



**Bird Island Reserve
Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Friday, May 20, 2022, 2 pm**

Attendance

<u>LAC Partner Organization Members</u>	<u>Present</u>
NC Coastal Land Trust – Jessica Blake	No
NC Coastal Federation – Lauren Kolodij	Yes
Bird Island Preservation Society – Bill Ducker	Yes
Sunset Beach Police Department	No
Town of Sunset Beach Administration – Lisa Anglin	Yes
Natural Heritage Program – Scott Pohlman	No
<u>Community Members and Community Organization Members</u>	<u>Present</u>
Katie Hovermale	No
Noelle Kehrberg	Yes
Sunset Beach Turtle Patrol - Carmel Zetts	No
Cape Fear Audubon – Charley Winterbauer	No
<u>Others Present</u>	
Hope Sutton, DCM/NCCR & NCNERR, Stewardship Coordinator	
Elizabeth Colhoun, DCM/NCCR & NCNERR Southern Sites Manager	

Welcome – Hope Sutton

The stewardship coordinator welcomed the committee to the Spring 2022 meeting, reviewed the agenda, and called roll.

Reserve-wide Administrative Update – Hope Sutton

The Reserve-wide Update, which includes a range of Reserve activities and information was shared with committee members prior to the meeting. Members had no comments or questions about the updates. The Update in its entirety is included as Appendix A.

The stewardship coordinator provided some reminders from the Reserve-wide update:

- Brandon Puckett started a job with NOAA's National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science in April. A search for a new Research Coordinator will be conducted following some internal human resources work is completed.
- Elizabeth Pinnix is the Reserve's new Southern Sites Manager, providing site management for the four sites managed out of the Wilmington office, including the Bald Head Woods Reserve.
- Hope Sutton continues as the Reserve's Stewardship Coordinator, coordinating the efforts of the stewardship team and focusing on program-wide initiatives, policy, and partnerships.

Site Specific Update – Hope Sutton/Elizabeth Colhoun

Permit hunt

- The reserve has continued discussions and planning with Wildlife Resources Commission staff regarding the implementation of permit hunts on multiple sites, including the Bird Island Reserve. The stewardship coordinator presented initial thoughts on what the permit hunt at the Bird Island Reserve may offer, including a focus on waterfowl hunting, a larger buffer from residential areas, and no hunting in upland areas of the barrier island in order to reduce potential user conflicts. Input was requested from Local Advisory Committee members regarding the types of hunting, concerns that should be taken into account for the site, and any restrictions that should be included.

Mr. Ducker asked for clarification regarding how the permit process for hunting within the boundary would work and what would be different from current conditions. *The stewardship coordinator explained that hunters would have to obtain a permit through the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission and would be obligated to adhere to the conditions the reserve sets for the hunt, which may include limitations on firearms to be used or a shortened season.* He reported that there is a large amount of hunting activity in the marsh near his home, which is within the reserve boundary. He stated that the proposed plan is a good starting point for controlling hunting more effectively.

Site Stewards program

- The reserve is expanding a volunteer program developed at the Rachel Carson Reserve to several other sites. This program utilizes trained volunteers to provide site information via a phone app to provide additional direct information to site managers regarding site conditions. A training program was provided for twelve local site stewards associated with the Bird Island Preservation Society on May 4 prior to the pre-season volunteer meeting. Stewards learned about the types of concerns and items discovered on the site to report and how to use the phone app to submit observations.

Terrapin Tally program

- Two survey routes were hosted at the Bird Island site in 2022. Five data collection sessions were completed (multiple were canceled due to weather conditions) and 19 diamondback terrapins were recorded, including one area where approximately 8 individuals were seen.

Signage plan

- Production is underway for new signage at the site. One panel will be installed at the end of Main Street, along with a Chronolog, a program that allows visitors to submit images to display change over time. A three-panel kiosk will be installed on the ocean beach at the beginning of

the state property featuring interpretive information about the plants and animals found at the site as well as visitor guidance for visiting the site. Eight small signs will be installed along the nature trail, each featuring content about features along the trail and an interactive experience suggestion.

Ms. Kehrberg expressed her excitement about the new educational signage and suggested it may be a great opportunity for field trips and teachers to bring their students to. Ms. Kolodji asked what the timeline is for the signage install and suggested doing some public announcement when the signs are installed.

Roundtable

- Ms. Anglin reported that the town will be providing 3 benches for the end of Main Street and that the 40th Street beach access walkway has been completed. She also reported that the Town of Sunset Beach has acquired a 19' skiff that will allow the police department to monitor the creek systems and provide response to issues. They will also have additional police presence for the summer season due to a change that will result in two officers being dedicated specifically for the island.
- Ms. Kehrberg inquired about the status of informational packets for jet ski rental companies. She reported a slight decrease in activity. *The stewardship coordinator reported that information was assembled, and company contact information was collected, but packets had not been sent out yet.*

Public comments

- None

Action Items

- Reserve staff will contact committee members during the summer to establish a date for the fall meeting.
- Reserve staff will provide updates on the signage project and will plan for communications to announce the new signage following installation.