

Hurricane Dorian swamps Ocracoke Island; Village devastated

- No loss of life
- Island closed since Sept. 6
- Recovery to last many months

By Connie Leinbach

As his own home was flooded and those of his immediate family, Albert O'Neal, Ocracoke's fire chief, waded in chest-deep water to his boat early on Sept. 6 to rescue his family and other islanders as Hurricane Dorian's eye lashed the island.

Dorian went over Ocracoke about 7 a.m. that day as a category 2 hurricane. Around 7:30 a tsunami-like surge of Pamlico Sound water engulfed the island in unprecedented flooding that destroyed or damaged vehicles, homes and businesses, many of which were traditionally thought to be on high enough ground.

He and his wife, Theresa, waded to O'Neal's parents' home in front of his.

Then O'Neal waded in chest-deep water to get his Woccocon Oysters skiff at the Island Inn on Lighthouse Road.

"I got momma and daddy, then Nicole (his niece) and her two kids and then (sister) Stephanie," O'Neal said several days after the storm.

He took the group to the Ocracoke Volunteer Fire Department where they awaited the touchdown of a U.S. Coast Guard helicopter to take O'Neal's parents off the island.

In addition to the O'Neal households, Theresa's shop, the Island Ragpicker, was inundated. Albert's business, Woccocon Oysters, that he works with Stevie Wilson, also was destroyed.

As Dorian's eye passed and the winds died down, people ventured out and probably saw O'Neal and other boaters out rescuing people, some of whom had scrambled into their attics to escape the water.

"Lord, I'm going to drown"

Mickey Hoggard, 85, told her story to Gov. Roy Cooper on Sept. 23 when he returned to Ocracoke a second time.

"I managed to get a few things off the closet floor," she said. "The water was coming up so fast that I couldn't get through it--the pressure of it. So, I sat on the couch. Then I saw the water creeping up. When it got into my lap, I just said 'Lord, I'm going to drown.'"

"About the time I got those words out of my mouth, my grandson and my great grandson came through the back

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Clockwise from top, Albert O'Neal, Ocracoke Volunteer Fire Dept. chief, left, helms a skiff with Brian Kissel, rescuing stranded islanders on Sept. 6. C. LEINBACH/OCRACOKE OBSERVER

The ocean breaches N.C. 12 at the north end of Ocracoke. NCDOT photo

Jakey Spencer is one of many islanders rescued from flooded island homes. After that, 'he just sat on his porch and cried,' said his sister Elaine Spencer. Photo by Sarah Warren



Flooded Irvin Garrish Highway looking north the afternoon of Sept. 6. C.
LEINBACH/OCRACOCKE OBSERVER

DORIAN

Continued from page 1

door. They got me into a boat somehow," she said.

"We've never had water in the house" was the new island refrain.

Indeed, Dorian's storm surge set a new record with a 7.4-foot storm surge as registered at the ferry terminal at 8:30 a.m. Friday. The previous record was Hurricane Matthew in 2016 with a storm surge of 4.7 feet.

Before that, it was the storm of 1944, which, while there's no official record of the height, "it was over the Lighthouse fence," O'Neal said, as was Dorian.

Dorian officially made landfall at 8 a.m. in Hatteras, but

Ocracoke received most of the water.

Now Ocracoke was one of those places seen on TV and the focus of media attention.

The power had been out since Thursday night and islanders waded through the now knee-deep water Friday afternoon to go to the fire station, which immediately became the disaster command center under the direction of Hyde County Manager Kris Noble.

Arriving soon after that was a cavalry of state emergency responders: The National Guard with cases of bottled water and meals-ready-to-eat, more deputy sheriffs, Fish Commission officers and search-and-rescue squads, who went door to door Friday night and Saturday to locate anyone trapped in their homes.

No loss of life

Amazingly, there was no loss of life on Ocracoke on the day Dorian hit nor the days following.

That night, and for two weeks afterwards, the firehouse was in high gear as do-

nated food and goods--by boat from friends Down East, from across the Pamlico Sound and via helicopter--poured onto the island. Officials held meetings and conducted business via a portable internet tower.

Shell shocked islanders arrived to sift through the bounty, sign up for services and commiserate. Hugs have been the currency since Sept. 6.

The Salvation Army set up hot meals the next day in the Ocracoke Community Center. They were joined by the Red Cross and later Baptists on Mission as the island chefs, augmented by Jason Wells, who cooked lunch for 10 days with food donated by U.S. Foods, Sysco and Performance Food Group.

The Baptists also brought portable shower and laundry facilities, which will be on the island until mid-October.

Islanders immediately kicked in to help manage and organize the "fire mart," as the storehouse inside the fire station has been dubbed.

The scene on the island was flat-out hectic for two weeks as islanders needed everything all at once—electricity, ice, food, safe water, the Variety Store and the post office back open, the bank open, cars towed, insurance adjuster visits.

Then there was the inevitable tearing out of soggy households and businesses, which was about 90 percent of the island. At press time, Hyde County has no total damage estimate but a report from the Recovery Center, set up Oct. 1 in the Variety Store parking lot, says that of the approximately

1,100 permanent residents, 238 have come in.

Of those, 109 homes are uninhabitable with 21 of those totally destroyed.

Dorian's waters invaded spaces thought to be safely out of reach—the bank, Ocracoke School, the library, Ocracoke Preservation Society, the NPS parking lot and the United Methodist Church.

Since the water was so high, Tideland Electric Member Cooperative had to check each building's electric meter before turning on the main switch to ensure against anything going up in flames.

When that happened Monday evening, Sept. 9, a few places did spark, prompting a



The view of Sunset Drive at the height of the storm.
Photo by Donna Drilling

small flurry of fire department activity, but there were no conflagrations.

