



State of North Carolina

ROY COOPER
GOVERNOR

PEA ISLAND LIFESAVERS DAY

2021

BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, on October 11, 1896, the surfman on watch at the United States Lifesaving Service Station on Pea Island saw a distress signal from the grounded and disintegrating schooner E.S. Newman; and

WHEREAS, the all-African American crew of the Pea Island Station set off to provide assistance in the midst of a hurricane; high winds, storm surge, and heavy surf rendered all their state-of-the-art equipment useless; and

WHEREAS, the Pea Island lifesavers made nine trips through the deadly waves, two at a time, tied together and connected to land only by a single line in the hands of their comrades; the Pea Island lifesavers saved all on board; and

WHEREAS, the Pea Island lifesavers carried out many other rescues and maintained an exemplary station through the Jim Crow era, the merger of the Lifesaving Service into the U.S. Coast Guard, and two world wars; and

WHEREAS, numerous Pea Island lifesavers were Civil War veterans, community leaders and held county offices even at the height of segregation and disenfranchisement; and

WHEREAS, the Pea Island Station was an inspiration and a beacon of hope for African Americans throughout the country even after its closure in 1947; and

WHEREAS, on March 5, 1996, Keeper Richard Etheridge and surfmen Benjamin Bowser, William Irving, Theodore Meekins, Dorman Pugh, Lewis We scott, and Stanley Wise posthumously received the Gold Lifesaving Medal for the Newman rescue; and

WHEREAS, Keeper Etheridge is buried on the grounds of the North Carolina Aquarium on Roanoke Island, the story of the Pea Island Lifesavers is integral to the interpretive mission of the Aquarium; and

WHEREAS, the Aquarium, the Pea Island lifesavers' descendants, and the nonprofit Pea Island Preservation Society, Inc., share strong bonds of goodwill and cooperation;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ROY COOPER, Governor of the State of North Carolina, do hereby proclaim October 11, 2021, as "PEA ISLAND LIFESAVERS DAY" in North Carolina, and commend its observance to all citizens.





Roy Cooper
Governor

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Great Seal of the State of North Carolina at the Capitol in Raleigh this seventh day of October in the year of our Lord two thousand and twenty-one and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-sixth.