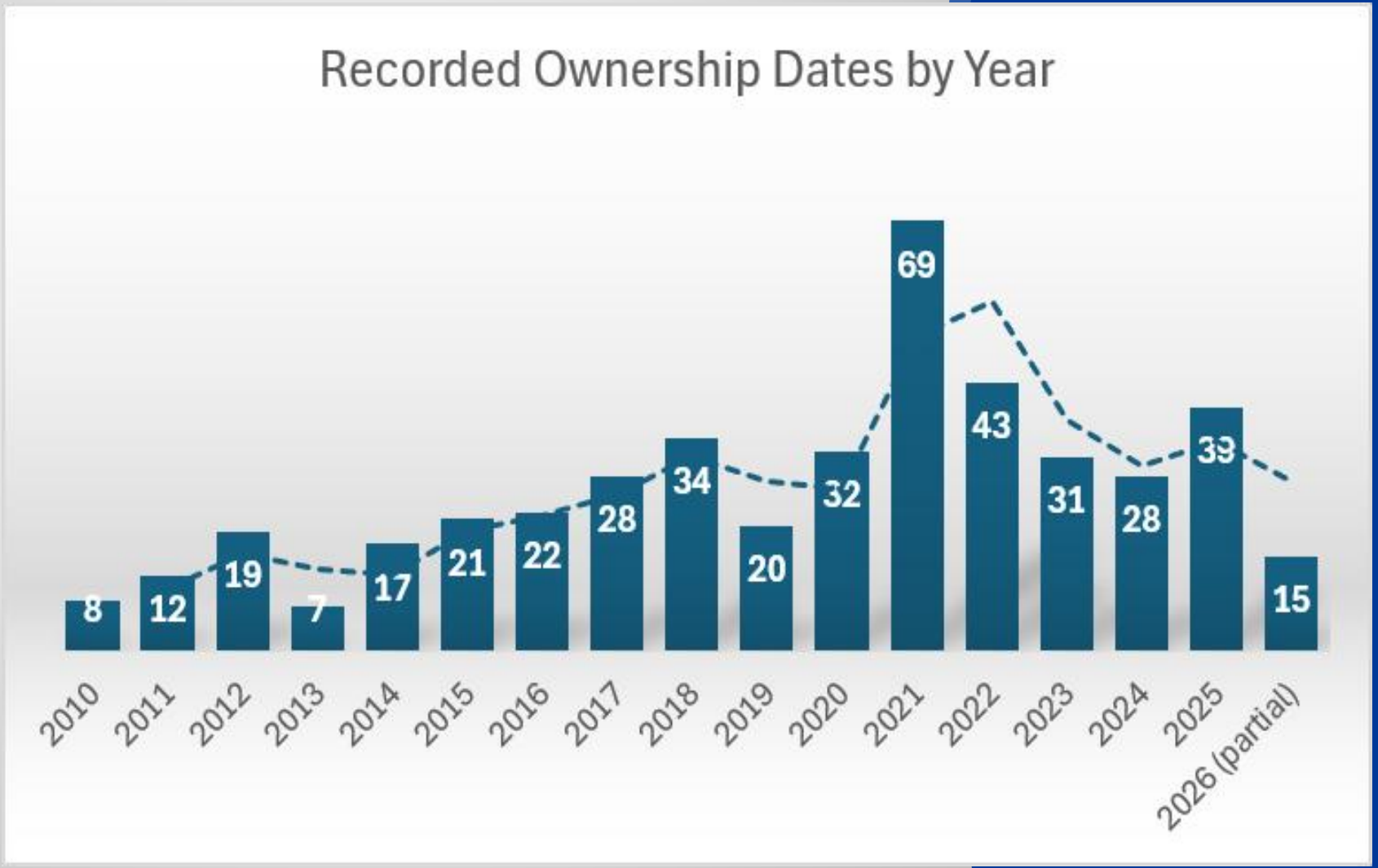
A Moving Target: Property Owner Engagement

615

OCEANFRONT PARCEL RECORDS

339

RECENT OWNERSHIP DATES
2010 THROUGH OCTOBER 2026



A Moving Target: The Challenge of Long-Term Property Owner Engagement

- **The challenge of continuity**
  - Changing ownership: 67% of parcel records with a recorded date reflect ownership dating from 2017 onward.
  - A changing audience: Owners who participated in early project discussions may sell their property, while new owners enter the process years later.
  - Repeated outreach: Project information, decisions, benefits, costs, and construction impacts must be communicated to new owners who may have missed earlier discussions.
  - Long-term commitment: Engagement must continue throughout planning, permitting, funding, design, and construction—not just at the beginning of the project.