Hyde County allowed residents and non-resident property owners back on the island Sept. 10.

Displaced islanders have found temporary quarters with family, friends, off island, and in rental houses.

Several Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOADs) descended on the island. Samaritan's Purse, Christian Aid Ministries and others have helped islanders muck out their buildings and remediate.

Disaster mitigation and debris removal crews are being housed in parts of hotels that didn't get flooded or they brought their own campers.

Elected officials Gov. Roy Cooper, newly elected U.S. Rep. Greg Murphy and state Insurance Commissioner Mike Causey visited the island promising help. At press time, Ocracoke has received

approval for public assistance from FEMA, which will help the county cover costs, but on Oct. 8 was denied individual assistance.

Donations pour in

With friends all over the country sending money to Ocracoke via the Outer Banks Community Foundation, to the two local churches and to dozens of GoFundMe campaigns, Ocracoke might indeed be "Ocracoke Strong," a slogan that popped up a few days after Dorian.

Janille Turner, of the Ocracoke Oyster Company and Tommy Barnette of Hard Core Tees came up with the slogan and immediately started printing T-shirts.

Elsewhere, others are creating T-shirts with this slogan (viewable on social media), stickers and more. Groups are holding fundraising concerts and events all over the region.

A 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew has been in place, but at the Oct. 7 Hyde County commissioners meeting, it was pushed back to 11 p.m. Alcohol sales will resume Oct. 14.

The Variety Store opened shortly after the hurricane as did Jerniman's gas station after the state provided free gasoline for several days.

Some businesses received little or no damage and are anxiously awaiting visitors. A few restaurants have opened with limited service: The Back Porch, Sorella's, Helios Hideaway and Plum Pointe Kitchen.

With the massive amount of debris along the roads and the rebuilding that needs to be done, a reopening date is still unknown but will be discussed at the Nov. 4 commissioners meeting.

"We have a long way to go before we allow visitors back," Tom Pahl, Ocracoke's county commissioner, said. "It's not just cleanup but then we have to rebuild and that's going to be significant. We'll have hundreds on the island for contract crews.

"It's going to be a workplace environment. We need the ferry space for materials, supplies and contractors. We have hundreds of houses that need to be repaired."

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'We were up to our necks'



Tammy Tolson and Trudy Austin

As told to Connie Leinbach

As water rushed into their Lighthouse Road home, sisters Trudy and Tammy ran around and put stuff up higher, but the water kept rising. Tammy relates what happened next:

"We went to the back door which is glass only on the top not in the bottom and tried to open it and me and Trudy is pushing. And we both looked at each other and said, 'This isn't good.' So, we ran to the kitchen and to the front door and same thing there. I said, 'It's about time we stopped putting things up. I think we better think about ourselves.'"

The front door had glass in the lower half.

"You gotta remember, now, Trudy can't swim."

Tammy took charge for them to go to their rental cottage behind the house.

"I kicked it (the glass half of the door). I looked at it and said, 'We're going to our cottage right back.' I knew the door was locked over there."

They grabbed the key, dry clothes and medicines.

"So, we kicked through the door and went down three steps and we were up to our necks. And she said, 'I can't swim, Tammy.' And I said, 'Well, guess what? You will not die today on my watch if it's the last thing.'

"So, I grabbed her shoulder, and I went going and she kept saying she couldn't feel her feet a couple times. So, I just took her, and we just waded over.

"Our hair was wet; we had swallowed some water. I mean, we stood on the porch like little drowned rats, but we were both fine. We made it; we'll be okay.

"Trudy always said that she would never go down on the Titanic with me. She told everybody that story because I'm the hyper one and not organized. And after this, she said she would go anywhere with me."

"She turned into Wonder Woman that day!" Trudy said about Tammy afterwards.



Clockwise from left: A kayaker in the flood waters on Irvin Garrish Highway. Photo by Carol Ritchie

The eye of Dorian is almost on top of Ocracoke before it officially made landfall in Hatteras. Graphic furnished by N.C. Rep. John Torbett (R-Gaston), who kept in touch with the Ocracoke Observer during the storm.

The new high tide line, with Dorian at the top, at the Village Craftsmen. Photo by Philip Howard

When Dorian's winds had died down the afternoon of Sept. 6, islanders rescued from flooded homes began to gather at the Ocracoke Volunteer Fire Dept. A Coast Guard helicopter circles above to find a landing area from which to evacuate rescued residents. C. LEINBACH/OCRACOKE OBSERVER

The Jolly Roger is among the many damaged waterfront businesses. C. LEINBACH/OCRACOKE OBSERVER





Hugs and food have been the currency post-Dorian on Ocracoke. This food truck from Belvidere, Perquimans County, was one of several that came to the island to help. CONNIE LEINBACH/OCRACOCKE OBSERVER.

“No one is an island,
because an island,
(Ocracoke)
has many friends.”



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Floodwaters on Irvin Garrish Highway. Photo by Carol Ritchie



One of several boats from Cedar Island, Oriental and New Bern that delivered supplies right after the storm. C. LEINBACH/OCRACOCKE OBSERVER



Considered one of the safest spots on Ocracoke Island, many cars parked in the lower part of the NPS parking lot near the ferry docks were flooded and some were pushed into the Berkley Manor fence. C. LEINBACH/OCRACOCKE OBSERVER



The Salvation Army set up free food service on Sept. 7 in the Community Center. It was later taken over by the Baptists on Mission until Oct. 12. C. LEINBACH/OCRACOCKE OBSERVER



The Ocracoke air strip has been closed to regular traffic since Dorian, but the Red Cross helicopter made numerous trips to bring water and food. C. LEINBACH/OCRACOCKE OBSERVER



The Ocracoke Volunteer Fire Department became the command center and community hub for help, information, first aid, phone charging, and a free store with a myriad of donated food and supplies. C. LEINBACH/OCRACOCKE OBSERVER

Benefit concert for Ocracoke Oct. 14 in Durham

By Peter Vankevich

Rob Sharer was devastated along with his island friends as he watched the news about Hurricane Dorian flooding Ocracoke on Sept. 6, leaving destruction in its wake.

