



Currituck Banks
 Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
 May 21, 2018
 Outer Banks Center for Wildlife Education
 Corolla, NC

LAC Partner Organization Members	Attendance
Jennie Turner, Currituck County Planning Dept.	Y
Sgt. Terrance Sutton, Currituck County Sheriff's Office	Y
Sgt. Jarret Culbreath, NC Wildlife Resources Commission	Y
Sharon Meade, NC Wildlife Resources Commission-Outer Banks Center for Wildlife Education	Y
Mike Hoff, Currituck National Wildlife Refuge	N
Aaron McCall, The Nature Conservancy	N
Others Present	
Kate Jones, Site Manager, NC Coastal Reserve Northern Sites	Y
Rachel Veal, Stewardship Assistant, NC Coastal Reserve Northern Sites	Y
Kate Hefner, Intern, NC Coastal Reserve Northern Sites	Y

Reserve-wide Administrative Update

Staff will share these written updates with the local advisory committees prior to the committee meetings so that members have the opportunity to review them in advance; this change is in response to committee member suggestions at the fall 2017 meetings.

- *Local Advisory Committees*

The Division solicited applications from citizens and community organizations January 8-February 5, 2018 to fill vacancies on the local advisory committees. Committee members are appointed by the Secretary of the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality; the Secretary's office is currently reviewing the Division's recommendations for appointment. Letters will be sent to applicants after the appointments are made.

The local advisory committee [Operating Procedures](#) document is to be updated every five years according to the Operating Procedures. Staff will initiate the update process this fall and seek committee input on potential changes for Division consideration.

- *Periodic Rules Review*

Staff is working with the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality to establish a timeline and process for reoption of the Coastal Reserve rules (15A NCAC 070) identified in the final Rules Review Commission report. This work is part of the Legislative Periodic Review and Expiration of Existing Rules process (G.S. 150B-21.3A).

- *N.C. NERR Management Plan*

In 2017, the local advisory committees and N.C. Coastal Resources Commission reviewed and provided input on the draft management plan for the N.C. National Estuarine Research Reserve that will cover 2018-2023. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is currently reviewing the plan. 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.

<i>Federal Budget Lines</i>	<i>Final Omnibus Appropriations FY2017</i>	<i>Final Omnibus Appropriations FY2018</i>	<i>President's Budget Request FY2019</i>
<i>NERRS Operations</i>	<i>\$23,500,000</i>	<i>\$25,000,000</i>	<i>\$0</i>
<i>CZM Grants</i>	<i>\$70,000,000</i>	<i>\$75,000,000</i>	<i>\$0</i>

- *Federal Fiscal Year 18: Congress passed an omnibus budget bill for federal fiscal year 18 in March which includes a \$1.5 million increase for the NERRS Operations budget line and a \$5 million increase for the CZM Grants budget line. The NERRS appropriation resulted in \$50,000 increase to base operational funding for each reserve within the System. As a result, the Division will receive \$690,000 from NOAA for operation of the NCNERR portion of the Coastal Reserve during the upcoming state fiscal year (July 2018-June 2019). The additional funds will be used to cover direct and indirect cost increases and to fund stewardship-focused temporary staffing positions in the north and south via the annual budget.*

- *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 releasing their respective budgets and then a conference between the chambers and chamber votes 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*

Thirteen seasonal temporary staff and interns are helping the Reserve with a variety of projects this summer including the general public and summer camp education programs, various site management and research activities including sea turtle and shorebird monitoring, exploring alternative substrates for living shorelines, and a thin-layer deposition marsh enhancement project (see fall 2017 update for more information on this project). Funding for the paid positions comes from the Division, Reserve, and Youth Advocacy Involvement Office. Three interns are volunteering their time, and an additional three are working for university credit.

- *Recent and Upcoming Program Activities*

Find upcoming event information on the event calendar at www.nccoastalreserve.net.

- **2018 NCSG-NCCR & NERR Coastal Research Fellow** – N.C. Sea Grant, the Reserve and Division co-sponsor a graduate research fellowship each year for a student to conduct work within the sites of the Coastal Reserve on mutually beneficial priorities. The 2018 fellow is Chris Moore, a doctoral student in Biology at East Carolina University. Under the advisement of Dr. April Blakeslee, Chris will be measuring parasite diversity to evaluate the success of shoreline stabilization practices in restoring biodiversity.
- **Alternative living shoreline substrate project** - In collaboration with Dr. Rachel Gittman (East Carolina University) and Dr. Niels Lindquist (Sandbar Oyster Co. & UNC-CH Institute of Marine Sciences), Reserve Research Coordinator Dr. Brandon Puckett is testing the effectiveness of an alternative settlement substrate developed by Sandbar Oyster Co. as a living shoreline material to protect eroding salt marshes at the Rachel Carson Reserve.
- **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. 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 are underway. On-site surveys of visitors will be conducted throughout the summer at the Currituck Banks, Kitty Hawk Woods, Rachel Carson, Masonboro Island, Zeke's Island, and Bird Island Reserves. A study report will be complete in 2019.