A Moving Target: The Challenge of Long-Term Property Owner Engagement

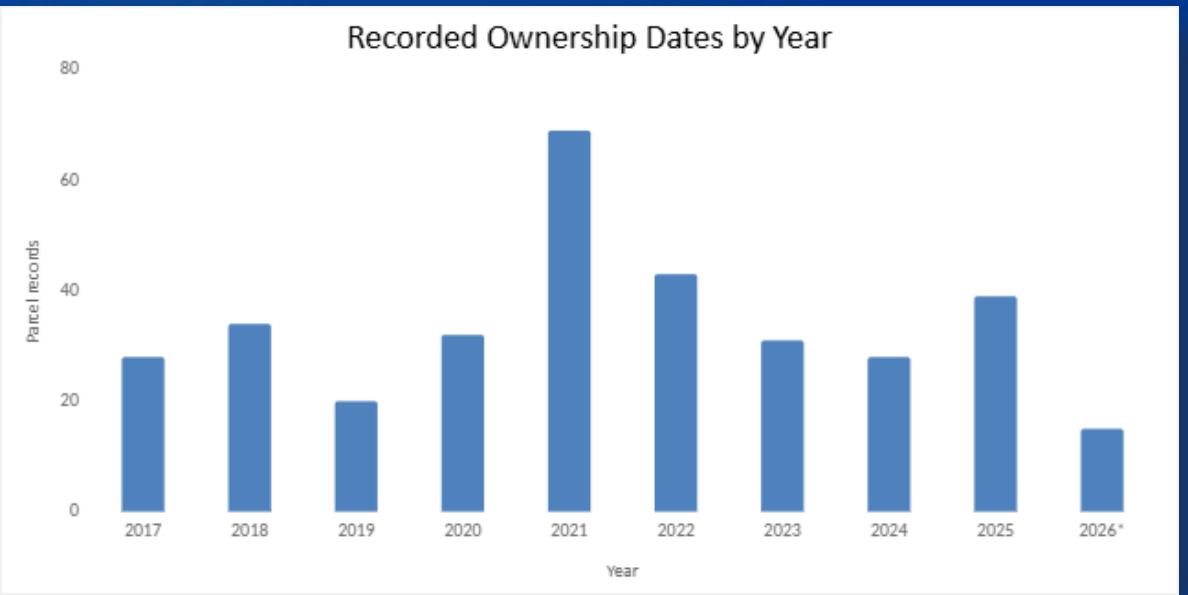
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Oceanfront parcel records

339

Recent ownership dates

2017 through October 2026



Project Awareness & Understanding

Project Awareness		Project Understanding
I've heard about beach nourishment.	→	I understand the engineered storm risk reduction system
I know the Corps is involved.	→	I understand the federal and local responsibilities
I've heard construction is coming.	→	I understand the milestones and schedule uncertainties.
I know easements are needed.	→	I understand why property rights are required

Our Approach

From Awareness to Engagement

Awareness

People know the project exists & recognize its importance.

Understanding

People understand its purpose, benefits, limitations & timeline.

Engagement

People know where to find answers, ask questions, & prepare for impacts.

The Questions Our Community Is Asking

When will construction begin?

Will I still be able to use the beach?

How will my property be affected?

What will this cost the Town?

How much protection will it provide?

What happens after construction?



From Project Information to Public Understanding

Translate complexity into clarity without losing accuracy.

Technical Information

- Engineering reports and design elevations
- Federal agreements and cost-sharing requirements
- Project schedules and procurement milestones
- Risk assessments and economic analyses

Public Understanding

- Visualizations of the future beach and dune
- Clear explanations of who pays for what
- Milestone timelines with practical implications
- Plain-language explanations of benefits and remaining risks

