



Bird Island Reserve
Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, December 4, 2017, 10 am
Habitat Conference Room, UNCW Center for Marine Science, Wilmington

Attendance

<u>LAC Partner Organization Members</u>	<u>Present</u>
NC Coastal Land Trust	Yes
NC Coastal Federation	Yes
Bird Island Preservation Society - Bill Ducker	No
Sunset Beach Police Department	No
Town of Sunset Beach Administration	No
<u>Community Members and Community Organization Members</u>	<u>Present</u>
Sue Weddle	No
Noelle Kehrberg	Yes
Jim Barber	Yes by phone
Sunset Beach Turtle Patrol - Carmel Zetts	No
Cape Fear Audubon	No
<u>Others Present</u>	
Hope Sutton, DCM/NCCR, Stewardship Coordinator and Southern Sites Manager	
Elizabeth Colhoun, DCM/NCCR, Stewardship and Outreach Specialist	

Welcome – Hope Sutton

The Site Manager welcomed the committee to the Fall 2017 meeting and reviewed the agenda.

Reserve-wide Update – Hope Sutton

The Reserve-wide Update now includes a broader range of Reserve activities with the addition of a new section titled “Recent and Upcoming Program Activities”. This section will share events

that committee members may be interested in and enhance the awareness of activities across the Reserve’s programs. The activity descriptions are intentionally brief; committee members may request more information and/or future presentations for topics of interest and find event information on the event calendar at www.nccoastalreserve.net.

Periodic Rules Review

- Both the Rules Review Commission (RRC) and the Joint Legislative Administrative Procedures Oversight Committee approved the rules review report for the Coastal Reserve rules 15A NCAC 070 this summer. These actions follow input received on the classification of each rule in 070 from the local advisory committees (Spring 2016), N.C. Coastal Resources Commission (July 2016), and a 60-day public comment period (September-November 2016). One comment was received during the public comment period and it was supportive of the proposed classification of the rules. The rules identified in the final report must be readopted using the permanent rulemaking process. Staff is working with the Department to establish a timeline and process for readoption.

Federal Budget

- The budget table below is a summary of the current status of the federal budget for fiscal years 17 and 18 as it relates to the Coastal Reserve. Recall that the federal fiscal year is October 1-September 30. The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) budget line provides funding to the 29 reserves within the System through cooperative agreements that are matched by the states, and supports national coordination of programs and implementation of system-wide and competitive projects. The Coastal Zone Management (CZM) grants budget line provides funding to coastal states with approved coastal management programs through cooperative agreements that are matched by the states. The Division of Coastal Management (DCM) receives funding from both budget lines to operate the N.C. National Estuarine Research Reserve (NCNERR) and N.C. Coastal Management Program. The CZM grant funds DCM receives provides funding for Reserve staffing, state site operations, and administrative support.

Federal Budget Lines	Final Omnibus Appropriations FY2017	President’s Budget Request FY2018	House Appropriations FY2018	Senate Appropriations FY2018
NERRS	23,500	0	23,500	25,000
CZM Grants	70,000	0	45,000	70,000

In thousands of dollars

- Federal Fiscal Year 17: Congress approved the federal budget for fiscal year 17 in April with a \$500,000 increase for the NERRS (see budget table), resulting in a \$14,000

increase to base operational funding for each reserve within the System. As a result, the DCM received \$633,000 from NOAA for operation of the NCNERR portion of the Coastal Reserve during this state fiscal year (July 2017-June 2018). The additional funds are being used to cover fixed cost increases and to fund a portion of the temporary staffing positions through the annual budget.

- Federal Fiscal Year 18: Congress passed a continuing resolution in September to fund the federal government from October 1, 2017 through December 8, 2017 based on fiscal year 17 funding levels. The budget table summarizes the President's budget request and the House and Senate appropriations committees' numbers for fiscal year 18:
 - The President's budget request does not include funding for the NERRS or the CZM grants budget lines.
 - The House supports fiscal year 17 level funding for the NERRS and the Senate supports a \$1.5 million increase for the NERRS.
 - The House reduces funding for the CZM grants to \$45 million and the Senate supports fiscal year 17 level funding for the CZM grants.

Next steps for the federal fiscal year 18 budget include individual House and Senate votes for their fiscal year 18 budgets and then a conference between the chambers to agree on a final budget.

Thank you to the National Estuarine Research Reserve Association and Friends of the Reserve for their work to educate Congress on the value of the national system and the NCNERR.

Staffing News

- Michelle Brodeur started as the Reserve's new Communications Specialist in August. Michelle is a marine ecologist who recently completed her PhD at UNC Institute of Marine Sciences. As a graduate student, she worked as a NOAA-NERRS Fellow to explore how interactions within oyster reef communities affect oyster reef growth and restoration success in the Rachel Carson Reserve. Michelle has always held a passion for science communication and is excited to join the Reserve staff as the Communications Specialist. She brings her knowledge of estuarine ecosystems and her experience communicating research to broad audiences through formal education, public outreach events, and filmmaking.
- Elizabeth Colhoun, the Stewardship and Education Specialist working in the Southern Sites office, will continue with the Reserve for an additional 11-month period starting in late January.

