



Folly Beach Pier Replacement Media Fact Sheet – September 2020

The Folly Beach Fishing Pier is a Lowcountry icon. Thousands of locals and visitors have fond memories of fishing, dancing or enjoying views since it opened in 1995. As the wooden pier reaches the end of its useful life, Charleston County Parks is honored to announce the creation of the next Folly Beach Fishing Pier that will serve our community for generations to come.

The current Folly Beach Pier

The history of a pier at this location on Folly Beach goes back to the 1930s. The current Folly Beach Pier, owned by Charleston County Parks, opened July 4, 1995. The entirely wooden pier is 25 feet wide and 1,047 feet long (roughly the length of three football fields), and features 319 pilings. This 25-year-old pier, while still currently safe for visitors, is deteriorating, its wooden piles impacted by marine borers as well as wear and tear from the ocean environment. CCPRC began dive inspections of the pier pilings in 2013, and encapsulated many of the piles - including half on the “diamond head” area - in an effort to strengthen them, kill the marine borers, and maintain the integrity of the pier. Though the pier has been maintained regularly to keep it safe for the public, pile deterioration is a continuous process that cannot be stopped. Wooden timber pile piers typically have an average life expectancy of 20-25 years.

The new Folly Beach Pier

As the Folly Beach Pier reaches the end of its life, CCPRC plans to remove the existing structure to replace it with a new pier made of concrete and wood. The new Folly Beach Pier will be reminiscent of the old pier and in the same footprint, but also offer unobstructed views of the ocean, modern improvements and a longer lifespan.

Footprint: The new Folly Beach Pier will be constructed in the existing pier’s physical footprint. The length of the pier will remain essentially the same (1,039 feet), and will also include the diamond-shaped pier head. Two locations along the pier deck will be slightly widened and covered. Pier pilings will decrease from 319 wooden piles to 208 concrete piles.

Changes and improvements: Two locations along the pier walkway will be slightly widened, with covered shelters in the middle, to allow additional fishing opportunities and more efficient pedestrian access. The new pier will be designed and constructed using pre-stressed concrete piles, a concrete substructure and concrete beams – which will greatly extend the pier’s life - with wooden decking, benches and shade structures. The new pier will offer all of the elements visitors love about the existing pier, including fishing stations, public restrooms, retail facilities, benches, shade structures, places to watch the sunset, and the beloved Moonlight Mixer dance series.

Pier closure

The pier will close to the public after October 18, 2020. Details continue below.

Construction details

Timeline:

Permits were filed in May 2019 with SCDHEC’s Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management and the United States Army Corps of Engineers. The state permit was received in October 2019. The federal permit was received Sept. 2, 2020.

Contract bids were received in late 2019. A contract with Cape Romain Contractors was signed in March 2020. Cape Romain will mobilize following the pier’s closure on October 19, 2020. This timeline allows construction to begin following the end of turtle nesting season on Folly Beach. **Construction is expected to take 28 months (through Spring 2023).**

Scope of construction:

The plan is to do a “modified top down” construction for the new pier. The “apron” area – the rectangular deck behind the restaurant and gift shop – will be constructed first along with the first few bents of the pier walkway. Contractor Cape Romain will then build a trestle within the pier footprint and begin demolition and construction of the diamond head at the end of the pier. Last, the contractors will build the walkway starting from the diamond head and working back towards the shore.

Closures and impacts to the public

Pier access: **The last day for public access to the pier will be Oct. 18.** The walkway section of the pier will be closed throughout the entire anticipated construction period.

The “apron” area: The apron is the rectangular deck behind the restaurant and gift shop. This area will be closed for renovations from Oct. 19 through approximately Spring 2021, but will reopen during walkway construction and will be an excellent location from which to view the ongoing construction and progress.

Pier 101 restaurant, pier gift shop, public restrooms: Are expected to be closed for 4-6 months during the apron closure. Pier 101 closed for the season on Sept. 7.

Beach access: Will also be affected during the “apron” closure, and possibly at other times during the pier construction period for loading or unloading of equipment and materials onto the pier.

Parking: Starting Oct. 1, about half of the pier parking lot will be impacted as the construction team mobilizes. During the apron closure and the first phase of construction (Oct. 19 through Spring 2021), no public parking will be available at the pier. Beginning approximately Spring 2021, about half of the pier’s parking lot will reopen. This will continue for the full construction period.

Recommendations for alternative locations to visit

Folly Beach County Park, located on the west end of Folly Island, is a beautiful alternative for Folly Beach access during this time, and its new Dunes House opened in May 2020. Anglers are also encouraged to visit the Mount Pleasant Pier, another expansive pier great for fishing and water views.

Remembering the old pier

As part of the RFP process, the construction firm will be salvaging pieces of wood from the current pier. These pieces will be made available for purchase at a later date for people wishing to keep a souvenir of the former pier.

Pier team

Owners: Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission

Consultants: Wantman Group, Inc. (WGI) - selected due to its extensive experience in ocean fishing pier design and construction

Local WGI sub-consultant: Bolchoz Marine Advisors

Local architect team: LS3P

Construction contractor: Cape Romain Contractors

History of the Folly Beach Pier

The original Folly Pier was 120 feet wide, 97 feet long and was a green and white structure built with Palmetto tree logs. Known for its sheltered dance floor, the pier attracted many famous bands and artists, including Jerry Lee Lewis, The Drifters and The Coasters. Following a fire at the nearby Ocean Front Hotel, the pier and pavilion area reopened as the Ocean Plaza in 1960 and featured a boardwalk, amusement rides, a roller skating rink and concessions. The pier and pavilion were lost to another fire in January 1977. After the remains were removed and the boardwalk was sold, the Holiday Inn hotel was built adjacent to the site in 1985. As part of the 1992 bond, CCPRC was able to purchase the 1.4 acres of beachfront property on Folly Beach where the former pier stood. CCPRC opened the Folly Beach Fishing Pier on July 4, 1995, nearly 20 years after the previous pier burned down.

About marine borers

Also known as shipworms, marine boring "worms" are actually mollusks and are the most destructive of the marine wood boring insects. They enter timber submerged under water and then grow rapidly once inside.

- These creatures have been around for as long as wood has been found in saltwater. They are well known for tearing apart the bottom of boats and have caused the common practice of covering the submerged part of a boat with either metal or plastic.
- These insects are especially bad on the Southern Atlantic Coast, as they thrive in warmer water temperatures.
- Wood pilings can be preserved after marine borers have gotten in them; however, eventually they will need to be replaced.
- The best long-term solution to stop the damage caused by marine borers is to reconstruct using concrete pilings.

Updates on the pier's progress

For updates on the status of the Folly Beach Fishing Pier construction, visit CharlestonCountyParks.com/pierprogress. The website will be updated regularly with information and photos of the construction progress.