Sharer, of the band Craicdown, a longtime performer at the annual Ocracoke Festival, wanted to do something to help.

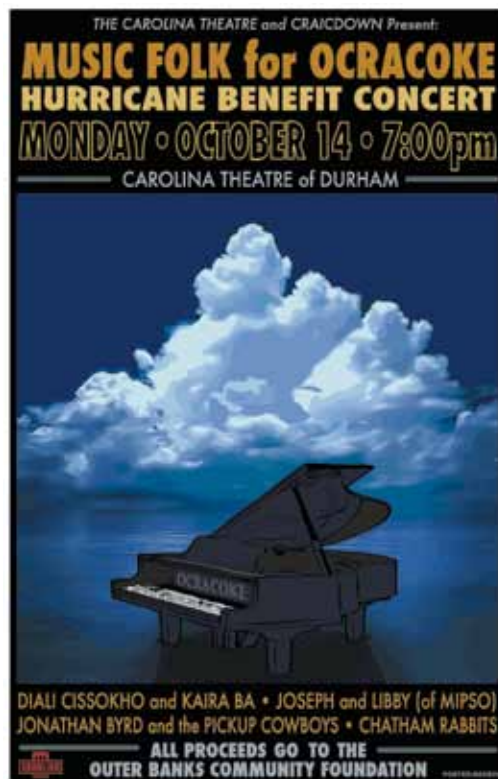
"Friends of mine were in their upper stories, watching their yards, and their houses completely fill up with water," Sharer said in an interview. "It was physically painful to watch. Livelihoods and homes and possessions getting destroyed in real time. It was almost like I could feel the water coming in my own house."

So, Craicdown, in conjunction with the Carolina Theatre, 309 W. Morgan St., Durham, has organized a benefit concert, "Music Folk for Ocracoke," to support the ravaged Ocracoke community.

The concert will start 7 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 14, in the historic theatre's Fletcher Hall. Tickets are \$27.50 and available through the venue's box

office, on the venue website carolinatheatre.org and at Ticketmaster.com.

Proceeds will go to the Outer Banks Community Foundation disaster relief campaign for Ocracoke Island.



If you cannot attend and want to support the musicians' efforts, you may donate online to the Outer Banks Community Foundation Disaster Relief Fund. In the donor information line, add Music Folk for Ocracoke.

Sharer was particularly concerned about Marcy Brenner and Lou Castro's beautiful 1908 Steinway piano that he is in love with and which he plays every time he visits.

"I waited a day or so because I didn't dare ask, and when I did, Marcy said it got wet and the keys are swelling together, so that might be it for the piano," he recounted. "She sent some pictures, and I just started freaking out."

"The piano just seemed so emblematic of what was going on down there. You know, things that I love were getting destroyed."

He asked her what he could do.

"Do you want me to come down and bring you a dehumidifier, or anything like that?" And she said, "Oh, sweetheart, just play some music," he said.

So in the grand tradition of musicians helping those in need—George Harrison and Ravi Shankar did it

in 1971 with their Madison Square Garden concerts for Bangladesh, and then there was the famous and successful Live Aid in 1985, a world-wide effort that raised money and conscientiousness to the famine in Ethiopia—Craicdown orga-

nized a benefit concert.

The performers, who all have performed on Ocracoke, are as follows:

Diali Cissokho & Kaira Ba
Jonathan Byrd and the Pickup Cowboys
Chatham Rabbits
Joseph Terrell and Libby Rodenbough of Mipso

"We're just really thrilled that we have a time open, that it wasn't too far off," said Rebecca Newton, the theater's executive director.

Sharer and the trio's other two members, David DiGiuseppe and Jim Roberts, consider the island a second home. Craicdown has performed at the highly acclaimed Ocracoke Festival for the past 11 years. The festival, which began in

2000, takes place annually on the first full weekend in June.

Craicdown has also given musical workshops at the school over the years.

"So, it really is like the spiritual home of the band," Sharer said. "It's our home away from home. We've written songs and made great friends out there. And it's just a magical, enchanted place that I look forward to going to every year."

"The very thought that something terrible has happened to the place and to the people that we love so much, how could you not do something? So, this was something I could do. I can't hold the waters back, but I can organize a concert."



Craicdown has organized a benefit concert for Ocracoke at 7 p.m. in the Carolina Theatre in Durham Oct. 14. P. VANKEVICH/OCRACOE OBSERVER

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Dorian forces Ocracoke School to resume classes elsewhere



The water-damaged Ocracoke School gym floor is among the many rooms that are being remediated and rebuilt. Photo courtesy of Ocracoke School

By Peter Vankevich

When Hurricane Dorian struck Ocracoke on Sept. 6, Ocracoke School, along with most all buildings on the island, received significant flooding.

Up to 10 inches of water inside the main building caused severe damage to the walls and floors. The shop class in a separate campus building on Back Road got up to 40 inches, destroying most of the equipment.

"We will not be having school on our campus for some time, except to use the upstairs in one building that was not damaged," Hyde County Superintendent of Schools Steve Basnight said on Sept. 23 at the OVFD, where Gov. Roy Cooper and several of the state secretaries addressed Ocracoke residents.

He said remediation and repair was going well.

