

RESOLUTION

SUPPORTING PROTECTION, PRESERVATION AND SAFETY AT THE OLD MANNS HARBOR BRIDGE PURPLE MARTIN ROOST

WHEREAS roosting area under the west end of the William B. Umstead Memorial Bridge (“Old Manns Harbor Bridge”) has attracted purple martins during summer months for nearly 30 years; and

WHEREAS recent counts have recorded some 100,000 purple martins coming from throughout North Carolina’s northern Coastal Plain to roost at the bridge from late June through mid-September, enough to appear as a significant event on Doppler radar observations; and

WHEREAS a documented study in 2005 showed martin activity during sunrise and sunset of the roosting period causes considerable distress among motorists crossing the bridge, producing a safety hazard; and

WHEREAS the 2005 study recorded a conservative count of approximately 1,750 purple martin deaths caused by vehicles crossing the bridge, and a 2004 informal study recorded a conservative count of more than 3,000 martin deaths at a time when the new Virginia Dare Bridge diverted about 80% of traffic from the Old Manns Harbor Bridge; and

WHEREAS viewing the purple martin activity has become an annual attraction among tourists and birdwatchers (579 people observed in a 42-day period during the 2005 study and 407 people participated in a roost celebration event); and

WHEREAS this natural phenomenon represents considerable value to environmentally-safe economic development of Dare County and the Coastal Plain;

WHEREAS the combination of increasing bird / birdwatcher activity and the increasingly hazardous driving conditions at sunrise and sunset during June, July, August and September represents a serious safety issue;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Dare County Board of Commissioners support the installation and enforcement of school-crossing zone-type signs with flashing lights and an enforced speed limit reduction of 20 MPH during a specific temporary time period of approximately 2 hours surrounding sunrise and sunset during the purple martin roosting period (mid-June to mid-September).

This 16th day of January, 2007.

Chairman

ATTEST:

Clerk

