



**Emily and Richardson Preyer Buckridge Reserve  
Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, 31 October 2018, 10:00am-12:00pm**

Attendance

<b>LAC Members</b>	<b>Affiliation/Interest</b>	<b>Present</b>
Lt. Mark Cagle	N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission – Enforcement	Yes
Sgt. Robert Wayne	N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission – Enforcement	Yes
Mr. David Turner	N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission –Biologist	No
Mr. William Ridgeway	N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission – Game lands	Yes
Mr. Howard Phillips	Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge	Yes
Sheriff Darryl Liverman	Tyrrell County Sheriff’s Office	No
Mr. Mike Clements	Community Member	Yes
Mr. David Clegg	Tyrrell County Government	Yes
Mr. Dan Feola	N.C. Forest Service	Yes
Mrs. Nina Griswell	Tyrrell County Government	No
Mr. Jimmy Johnson	Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership	Yes
Mr. Michael Schafale	N.C. National Heritage Program	Yes
<u>Others Present</u>		
Woody Webster	N.C. Coastal Reserve, Buckridge Site Manager	

## **Reserve Program Update**

### **Reserve-wide Administrative Update – Fall 2018**

Reserve-wide update attached at the end of the minutes.

### **Site Update and Old Business – Woody Webster**

#### *Property Updates*

- Funding for the Woodley Tract acquisition has been extended an additional year as we await action from the U.S. Air Force (USAF). The Nature Conservancy (TNC) purchased the parcel last year. As explained at previous meetings, the Reserve was approached by TNC regarding this boundary expansion opportunity a few years ago. Their USAF partner is supplying 50% of the purchase price through Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) funds to protect operational areas around the Dare County Bombing Range. It is hoped the Reserve will close on this addition to Buckridge within the next few months.

\*Mr. Clegg questioned what the Reserve would be doing with the Woodley Tract. Staff explained that preserving representative coastal ecosystems, such as found on Woodley, is primary to the mission of the N.C. Coastal Reserve. It is hoped the new parcel will attract additional research, as some research on endangered red-cockaded woodpecker has gone undone in the past while Woodley was in private ownership. Another question arose about public access, and the potential of developing the old barge landing near the N.C. 94 bridge. Mr. Clegg indicated N.C. Department of Transportation owns that small parcel, but they have no interest in developing it as a public access.

- The same TNC/USAF partnership also pursued the purchase of 260 acres at Grapevine Landing, known as the Primland Tract. The Reserve had previously secured funding for this parcel as well, but a desire for a last-minute appraisal by the current landowner led to the purchase falling through. The funds had to be returned to the Clean Water Management Trust Fund unspent. TNC has voiced their desire to continue to pursue the parcel, but the Reserve does not plan to dedicate additional time toward the project until a very firm commitment from the owner is in place. This location would be a viable water access point, if publicly owned.
- A tidegate damaged by Hurricane Matthew was repaired with assistance from local N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) staff. This particular tidegate connects to a culvert beneath Grapevine Landing Road.

#### *Invasive Controls*

- An isolated outbreak of alligatorweed at Otis Road canal was monitored for return after an experimental imazapyr treatment the previous year. The outbreak showed no sign of return until the very end of the growing season, when a few sprigs of alligatorweed was documented

along the far edge of the canal. Additional treatment will likely be delayed until the next growing season, as alligatorweed is not cold-hardy above the water.

- As part of a cost-share agreement, the Division of Water Resources is treating alligatorweed and *Phragmites* along the Alligator River at Buckridge, starting at Gum Neck Landing. This effort is in addition to treatment of Gum Neck Landing by Tyrrell County.
- A new monitoring protocol developed by State Parks was shared with staff at a recent pesticide training workshop. Staff like the relative simplicity of the protocols, and will soon discuss its possible implementation program-wide.