Basnight was hopeful that school could resume Sept. 30, but the opening date was pushed to Oct. 7 and divided among three locations on the island.

Pre-K to first grade is in Ocracoke Child Care on Old Beach Road. Grades two through five are on the second floor of the elementary building, which was cleared after air-quality and mold testing. The remaining grades are at the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching building (NCCAT) adjacent to

the ferry docks in the village.

The NCCAT Board of Trustees voted unanimously to allow Ocracoke School to use the Ocracoke campus building for secondary classes through December.

Sept. 29, he said he already worked in 12 extra days to the calendar and is asking the N.C. General Assembly whether Ocracoke School can receive "forgiveness" for its inadvertent month-long hiatus.

School officials noted that the school has lost nine students who resumed classes elsewhere around the state and country.

Communities around the region have chipped in to help with the idled island children.

East Carteret High School hosted

the middle and high school students for a weekend of fun and the third to fifth-grade students spent an educational week at AstroCamp Virginia in Clover.

At the students' one and only soccer game in Manteo Oct. 4, soccer coach Andy Todd said on Facebook that the team did not produce the result they were hoping for, with an 8-0 loss, "but we played well against a very good Manteo team. The welcome we received was exceptional. From pizza, drinks, signs and gift bags."

Several fundraisers for the school have taken place, including as far away as Virginia. Financial donations to help rebuild the school can be mailed to:

Hyde County Schools
Ocracoke School Donation
P.O. Box 217
Swan Quarter, NC 27885

The school got some good news when State School Superintendent Mark Johnson announced that the N.C. Department of Public Instruction would provide 200 iPads to help students stay on schedule with their schoolwork.



The welcome for the Ocracoke soccer team in Manteo Oct. 4. Photo by Janille Turner

"We feel like the most valuable thing NCCAT can do for Ocracoke School and Ocracoke Island is to be a resource to help them rebuild," said NCCAT Executive Director M. Brock Womble, who said Basnight reached out to him.

"We are absolutely blessed to have been offered the NCCAT building until Jan. 1," said Basnight.

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When Dorian struck...



From left, Trudy Austin, Mickey Hoggard and Kelley Shinn talk with Gov. Roy Cooper about their ordeals the day Hurricane Dorian inundated Ocracoke Island. Photo by Richard Taylor.

As told to Connie Leinbach

Kayak rescue: Dellanira Romero

Her stepdad, Elias Contreras, made three trips in chest-deep water with a kayak to pull his family to safety along Ocean Road, behind the OVFD.

We were at my mom's house (Margarita Gonzalez). At first, we thought the water was just going to go up a few steps. We were eating breakfast. And suddenly, she said, 'It's going over the porch.' I got my 4-year-old in clothes and got stuff ready in case we had to leave and the next thing, we see my stepdad opened the door and the water just came into the house.

Luckily, he had tied a kayak to a tree. He said, 'I'm going to have to make three trips' (to a rental house across the street)—my sister, my mom, my two kids, two cats and myself. The water was chest high. He put chest waders on and just went out into the water. He said at one point he felt his heart was beating so, so fast because he was scared about the responsibility of taking care of us.

(Afterwards), we just sat there for maybe a whole hour. The family remained in the rental house for about two weeks.

Fast-rising tide: Janet Spencer (on Lighthouse Road)

The tide kept coming up and coming up and Nathan said, 'Let's get the furniture up.'

(The couple stacked furniture on top of tables. "We lost the washer and dryer and the big freezer. We had about four inches. Our house is sloped so the front barely got wicked in the dining room. The kitchen is lower. So, it got more (water), but as soon as it started going below the threshold I had that broom and I was pushing it out of there and he was pushing it from the kitchen to the laundry room. By 9, 9:30 I was mopping with bleach.

It came up so quick. You look out there and we were like, oh, OK. We know someone in Little Washington, and they were in their house on the river there and she said they were watching the tide come up and then all of the sudden it went (down). And she knew (the water) was coming this way. It just sucked everything out of there. I mean, that eye was laying on us just right to push all that water.

Afterwards, the underpinning got pulled out.

Then we had a fire underneath. The wire caught on fire.

It had a hole in it. Someone, when they raised the house 19 years ago, had hit a wire with a nail and just taped it.

When Tideland turned the electricity back on Sept. 9, that wire sparked.

"We were *THE* call. The fire company showed up really quick."

Attic rescue: Jude Wheeler

It was early morning when islander Kelley Shinn called Jude, who lives on Sunset Drive.

She said part of (the storm) had come but the worst was still to come. And so I got up and looked outside and I noticed there was water all the way up, coming into my house, and within maybe 10 minutes, water was over my ankles.

And then it just rose and rose and rose. And I'm lucky I have this closet that has pull-down steps to an attic.

And I got Spencer, one of

my kitties, and I got him up there. And I got a thing of water. Then the refrigerator evidently got full of water in the bottom and it came at me. And I thought, 'Oh my gosh,' and that's when I was like, Okay,

on the door, and I hear this banging and I'm calling out. And so I put all those in a bag. And I come down like Santa Claus. And I've never seen a more handsome man—Rob King smiling! And he's got

his kayak in here.

And he puts me in the kayak. It was a two-person. And so he was going to take me to the fire station. Well, the current was so intense. He could hardly paddle. I think it was coming this way and he was trying to go that way.

I wasn't scared. I had these pants and knew I won't have to get rescued in my underwear.

King, a Hyde County sheriff deputy, got Jude to

the WOVV studio at Back Road and Sunset Drive where she got dried and in the afternoon made it back to her house. With her damaged house now down to the studs, Jude, like many other islanders, is temporarily in a rental cottage.



