



**Buxton Woods Reserve
Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
October 23, 2018
Buxton Fire Hall
Buxton, NC**

Attendance

<u>LAC Partner Organization Members</u>	<u>Present</u>
National Park Service, Law Enforcement Ranger	n
N.C. Forest Resources, Dare County Ranger John Van Riper, John Cook	y
Coastal Studies Institute, John McCord	n
Dare County Sheriff's Department, Lt. Doug Oberbeck	y
N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, Officer Robert Martine	n
Dare County Commissioner, Danny Couch	n
NC Natural Heritage Program, Scott Pohlman	y
<u>Community Members and Community Organizations Members</u>	
Harvey Scarborough, Local Resident	n
Russ Kiddy, Local Resident	n
Karen Lebing, Local Resident	y
Michael Flynn, The Coastal Federation	Y
<u>Others Present</u>	
Bryan Perry, Buxton Fire Department	
Kate Jones, NCNERR Northern Sites Manager	
Pat Moore, Local Resident	

Site Manager Kate Jones recognized new LAC members and welcomed them to the committee.

Reserve Wide Update

October 17, 2018

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

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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 –

Support was received by the committee for generating a rule in this situation. This is a tough one as people have always used this lot for purposes other than Reserve use. Will be difficult, but once enforcement (towing or booting) begins the situation will improve.

Abandoned Vessels –

Committee supports a rule. Concern was voiced that people will then use Reserve as a dumping ground for derelict vessels. Will need to work with N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission to make sure this does not happen.

Special Use Permit –

Overall, the Committee was surprised that the Reserve does not have a way to address special use. Comments included that the Reserve should look at what other state agencies are doing, talk with them, and see what they think could be improved upon. Site Manager explained that this rule would not specify what uses would and wouldn't be allowed, only designate that the Reserve could formally create a process by which to evaluate requests.

Private Property –

Some frustration was communicated as to why the Reserve is overly cautious or "nice" about dealing with property left in the Reserve. It should be disposed of immediately, or perhaps with minimal notice.

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

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.

- **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

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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 four 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.

Site Update

Old Business (Follow-up from previous meetings' action items)

Wildfire Management Plan. Site manager introduces the wildfire management plan which was passed out for each LAC member. The plan includes a background on Buxton Woods habitats, locations of site infrastructure, and additional information about partners that would assist in a wildfire situation. Included in the plan are a variety of maps, including recommended fire breaks and diagrams showing firebreak width characteristics. After viewing the maps, the following discussion took place:

John Cook: North Carolina Forest Service (NCFS) has a pot of money and it is available for creating firebreaks. Need to identify which firebreaks are a priority for the year. This is an ongoing (year-round) available funding source. NCFS can do the work with their equipment and personnel. NCFS needs specifically, linear feet of proposed breaks and width of breaks to calculate estimated costs. One option is to tackle the firebreaks near housing first, or just submit for all the firebreaks and what doesn't get done can be applied for the subsequent year. Please also send map files of firebreaks to NCFS.

Site Manager: Agreed to send map files and will calculate the linear feet and width of firebreaks. Need to get the plan approved by the Reserve leadership.

Scott Pohlman: Need to add a firewise component to the Wwldfire plan.

Site Manager: Agreed, will add a firewise section and recirculate the plan electronically.

John Cook: Need to be careful when installing firebreaks adjacent to private property as homeowners can start to use the cleared area as their own. Suggests leaving a buffer of trees so there is separation between the homeowner and the firebreak.

John VanRiper: Would need to maintain the breaks every five years most likely.

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John Cook: Need to have MOU in place too.

Vegetation Surveys 2018. Site manager updated the LAC on the Old Doctors Rd. vegetation survey that was sampled again in 2018. Two additional species were found that were in the herb (very small) layer. These species were Eastern Red Cedar and Devilwood.

Scott Pohlman: The Natural Heritage Program may be able to help with vegetation surveys. Please reach out if you need help next year.

Hunting. Eastern Deer season is underway, and the site manager shared harvest data from 2010 onwards.

Bryan Perry: Currently, there is a group of young people (high schoolers) that hunt and the increase in takes last year is likely because they have been in the woods hunting. It will be interesting to see as these people graduate and potentially move away, how the harvest numbers will change. Also need a new jaw bone box at Frisco Road and Gun. Haven't had one since 2015.

Site Manager: Will get a new jawbone box to you.

Volunteers. Site Manager detailed the volunteer workday in October with Heron Pond Montessori School in Kitty Hawk. Trail clearing was performed on the North Trail. The mosquitos were still quite bad, and the kids only lasted 2-3 hours for the day. Much more hiking trail maintenance needs to happen. If anyone is willing, or knows someone willing to help clear trails, please let Kate know.

Roundtable Discussion (*Staff response in italics*)

- Scott Pohlman: Remember that the Clean Water Management Trust Fund has delayed their board meeting and all decisions on grants have therefore been delayed. They should be meeting in the next month, and you can check their website for information.
- John VanRiper: NCFs now has a boat. Can use this to help with wildfire management and monitoring. Need MOU between NCFs and NCCR. *Site manager responded that this may be a benefit to Kitty Hawk Woods Reserve.*
- John Cook: Money is available for Hurricane Florence clean up assistance, and could use this for Buxton Woods trails. Will send the link via email.
- Michael Flynn: There will be a land based clean up on January 12, 2019 and could work at Kitty Hawk Woods again. *Site Manager commented that this was a success last year and hope it can happen again.*

Public Comments

- Bryan Perry: Has been seeing 20-30 deer on his property (uses corn on his property) and the deer would rather eat shrubby oaks and other vegetation.

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- Pat Moore: Would like to see trails clear and usable for educational events like Wings over Water.

Action Items

- Site Manager will be sharing wildfire map files with those that requested them.
- Site Manager will contact John Cook with information to move forward with firebreaks.
- Site Manager will email minutes for comments/changes