### Hunting Statistics

- Bear harvest in 2017 increased to 19, from 11 the previous year. One of many heavyweights reported the first day of the season was 683 lbs. The reported deer harvest fell from 7 to 6. Reserve staff have evidence, corroborated by NCWRC staff observations, that there are still ample numbers of deer at Buckridge, despite low harvest reports. Hurricane Florence caused a two-week closure of the early deer season due to flooding.
- Bear season for the County was extended an additional week in November, and the three bear hunting days at Buckridge are no longer consecutive. The November season at Buckridge will be on November 10, 12 and 13 this year. This change was made by NCWRC.
- NCWRC has continued their progress rehabilitating the roads at Buckridge. Temporary road closure gates have remained undamaged, and the gravel added this year improved Eastern Road all the way to the Connector Road (4/10<sup>th</sup> mile). The Reserve added an additional \$5000 of gravel toward this year's effort.
  - Mr. Ridgeway indicated that NCWRC has received a few complaints regarding the temporary road gates, but some good feedback on the progress of the road repairs as well. The Reserve received one main complaint of more difficult hunting conditions, but this complaint's allegations disagreed with the increase in bear harvest success last year.
  - Staff asked about when side mowing of road-encroaching woody vegetation would occur, and Mr. Ridgeway indicated it would be next spring or summer. This will result in a decrease in the amount of gravel NCWRC can purchase next year.
  - Mr. Ridgeway mentioned again the conundrum of bear hunters who voice safety concerns at Buckridge (due to the large number of hunters) while desiring no restrictions to the number of hunters. NCWRC could make this a limited permit hunt at Buckridge, and LAC members asked what would the threshold be for taking this step. Lt. Cagle indicated that there have been no documented safety problems. Staff indicated there is no evidence the number of hunters is hurting the bear population either, so there is no documented evidence that would support such a change.

### Research Update

- There are currently two research projects at Buckridge, one by an East Carolina University geology graduate student continuing an investigation of saltwater intrusion into the groundwater via the canals. The other graduate project will measure atmospheric gas production of standing dead trees, with sample locations across several other game lands.
- Sea Grant and the N.C. Coastal Reserve have a fellowship opportunity open to applicants until December 3.

### Visitor Access Issues

- A volunteer asked about creating one or two pedestrian bridges at Buckridge, connecting Buckridge Road to abandoned logging roads. Staff investigated the potential with regional N.C. Division of Coastal Management permitting staff, and the project was given approval. Construction is slated to begin November 2018. Staff hope to increase visitor access, while restoring access to an old trial restoration planting plot.
- Wildlife trail cameras have continued to be an important resource for tracking wildlife behavior and population trends. Lt. Cagle requested that we share any suspicious human behavior seen from the cameras.

### Upcoming Activities

- Outreach for Tyrrell Elementary School's 2<sup>nd</sup> grade was done this year, and outreach events for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade are planned.
- Bear season starts November 10. NCWRC staff expressed the importance of their visibility during this time, given the concentration of hunters at Buckridge.
- The Northern Sites Manager notified staff that she will be leaving the Reserve for a job with the Town of Nags Head. This will mean additional requirements on the Buckridge Site Manager and the Reserve Manager to cover that office until the position is filled. LAC members were asked to spread the word about the vacancy to potential applicants.
- The Woodley tract inclusion into the Buckridge Reserve should be complete before our next meeting.

## **Member Roundtable**

LAC members discussed whether construction of camping platforms would be feasible adjacent to the lower Alligator River. Mr. Schafale asked about their legality on Reserve property. Staff indicated the Reserve has a right to build such structures per the terms of the Roper Island conservation easement, but management and a reservation system of such platforms is usually taken on by a county or nonprofit entity, such as along the Roanoke River.

Lt. Cagle shared that some of the largest enforcement actions of late have been against poachers of reptiles for the illicit pet trade. Somewhat common species here, such as box turtles and spotted turtles, are commanding higher prices than in the past. He asked that all LAC members report any suspicious activity that might be tied to animal trafficking, and the LAC members were reminded that individuals trafficking in animals are often cited for drug and other charges. Lt. Cagle further stated that he and Sgt. Wayne are available for training regarding reptile trafficking.

Lt. Cagle announced that enough recruits had recently graduated from enforcement school to fill all area wildlife enforcement positions, some which have been open for years. That should include officers for Hyde, Tyrrell and Washington counties.

Staff asked about the status of the Palmetto Peartree property. Mr. Ridgeway indicated that it had been transferred to NCWRC, but it hasn't yet undergone to process necessary to make it into an official game land.

### **Public Comments**

No members of the public were present.

### **Review of Action Items**

NCWRC and the Reserve will work to make connections with new enforcement personnel as they are deployed.