Jude Wheeler's house is down to the studs awaiting repair.
C. LEINBACH/OCRACOCKE OBSERVER

I think it's time to go into the attic. I was in my bare feet, underwear and a T-shirt, which is what I slept in. I found some pants up there. Then Kelley called and said that people were coming to rescue folks out. So, Rob King's banging

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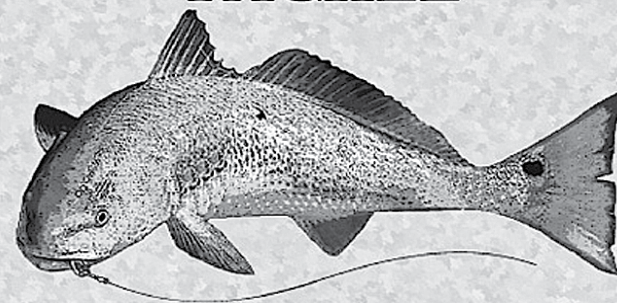
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Above all, Ocracoke is a fishing village...

By Megan Spencer

The good news is pretty much everyone's boats made it through the storm.

Even better, folks are fishing.

Ocracoke exemplifies a fishing community – fishing is an honest living and a way of life and it has been for generations. Hurricane Dorian dealt a blow of destruction and uncertainty but left a salty wake of resil-

ience and hope for the “new normal.”

“The Fish House got hurt real bad,” said Theresa “Tree” Ray, who commercially fishes alongside Hardy Plyler. The whole back wall blew out. The conveyer belts, the tables, everything was gone. Namely, the ability to process fresh catch was briefly sabotaged.

Briefly.

“There's people fishing now,” said Tree. She cheerfully

chatted about catching blues and Spanish, along with a few speckled trout. Tree and Hardy went fishing on Sept. 27 for the first time since the Sept. 6 storm.

“I almost forgot what it felt like,” Tree reflected about being back on the water. She, like the majority on the island, lost everything and lived through what she described to NPR as “Mad Max Beyond the Thunderdome mixed with The Wizard of Oz.”

Limping along, the Ocracoke Working Watermen's Association's Fish House was finally able to produce ice towards the end of September, allowing fishermen to pack out their commodity. Since the OWWA truck got flooded, Plyler has been driving his truck to Hatteras to deliver and sell the island's fresh catch. Of course, there's no market locally. The restaurants are all closed, and the tourism season is certainly done for 2019.

Still, getting back on the water to work gives hoi-toiders a sense of normalcy and accomplishment. Being true fishermen, they're happy to just feed the village.

Ocracoke oysters, however, won't be on the post-hurricane menu.

“As Woccocon Oyster Company, we're done,” said Stevie Wilson.

He lost two thirds of his equipment and three fourths of his oyster crop in the storm. “The rest is just a mess,” he said. The business infrastructure – his cooler and packing station – was wiped out.



The Ocracoke Seafood Company, aka, the Fish House, on Sept. 7 after Hurricane Dorian. C. LEINBACH/OCRACOKE OBSERVER

He explained the vulnerability of the oyster gear.

While most fishing gear can be moved to safety – at least taken out of the water – oyster farming is different. The equipment and seed have to be left in the water while the proprietor hopes for the best.

Fletcher O'Neal, who co-operates Devil Shoals Oysters, said he sunk his equipment before the storm and lost about half of it but hasn't closed the business.

Even if Wilson did rebuild the farm, it would be at least another year before he'd be able to generate profit. So, he's throwing in the towel.

“We'd just started to operate at full steam,” he said.

Unlike his three-year-old oyster farming business, his boats fared fine and his high house didn't get flooded. His skiff was deployed for rescue missions during the storm and he's been a thread in the island's fabric in the aftermath.

So, what do you do?

You drag your gill nets out of retirement and fish.

In addition to oyster farmer, Wilson is a charter captain

aboard Dream Girl. He said he hasn't fished gill nets in nearly 10 years. But after finding his nets stowed away and intact, he reckoned he'd give it a whirl.

“We've got to be able to work,” he said.

Commercial fisheries in Ocracoke (and the rest of the state) were already facing a hurdle regarding a very sought-after and economically valued fish-southern flounder.

Under new rules from the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, commercial fishery sectors are allowed only one month to fish for flounder. Flounder fishing can equate to two thirds of an Ocracoke fisherman's annual salary.

So, as Dorian was eyeing Ocracoke, local fishermen were readying their gear to go flounder fishing on the Oct. 1 start date. The floods didn't steal all of the nets, but fishermen have been faced with hours of combing out debris that got ensnared in the freshly prepared nets.

Pound-netting is a generations-old fishery in Ocracoke, but only a couple of local fishermen have committed to setting pound nets this season.

In the charter industry, it's a no-brainer to say the rest of the season is a wash. Still, everyone's looking to 2020 to get back to work in the for-hire business.

With the “new normal” that Hurricane Dorian created, it's anyone's guess what next season will look like. One thing's for sure, though. Ocracoke is a fishing village.

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Where the National Car on Ocracoke is a Jeep

Dorian vignettes

By Peter Vankevich

Noise solution

Soon after Hurricane Dorian passed, the sound of the howling winds was replaced by the distant hum of generators. When power was restored a few days later, the whiny sound of chainsaws cutting down trees and blowers drying out buildings took over. Then came the back-up beeps and loud thumps of removing the large amount of debris along the roads.

Voting

Dorian struck four days before the Sept. 10 special election to choose Ocracoke's House member of the U.S. Congress.

But the Ocracoke Volunteer Fire Department, the usual polling place, was the disaster recovery center and filled with donated food, cleaning supplies and much more. Emergency meetings were constantly taking place as everyone mobilized to stabilize the community that went for three days without power and drinkable water.