Measuring Public Understanding

Establish a Baseline

Identify existing knowledge, questions, and misconceptions

Test Communication

Share educational content and gather audience feedback

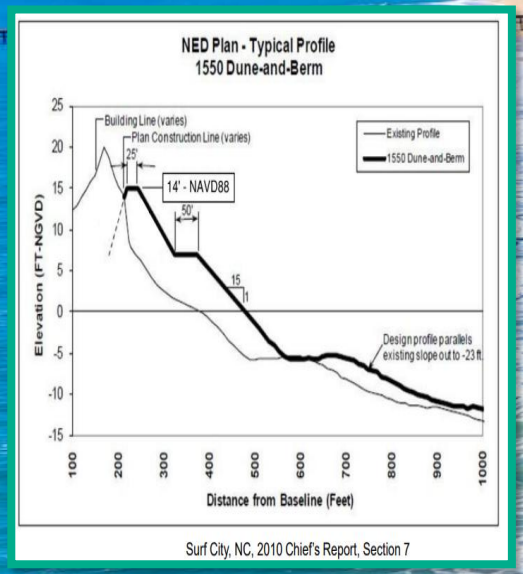
Measure Understanding

Assess changes in knowledge and persistent questions

Refine the Approach

Adjust messages, formats, and outreach methods

NED Plan – Typical Profile
1550 Dune-and-Berm



Surf City, NC, 2010 Chief's Report, Section 7

Building Line (varies)

Plan Construction Line (varies)

Dune Crest Width 25 feet

25'

Dune Crest Elevation 14.0 feet NAVD88

Protective Berm Width 50 feet

Berm Elevation 6.0 feet NAVD88

15
1

Design profile parallels existing slope out to -23 ft.

25 20 15 10 5 0 -5 -10 -15

Elevation (FT-NGVD)

1000 900 800 700 600 500 400 300 200 100

Distance from Baseline (Feet)

AI Generated Concept Illustration

Bringing the Project to Life





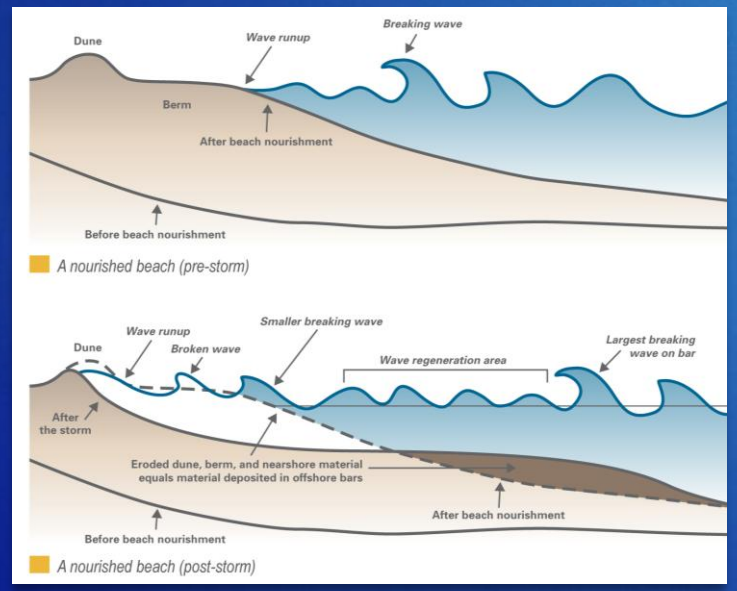




PHOTO BY: US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

- Educational Videos
- Interviews & Podcasts
- Graphics & Visualizations
- Project History & Storytelling

Reaching People Where They Are

CONSISTENT, ACCURATE, ACCESSIBLE MESSAGING

Property Owner Outreach

Direct correspondence, easement information, and project-specific updates.

Town Communication Channels

Website, social media, utility inserts, and printed materials.

Business & Rental Partnerships

Equip local businesses and rental partners with accurate, visitor-friendly information.

Beachfront Communication

Informational signage and QR codes connecting beachgoers to project resources.

Preparing Through Project Milestones

August 17, 2026	PPA Executed
In Progress	Real Estate Certification
	Procurement
	Construction Begins
	Construction Complete

Moving from Planning to Implementation

Project Readiness

- Advance engineering and design with USACE
- Complete remaining easement acquisition
- Prepare for real estate certification
- Plan for financial and administrative obligations
- Coordinate construction procurement milestones

Community Readiness

- Establish a baseline of public understanding
- Develop accessible educational content
- Expand outreach through trusted partners
- Explain milestones and schedule changes
- Prepare construction-phase communication tools

Lessons for Coastal Communities

1. **Persistence Matters**
Major coastal projects require sustained leadership and commitment across decades.

2. **Local Responsibilities Are Significant**
Financial commitments, easements, and coordination are essential to project delivery.

3. **Communication Is Infrastructure**
Public understanding should be developed alongside engineering and construction readiness.

4. **Transparency Builds Confidence**
Explain milestones, uncertainties, and remaining risks without creating unrealistic expectations.



Thank You — Questions?