



Rachel Carson Reserve
 Local Advisory Committee Meeting
 November 12, 2024, 3pm
 101 Pivers Island Road, Beaufort
 WebEx option for out-of-town members

Attendance

LAC Partner Organization Members	Present
Ben Fleming, N.C. Div. of Parks and Recreation	Yes
Ben Wunderly, N.C. Maritime Museum	Yes
Greg Piniak, NOAA's National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science	Yes
Charlie Burgess, Interim Town of Beaufort Administration	Yes
Paul Burdette, Town of Beaufort Police Department	No
Andy Walker, N.C. Natural Heritage Program	Yes (virtual)
Sue Stuska, Cape Lookout National Seashore	Yes
Jimmy Johnson, Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership	Yes (virtual)
NC Wildlife Resources Commission	No
Community Members	
Miriam Sutton	Yes
Susan Schmidt	Yes
Passion See	No
John Fussell	No
Stan Rule	No (technical difficulties joining virtually)
Dan Rittschof	Yes
Janina Millis	No
Jeff Benoit	Yes
Elliot Lupton	Yes
Others Present	
Paula Gillikin, Reserve Central Sites Manager	
Courtney Felton, N.C. Maritime Museum - Beaufort	
Jess Hawkins - Public	

Reserve-wide Administrative Update – Paula Gillikin

The Reserve-wide Update, which includes a range of Reserve activities, was shared with committee members prior to the meeting, reviewed during the meeting, and is included as Appendix A.

Rachel Carson Reserve Business – Paula Gillikin

Site update

- **Education.** Summer education activities included summer camps in partnership with the Maritime Museum’s Summer Science School, nature hikes and boat trips for the public, and a Teachers on the Estuary Workshop.
- **Research** Currently, there are 13 active research permits for work that has been or is continuing to occur at the Rachel Carson Reserve. Members viewed a list of the projects.
- **Wild Horses.** Mare (ID# 1008) is assumed to have passed away after the un-named storm of September. She was born in 1999 and was 25 years old. The herd size remains low, and birth control will continue to be withheld.
- **Carrot Island Living Shoreline.** Construction of the Carrot Island Living Shoreline was completed in early summer of 2024. Pre-construction monitoring and two post construction monitoring sessions have been conducted. The Reserve will monitor elevation, sand accumulation, and biological growth for at least three years. The committee should anticipate a presentation of one-year post-construction monitoring results at the 2025 fall meeting.

Responsible shelling policy

- Due to public complaints about the targeted harvest of live and dead sand dollars over the past several years at the Rachel Carson Reserve and a special activity authorization application requesting ~40 paying passengers at a time to collect dead sand dollars on the Reserve, a new policy has been implemented to limit the number of dead sand dollars collected by all visitors to five per person. This applies to all Reserve sites where sand dollars occur. Reserve staff from the Beaufort office are conducting sand dollar surveys at the Rachel Carson Reserve to better understand abundance and distribution during the year and will revisit and readjust the policy, if needed, after reviewing the data and further consulting with subject matter experts.
- Susan Schmidt commented that the local ferry provider is pretty good about informing customers to only collect dead sand dollars. Ben Wunderly explained that the policy makes sense given that the site is receiving more visitation, thus there is more pressure on natural resources.

Habitat Resilience Plan

- Committee members were given a summary of the habitat resilience planning process at a previous meeting and a process refresher and general overview of the content was presented. The plan will be finalized in December.

Roundtable Discussion

- Susan Schmidt reminded community committee members that they can contact the Reserve's nonprofit if there is an issue or program that needs support at the legislative level. She announced a discussion of Rachel Carson's books to be held at the public library in January 2025.
- Jimmy Johnson informed the committee that the Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership will be sending its Conservation Management Plan for review by the Environmental Protection Agency in December.
- Andy Walker announced that his colleague Laurie will begin serving on the committee on behalf of the N.C. Natural Heritage Program.
- Ben Wunderly shared that the Maritime Museum will be closing for HVAC renovations through part of 2025. Summer Science School and field trips will continue, but lectures will be moved to Fort Macon State Park facilities.
- Miriam Sutton is concerned about gillnets targeting mullet being set in Tavern Creek. A cormorant was found dead, there are abundant terrapins in the area, and other users cannot access the creek when nets are being used.

Public Comment

- Jess Hawkins is supportive of the new sand dollar collection policy and suggested that the Reserve notify the Division of Marine Fisheries, Chief of Fisheries about it for their awareness.
- Jess acknowledged that captains/leaders should interact with paying passengers to encourage responsible collection of dead sand dollars, as live sand dollars are likely incidentally collected and an entire population could be wiped out in less than a day, particularly when collection coincides with the low tide after a King Tide.
- Jess responded to Miriam's comment about gillnets being deployed in Tavern Creek and explained fisheries rulemaking.

Final comments, Action Items, and Wrap-up

- Paula will send *Gracilaria* research information to Courtney Felton and Friends of the Reserve internship information to Jeff Benoit.
- Paula will confirm the boundaries of the local blue crab sanctuary.
- Paula will be in touch with members about a spring meeting date.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:15pm