Changing the location on voting day was out of the question. The solution? A tent was set up alongside the building. The voting equipment and the island's trained election staff were ready.

In front of the tent that morning was a table and people congregating.

Assuming it was a checkpoint to verify voting, I approached the table and was asked if I wanted a tetanus shot.

No, I said. I was here to vote. "Just head into the tent, then," she said. "We're giving out free tetanus shots and this was where they placed us. Do you want a shot?"

I thought for a moment and said I wasn't sure when I last had one, but it had been a few years. If it's been that long, it wouldn't hurt to get another, she said. So, I got a tetanus shot and proceeded into the tent to do my civic duty of voting.

Only on Ocracoke did one have the option of getting a tetanus shot before voting.

A follow up: Greg Murphy (R-Pitt County) won the election and visited the island a few days after being sworn in.

If this happens

The Ocracoke Preservation Society's museum next to the big NPS parking lot had never been flooded. "If that building ever gets flooded, this island will be in big trouble," someone once remarked. The museum suffered flood damage with about four inches of water inside.

Biblical proportions

The two weeks following Dorian, the fire trucks were relocated across the street and the OVFD bays were filled with tables of food and supplies and were quickly replenished as people took items. On one table in the morning were four loaves of bread. In the afternoon, after more food supplies arrived, and the loaves increased to more than 100.

Pirates vs. Hurricanes

The first Blackbeard's Pirate Jamboree was scheduled for 2011. Hurricane Irene caused its cancellation. Hurricane Sandy put the kibosh on the next attempt in 2012.

The Jamboree debuted in 2013 and ran successfully for the next two years (2014, 2015). Then Matthew (2016) caused another cancellation. Two more jamborees took place, with the 300th anniversary last year of Blackbeard's demise in 1718. Hurricane Dorian shut down the island forcing another cancellation. So, as it stands, the Pirates lead the Hurricanes 5 to 4.

A thank-you to all

At the town hall meeting Sept. 29, Ocracoke's County Commissioner Tom Pahl, who along with Hyde County Manager Kris Noble, several other Hyde County officials and numerous volunteers, talked about the flood aftermath and of generosity since Sept. 6.

"How do you say thank you for the more than 21,000 volunteer hours, plus all the neighbors helping neighbors? That's gotta be double, plus all the things we've received—the commodities, generators. It's overwhelming to be on the receiving end of that generosity.

"The size of the thank you is just beyond words.

"The day after the storm, we set up roadblocks and a blockade out in the water and we put a ban on airplanes flying into the airport to control who comes to the island during that particularly vulnerable period.

"We had friends of ours from across the water who violated our blockade in order to bring donated supplies. We started calling them the pirate donors and the spirit of Blackbeard.

"I don't know who was responsible for the Rice Krispies Treats, but they have been my primary source of nutrition for the past week."

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Animal Disaster Relief Coalition helps with island animals



An Ocracat at one of 10 newly built feeding stations by members of the Animal Disaster Relief Coalition and Operation Bring Animals Home. Photo by Caroline Feightner

By Rita Thiel

Ocracats would like to thank everyone for their outpouring of concern and support for the cats and dogs of Ocracoke following Hurricane Dorian.

We have tried to assess the feral feline casualties. Each colony suffered losses and we deeply grieve for our feline buddies.

Our best estimate as to the number that died or have not returned has exceeded 60 cats and kittens and many were identified and buried. This is most likely a low estimate. Many survivors are slowly beginning to return to their once-familiar areas.

But the landscape has changed dramatically for these animals. The feeding areas and shelters were destroyed or badly damaged, with some stations stuck in trees or washed into the marsh; debris blocked most areas.

They don't know where to go to eat, sleep or be in a safe place.

The unexpected loud noises from the debris removal equipment and construction have them hiding. Some are relocat-

ing themselves and we try to find where they are and set out food.

Just days after the storm, Marshall Furr of Farmersville, Texas, who is with Operation

"We get deployed after hurricanes," Riffe said, noting that they are vet techs. They rescued three pelicans and helped Dr. Laura Trent treat a lot of sick cats, both feral and pet, and dogs.

"These are the most well-kept (family) dogs I've seen in any disaster community," Furr said.

For several days, they worked with Ocracats to clean up the feeding stations and shelters.

In the hot sun, Furr, Riffe and others in their team built 10 new cat-feeding stations for Ocracats.

Before they left, the group supplied new feeding dishes, medicines and a variety of foods for Ocracats and the community's pets.

Ocracats' fall trap-neuter-release clinic was canceled. An April clinic is being planned.

Ocracats will feel the pinch from lost tourist donations and retail sales during the rest of the season, but we join in our Ocracoke community in saying we are "Ocracoke Strong!"



Brandon Riffe and Marshall Furr build feral-cat feeding stations. Photo by Caroline Feightner

Bring Animals Home, and Brandon Riffe of Pipe Stem, W.Va., who is with Animal Disaster Relief Coalition, followed Dorian up the coast from Florida and just showed up.

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The Ocracoke ponies after Dorian. All are OK. Photo courtesy of NPS

VOADs and volunteers

Despite the mandatory evacuation, Ocracoke's population swelled after Dorian with numerous helpers, both paid and voluntary. Several Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOADs), with 3,928 volunteers logging more than 33,000 hours, have been on the island helping muck out houses, remove downed trees and more.

Islanders jumped in to help at the command center to manage all the work. Ivey Belch, pastor of the Life Saving Church, became the commodities manager and is chair of the Long-Term Recovery Committee of islanders who will carry on with recovery once the government agencies leave.

Clockwise from top:

Since Dorian hit, the Salvation Army and the Baptists on Mission, above, have served more than 25,000 meals for islanders and work crews.