## **Attachment 1 Reserve-wide Update**

### **N.C. Coastal Reserve and National Estuarine Research Reserve Fall 2018 Local Advisory Committee Meetings Reserve-wide Update**

#### ***Hurricane Florence and Tropical Storm Michael***

All Reserve sites and the Kitty Hawk, Beaufort, and Wilmington offices closed September 11 in preparation for Hurricane Florence. The Columbia office closed September 13. The eye of Hurricane Florence passed directly over the Masonboro Island and Zeke's Island Reserves on September 14.

The Kitty Hawk and Columbia offices received little to no damage as a result of the storm and reopened September 17. The Beaufort office at the NOAA Beaufort Lab sustained a variety of damage and fully reopened September 28. The Wilmington office at University of North Carolina Wilmington's (UNCW) Center for Marine Science also sustained a variety of damage and reopened to staff on October 1. Damage assessment and repair is handled by the respective partners that own the office facilities and not by Reserve staff; thank you to NOAA Beaufort Lab and UNCW staff for getting the facilities up and running again so that more regular business operations could resume.

Storm impacts to the Reserve sites varied geographically based on the track of the storm. The Currituck Banks, Kitty Hawk Woods, Buxton Woods, and Buckridge Reserves received little to no damage. The remaining sites located in the central and southern portions of the state experienced the following general impacts: erosion and deposition on oceanfront and estuarine shorelines, grounded vessels at the Rachel Carson and Masonboro Island Reserves, significant accumulation of marine debris such as lumber, staircases, floating docks and pilings, downed trees, missing signs, and damage to the boardwalk at the Rachel Carson Reserve. Eight of the ten Reserve sites reopened on September 24 following site assessments; Permuda Island and Bald Head Woods Reserves remain closed at this time.

Potentially hazardous conditions associated with storm damage remain at the Reserve sites and visitors should exercise caution. Grounded vessels are being addressed under Emergency Support Function #10 staffed by the U.S. Coast Guard, NOAA, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, and N.C. Department of Environmental Quality, including Reserve staff. Pollutants and a subset of vessels that remain grounded will be removed from the Reserve sites under this operation. Visitors should refrain from disturbing the vessels to protect personal safety and respect vessel owners' personal property while removal efforts are underway. Clean-up of smaller marine debris items has begun with the help of volunteers at select sites while storm recovery funding sources are being explored for removing the larger marine debris items described above and addressing the downed trees.

Reserve programming was and continues to be impacted by the storm. K-12 student field trips, teacher workshops, public education programming, and Coastal Training Program workshops have been

cancelled, postponed, and rescheduled. Research staff are measuring storm impacts on several current research projects including performance of marsh sills and living shorelines constructed of alternative substrates. Water quality monitoring equipment remained deployed at the Masonboro Island and Zeke's Island Reserves during the storm and staff will be evaluating those data in the near future. Stewardship staff are addressing the site-related items described above.

No additional impacts were observed from Tropical Storm Michael.

#### Local Advisory Committees

In August 2018, the Secretary of the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality appointed new community members and re-appointed community members interested in continuing to serve to the local advisory committees following an application process earlier in the year to fill vacancies. Additional government agencies were also appointed to fill gaps on the committees.

The local advisory committee Operating Procedures document is to be updated every five years according to the Operating Procedures. An update was originally planned for fall 2018 but has been rescheduled to spring 2019 as staff focus on Hurricane Florence recovery.

#### Periodic Rules Review

Per the Division's request, the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality is seeking the Rules Review Commission's approval of a readoption timeline of November 30, 2021 for Coastal Reserve rules (15A NCAC 070). This item is scheduled for the Rules Review Commission's November 2018 meeting. Staff will begin preliminary discussions regarding 15A NCAC 070.0202 at the fall 2018 meetings. This work is part of the Legislative Periodic Review and Expiration of Existing Rules process (G.S. 150B-21.3A).

#### *Comments from Suggested Rules Edits/Additions:*

##### Currituck Parking Lot -

Committee questioned who would be involved with enforcement, and staff indicated this would likely be a cooperative effort with the Currituck Sheriff's office.

##### Abandoned Vessels –

Committee was supportive of any streamlining effort, and suggested Staff investigate recently-enacted ordinances which now govern vessels on Silver Lake at Ocracoke.