Recent and Upcoming Program Activities

- **Coastal Explorations Educator Workshop (11/2/2017)** - Beaufort: Participants of this workshop will learn about estuaries and the Reserve program through classroom activities that they can use with their students and groups. Field-based explorations and activities

will also be conducted during a field trip to the Rachel Carson Reserve. Teacher renewal credits and Environmental Education Certification credits are offered for this workshop.

- **Coastal Government Planning for Open Space Workshop** (11/30/2017 Wilmington & 12/5/2017 Plymouth): Participants will learn about the benefits of open space protection; learn how open space can service multiple needs; identify contacts that build framework for open space protection; and learn how other communities approach open space protection. This event is being held in partnership with the Division of Coastal Management.
- **Marine Planning Process Workshop** (1/8-9/2018) - Beaufort: Marine and coastal resource managers are challenged to address key ocean challenges, give states and communities greater input in governmental decisions, streamline federal and international decision-making, save taxpayer dollars, and promote economic growth. This course provides managers with the tools to utilize effective marine planning techniques. *Partners:* Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership, Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment.
- **CCVATCH NERRS Science Collaborative Transfer Grant:** The Reserve received a Science Transfer grant with the North Inlet-Winyah Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve to facilitate the use of a new tool, known as the Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment Tool for Coastal Habitats (CCVATCH), to assess habitat vulnerability to ecosystem stressors using the knowledge of Reserve staff and local experts. To enhance resilience through management actions, the tool produces vulnerability scores which can help guide and prioritize land acquisition, restoration, policy, and other management decisions. Meetings are currently underway to score the vulnerability of marshes at the 4 national sites in North Carolina.
- **Seeds to Shoreline NERRS Science Collaborative Transfer Grant:** The Reserve is a partner on a multi-Reserve project through which participating teachers and students will learn hydroponic growing techniques to grow saltmarsh cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*) in their classrooms and plant for future restoration efforts. *Partners:* Guana Tolomato Matanzas NERR, ACE Basin NERR, North Inlet-Winyah Bay NERR, Sapelo Island NERR, and the marine education specialist with the South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium.
- **Thin Layer Deposition NERRS Science Collaborative Grant:** The Reserve will serve as an experimental site for a project testing the effectiveness of thin-layer sediment placement as a climate adaptation strategy. The project tests how small additions of sediment affect the resilience of marshes to sea level rise and develops standardized monitoring protocols as well as siting and permitting guides for this technique. *Partners:* Elkhorn Slough, Great Bay, Waquoit Bay, Chesapeake Bay Maryland, Chesapeake Bay Virginia, and San Francisco Bay NERRS; University of New Hampshire.

LAC member nomination process

- The Reserve will be accepting applications for Local Advisory Committee members from January 8 – February 5. The application will be available through the Reserve's website and will be publicized via press release. No community member seats are expiring on the Bird Island committee; however, space is available for additional members to join. The remaining community member seats have been extended through December 31, 2019. Partner organizations and agencies hold permanent seats. The mix of representation on

this committee is good although the addition of a commercial entity conducting educational activities or a commercial fisherman would be helpful. Current members are encouraged to share names of community members who could be approached to apply or to directly encourage individuals to consider serving the site in this capacity. Following the application period, the Reserve staff will review applications, utilize a matrix to rank the applicants, and forward the names and applications to the Secretary of the Department of Environmental Quality for review and appointment. It is hoped that new members will be selected and notified in time to attend the spring meeting of the committee in May.

Natural Heritage Program – Scott Pohlman

- The Site Manager discussed the Natural Heritage Program, its purpose and activities, the Nature Preserves Act and how the status of the sites of the Coastal Reserve as Dedicated State Nature Preserves affects management of the sites. The Dedication letter describes the expectations for management of the Bird Island Reserve. The Reserve staff and the Natural Heritage Program staff have worked closely on many topics at various sites. The Department of Natural and Cultural Heritage through the Natural Heritage Program has the authority to interpret and enforce the dedication letters; however, it will continue to work with the Coastal Reserve to ensure that the Reserve's mission and purposes are also met.

Site Update/Old Business

- *Seasonal activities preparation*
Reserve staff met with local stewards/field trip leaders on October 13 to debrief from the season. The site manager expressed gratitude for all of the work the local volunteers do to take care of the site, and to educate the public about the Reserve and the protected habitats and organisms found at the site. Safety, especially the need to be aware of high temperature affects and prevention of heat illnesses, was also discussed. The Reserve will continue to supply brochures and beach access signs to support the efforts of the local volunteers.
- *Site work/trail maintenance*
Reserve staff conducted a site visit on October 13. No major work is needed at the site; however, Reserve staff will plan a day during the winter months to install some additional signage and complete trail maintenance.

New Business

- *Access study*
The Reserve has contracted researchers from UNCW to conduct a study to better understand how the public is accessing the sites and how public access can be better supported. Bird Island is one of six sites that will be included in this study. The process will include focus groups, stakeholder interviews, and on site surveys. It is hoped that this study will help the Reserve understand patterns of use, prioritize access improvements, and support potential applications for access improvements.

- *Property at Sunset Beach West*
Reserve staff have no additional information regarding the recent agreement between the developer of the Sunset Beach West property and the Town of Sunset Beach. The Reserve would be supportive of the property being added to the Bird Island Reserve if the parties work out the details of property ownership and are interested in transferring ownership to the State.

Roundtable Discussion

- No further discussion.

Public Comments

- None

Action Items

- Reserve staff will contact committee members during the winter to establish dates for the spring meeting.