From left, UMC Pastor Susie Fitch-Slater, Jennifer Mongan, Susan Dippold and Rita Hahn, work on commodities management.

Volunteers staff the table taking care of islanders' household needs.

Samaritan's Purse volunteers muck out an island home. These volunteers come from all over the country. Some are retired and some take vacations to help disaster victims.

The Baptists on Mission brought laundry facilities and portable showers and set them up behind Jerniman's gas station

Below, Ivey Belch, pastor of the Ocracoke Lifesaving Church and the disaster commodities manager, can also drive a forklift.

ALL PHOTOS: C. LEINBACH/OCRACOKE OBSERVER



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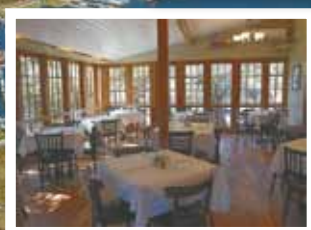
Left, the Ocracoke United Methodist Church, built in 1943, was flooded and has to be rebuilt. The pews were saved. Church services are being held at 9 a.m. in the Berkley Barn and a joint service at 11 a.m. in the Lifesaving Church. P. VANKEVICH/OCRACOKE OBSERVER. Above, The Ocracoke Health Center on Back Road is in a temporary M.A.S.H.-type unit while its building is being repaired from flooding. The Ocracoke Community Library, also on Back Road, received water and is being repaired. A book drive may be held soon. The First National Bank on Irvin Garrish Hwy reopened Oct. 1. C. LEINBACH/OCRACOKE OBSERVER



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VACATION RENTALS

Jimmy's Garage reopens after a month

Jimmy's Garage offers "major" repairs and recently it got its own major repair as Colony Tire donated a new tire mounter and wheel balancer to the business.

Like many other businesses and homes on Ocracoke Island, Jimmy's Garage, on Ocean View Road, got flooded, ruining many of Jamie Jackson's tools and equipment.

Colony Tire, whose owner,

Charlie Creighton of Edenton, but formerly of Rodanthe, also is allowing Jamie Jackson, son of Jimmy, to purchase new tools at cost.

The state-of-the-art tire changer and wheel balancer cost about \$15,000, said Bobby Turner, a sales rep at Colony Tire in Raleigh, who brought the machines to the island. Colony Tire also led the garage's GoFundMe campaign with a \$5,000 donation.

"They're doing all they can to get him up and running," Turner said as Jackson and his staff moved the equipment into the garage bay. "(Creighton) started the business (Colony Tire) in Rodanthe and he knows the plight of the whole island."

Turner said in addition to Colony Tire, Atlantic Tire Distributors and Mighty Auto Parts chipped in to pay for the new equipment.

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Jamie Jackson, center, thanks Bobby Turner for Colony Tire's gift of critical new equipment. Grant Jackson is at left. C. LEINBACH/OCRACOKE OBSERVER

Well wishes for Ocracoke



A message at Ryan's Gas Station in Swan Quarter. Photo by Candice Cobb.



A message on a water bottle delivered to Ocracoke. C. LEINBACH/OCRACOKE OBSERVER



Special Ocracoke Strong stickers on donated baked goods. C. LEINBACH/OCRACOKE OBSERVER

Youthful artists send 'get well' messages to Ocracoke



Tim and Amy McGlinn of Wilmington, who experienced the devastation of Hurricane Florence in 2018, bring well wishes from Amy's art students. C. LEINBACH/OCRACOKE OBSERVER

Amy and Tim McGlinn of Wilmington lived through the major devastation of Hurricane Florence in 2018 and know what Ocracoke is going through with the inundation from Hurricane Dorian.

Fans of the island, the two came to Ocracoke a week after Dorian hit Sept. 6 and brought supplies and a special gift from Wilmington youth—artwork with messages of hope.

Amy teaches elementary art. "Last year with Florence, my students were out of school for three weeks and we had to teach in a parking lot," she said. "So, I understand Dorian."

Having the third to eighth-grade students create "get well" cards was a lesson in empathy for another community that is going through what they went through, Amy said.

As islanders and emergency responders moved in and out of the Ocracoke Volunteer Fire

Department command center, the couple taped the messages on the pillars around the room.

Tim works at Wigglesworth Ace Hardware, which held a fundraiser for Ocracoke—people could buy things or donate money for the island.

They created a flyer and customers either bought items for Ocracoke or donated cash.

The couple brought that bounty: five generators, rakes and mops, 20 gallons of bleach, batteries and more. The cash donations being collected at the store will be sent later.



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Debris lines roads as island recovers



A casualty of Dorian's waters. C. LEINBACH/OCRACOCKE OBSERVER. **The growing mountain of debris is staged at the Lifeguard Beach.** As of Oct. 2, 484.2 tons has been taken off island, according to Kelton Williams, an islander who found work with the debris removal company. C. LEINBACH/OCRACOCKE OBSERVER. **A ruined guitar gently weeps from Dorian** P. VANKEVICH/OCRACOCKE OBSERVER. **Debris awaiting pick-up along Lighthouse Road Oct. 6.** The claw grasps all kinds of debris for removal from Sunset Drive. C. LEINBACH/OCRACOCKE OBSERVER.

How you can help Ocracoke Island

On behalf of all of us on Ocracoke Island, thank you for your kind thoughts, concern and patience as we recover and

rebuild from the destruction by Hurricane Dorian.

Hyde County Information:

www.hydecountync.gov/

NC Ferry Division: www.nc-dot.gov/divisions/ferry/Pages/default.aspx

What you can do to help

Thank you to all of the amazing people who have reached out to donate goods, organize fundraisers and volunteer. We would not be able to complete this journey without you.