##### Special Use Permit –

While largely supportive of this, Committee was surprised that the Reserve does not already possess this rule. Mr. Phillips cautioned that this may lead to additional paperwork/ staff time demands, as his organization has several types of permits, one for commercial use, one for research, etc. Staff reminded the Committee that a Research permit process is already in place, and seems to work well.

Private Property –

Committee members representing different agencies shared their differing approaches to personal property. NCWRC allow hunting stands to remain in place for a season, though ownership may not be claimed if left overnight, to prevent someone erecting a stand to “claim” a favorable hunting location. USFWS allows nothing to remain overnight. Staff shared that State Parks has no set policy, but rely largely on local staff decisions regarding disposal and retention. The Committee supported cementing a policy on personal property at the Reserve.

Permit Hunts – no comments.

N.C. NERR Management Plan

The Reserve received feedback from NOAA on the draft management plan for the N.C. National Estuarine Research Reserve that will cover 2018-2023 in late August 2018. Staff are currently working to address the feedback. Review by the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality will follow. A 30-day public comment period for the draft management plan will be scheduled after all reviews are complete and 3 public meetings, in the northern, central and southern regions of the coast, will be scheduled during the comment period.

Federal Budget

The budget table below is a summary of the current status of the federal budget\* for fiscal years 17, 18, and 19 as it relates to the Coastal Reserve.

Federal Budget Lines	Final Omnibus Appropriations FY2017	Final Omnibus Appropriations FY2018	President’s Budget Request FY2019	Senate Approps Committee Mark FY2019	House Approps Committee Mark FY2019
NERRS Operations	\$23.5 M	\$25 M	\$0 M	\$27.5 M	\$27 M
CZM Grants	\$70 M	\$75 M	\$0 M	\$90 M	\$75 M

- Federal Fiscal Year 19: The President’s budget request does not include funding for the NERRS Operations or the CZM Grants budget lines. Next steps for the federal fiscal year 19 budget include the House and Senate conferencing between the chambers, chamber votes to agree on a final budget, and a final budget going to the President for signature into law.
- 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.

State Budget



The N.C. General Assembly appropriated \$2.5M to the Division in the State Fiscal Year 18 budget for acquisition of the Sunset Beach West tract to be included in the Bird Island Coastal Reserve. The early stages of the acquisition are underway. The appropriation supports implementation of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Town of Sunset Beach and Sunset Beach and Twin Lakes, INC to resolve a legal battle regarding the tract. The tract is adjacent to the Bird Island Coastal Reserve and includes similar pristine beach and salt marsh habitats.

### Visitor Access Study

Reserve Site Managers are working with a team of researchers from UNCW (Environmental Science Department, School of Health, Applied Human Science Recreation, Tourism Management Program) to implement a visitor access assessment project at select Reserve sites titled "Understanding Access and Visitor Use on North Carolina's Coastal Reserve System." The project focuses on six of the ten Reserve sites – Bird Island, Zeke's Island, Masonboro Island, Rachel Carson, Kitty Hawk Woods, and Currituck Banks. The goal of the project is to understand visitor access patterns and inform planning and projects to accommodate visitor access of the sites. Interviews and stakeholder sessions with community members and government and business leaders, and on-site surveys of visitors are complete. Data collected will be analyzed by the research team and a study report will be complete in 2019. Results will be used by Reserve staff to inform visitor access management and planning.

### Upcoming Program Activities

Find upcoming event information on the event calendar at [www.nccoastalreserve.net](http://www.nccoastalreserve.net).

- **NOAA Tools Training Workshop (11.6, Wilmington)** - Participants will learn about NOAA's resources available to improve local decision-making. Participants will get hands-on experience with various tools, including the Sea Level Rise Viewer and the Coastal Flood Exposure Mapper, as well as learn about resources available through NOAA's Digital Coast. American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) will receive 4 Certification Maintenance credits. Registration is required.
- **Low Impact Development Basics for Water Quality Protection - Workshop for Real Estate Professionals (12.4 and 12.5, Wilmington)** - Participants will learn the following: how land use decisions impact water quality; Low Impact Development techniques that help protect water quality; the costs and benefits of implementing LID; managing stormwater control measures to meet state and local regulations and to maintain functionality and aesthetics; and tour stormwater control measures on the Wrightsville Beach Loop. Real estate professionals will receive 4 elective continuing education credits from the N.C. Real Estate Commission. Registration is required.

\*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.