Ocracoke will be in recovery mode for at least a year though the island will be open to visitors sooner than that at a date to be determined.

For updates about Ocracoke Island relief efforts concerning supplies needed and volunteering, please visit the Facebook page: Ocracoke Disaster Relief. Ocracoke has limited food and lodging at this time and those who want to personally help are asked to join one of the fol-

lowing groups already vetted to be on the island:

Samaritan's Purse
www.samaritanspurse.org
Christian Aid Ministry
www.christianaidministries.org
North Carolina Baptists on Mission
www.baptistsonmission.org
United Methodist Church Regional Disaster Response Center

Email: twig@nccumc.org
Adopt an Ocracoke Family:

Ocracoke families can sign up for the Adopt-an-Ocracoke-Family and Ocracoke Island friends (on or off) can "adopt" them. Sponsors pick a family to adopt and provides an item or items on the list.

For monetary donations, visit the Outer Banks Community Foundation and designate your donation for Ocracoke:

www.obcf.org/donate-now/disaster-relief-fund-donate/
There are about 40 GoFundMe pages for Ocracoke families and businesses.

Two local churches have stepped up to receive and distribute your assistance. Please send your check directly to either of the following with "Hurricane Dorian Relief" in the memo line:

Ocracoke United Methodist Church
P.O. Box 278
Ocracoke, NC 27960
Ocracoke Life Saving Church
P.O. Box 68
Ocracoke, NC 27960

You also can donate to Ocracoke School:

Ocracoke School Donation
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Whither (not wither) Ocracoke?

The seven-foot storm surge that accompanied Hurricane Dorian on Sept. 6 impacted all facets of Ocracoke. For variable times initially, the island had no electric power, tap water that needed to be boiled before consumption, no open grocery store or bank, and a badly damaged health center.

Thanks to the efforts of many from both on and off island, Ocracoke has started the long, slow process of getting back on its feet.

We can't thank enough those many individuals, organizations and government agencies that have made much-needed donations of food, supplies, money and skills to help the islanders. It gives one hope that catastrophic events can bring out the best in people.

This is a new Ocracoke. Many folks cannot return to their homes and businesses cannot reopen until major repairs are made. Others have lost all. Already some homes have been bulldozed and more will follow.

It's not only structure damage. Many have lost sentiment

tal and treasured personal items such as photos, letters and books.

One life-long islander in his 70s remarked that you can combine all of the damage from the previous storms in his lifetime and that would not equal that which Dorian wrought.

The old, dog-eared playbook on how to get the island back on its feet and welcome visitors after a major storm had to be tossed onto the heap with the other stuff piled along the roads to be carried off the island. In its place, both short and long-term disaster recovery plans are needed. Input for these plans should include those most affected.

Each day we have learned to expect the unexpected. This editorial would have been different two weeks ago and, no doubt, would be different a month from now.

Here are some examples. In the first few weeks, some business owners who said they would not reopen due to the severe building damage are now talking about getting the major repairs completed and striving to reopen by spring. Others with homes who initially be-

lieved the damage was not that bad have sadly learned otherwise.

Ferry service, the island's lifeline, has changed its sched-

This is a new Ocracoke. The old, dog-eared playbook on how to get the island back...after a major storm had to be tossed onto the heap with the other stuff piled along the roads to be carried off the island.

ules several times to accommodate the needs for both people and large vehicles and equipment to get on and off the island.

Historically, when N.C. 12 on Ocracoke was impassable, the Hatteras/Ocracoke ferry runs would cease until the road reopened.

For the first time, and with a few caveats, these river class ferries are running from Hatteras all the way to Silver Lake harbor and back, permitting islanders to make their medical appointments and to head up the Outer Banks for other reasons. Call it more of the passenger ferry ripple effect—something new yielding something good.

N.C. 12 on Ocracoke was expected to be closed until around Thanksgiving, but on Oct. 3, NCDOT announced there would be a limited reopening for four-wheel drive vehicles only.

Some businesses that are able to open are seeking to get the island opened by the end of October, but others are saying it's too soon to let visitors back.

The number of challenges facing the island is daunting. Many folks have lost their jobs causing major financial hardship. Some have found temporary work working for the cleanup crews.

"Should I Stay or Should I Go," the title of the 1982 hit song by the Clash (a fitting band name for our circumstances), is on the minds of many, and some have already gone.

A diminished workforce would be a significant problem when the island reopens.

At press time, the island is still closed to visitors, has a nighttime curfew and an alcohol sales ban. The sound of large trucks permeates the village air as tons and tons of materials are picked up to be hauled off the island.

The many disaster recovery groups are leaving after doing a super job of helping the many in need.

Some, such as the United Methodists Committee On Relief (UMCOR) will remain, not only to repair the church and parsonage, but also to help the community.

As the above plays out, one thing is certain. Ocracoke islanders are resourceful and look out for each other.

Many have been helping their neighbors in need and will continue to do so.

ocracokeobserver

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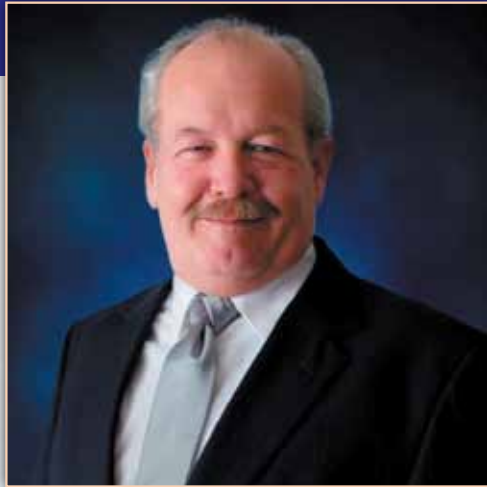
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