- **Spring community paddle at the Masonboro Island Reserve (06/27)** - Wilmington: Join Reserve staff for a paddle to the Masonboro Island Reserve for an evening of fun and education! Equipment is available for rental, see the event calendar for more details and registration.
- **Sea turtle walks (M-F, daily throughout summer)** - Wilmington: The Masonboro Island Reserve is looking for volunteers for the summer sea turtle nesting season. Contact Elizabeth Colhoun (colhoun@uncw.edu) for more information.
- **Teachers on the Estuary Workshop (06/19-20)** - Beaufort: K-12 teachers will participate in field-based training to improve their understanding of estuarine environments. Participants will receive content aligned with national education standards and/or N.C. Essential Standards to support incorporation of estuary and watershed topics into classroom teaching. Renewal credits are available for participation.
- **Summer camps (June - August)** - Beaufort: Registration for Summer Science School, in partnership with the NC Maritime Museum in Beaufort, is open. Reserve education staff will lead programs for students ranging from Preschool to 10th grade including Preschool Storytime and Crafts, Seashore Life I & II, and Maritime Adventurers.
- **Public field trips to the Rachel Carson Reserve (June - August)** - Beaufort: Public field trips to the Rachel Carson occur on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30-10:30am during June, July and August. All programs are open and free to the public but reservations are required as boat space is limited.
- **Birding by Ear (05/24)** - Kitty Hawk: The NC Wildlife Resources Commission and NC Coastal Reserve are offering a bird identification workshop. This class involves fieldwork in the Kitty Hawk Woods Reserve to identify birds by their songs and calls. Participants are eligible for Criteria II of the NC OEE Environmental Education Certification program. Registration is required, see the event calendar for more details.
- Keep an eye out for the Reserve's spring **Tidal Flat newsletter** coming out in May.
- **Coastal Explorations Educator Workshop (05/08)** - Corolla: Participants of this workshop learned about estuaries and the Reserve program through classroom activities that they can use with their students and groups. Field-based explorations and activities were also conducted during a field trip to the

Currituck Banks Reserve. Teachers were eligible to receive renewal credits and Environmental Education Certification credits for this workshop.

- ***Adaptation Planning for Coastal Communities (04/17-18)*** – Beaufort: NOAA’s Office for Coastal Management and the Coastal Training Program hosted this course for planners, public works staff, floodplain managers, hazard mitigation planners, sustainability managers, emergency managers, and coastal resource managers to gain a thorough grounding and practical skills for incorporating adaptation strategies into planning processes. Continuing education credits were offered to participants.
- ***Citizen science presentation (4/12)*** - Wilmington: Participants learned about research projects at the Masonboro Island Reserve and in the local community that citizens can participate in.
- ***Promoting Living Shorelines for Erosion Control – A Workshop for Real Estate Professionals (04/13)*** - Beaufort: Participants learned about the benefits and limitations of using living shorelines for erosion control, different shoreline stabilization techniques, including living shorelines shoreline stabilization permitting process, and the best practices for use of marsh plants and oyster shell in erosion control.
- ***Clean Marina Workshop (2/28)*** - Wilmington: Marina operators and workers learned about environmentally sensitive practices for marinas, marine debris, marina safety hazards, and the Clean Marina Program including sewage pumpout grants. This workshop was conducted in partnership with the Clean Marina Program.

** 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 (Site Manager)

- *CCVATCH (Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment Tool for Coastal Habitats):* This protocol was used at Currituck Banks Reserve to discuss vulnerabilities of the marsh at Currituck Banks. A quick rundown of how the protocol works: a scoring system is used to assign values to potential threats such as erosion, invasive species, etc. to assess and rank potential threats to inform management decisions. Local participants with knowledge in the various areas were recruited to complete the assessment. The conclusion that we came to at Currituck Banks was that the overall threat level was moderate, and that the most eminent threat was erosion. Invasive species (feral pigs, horses, Phragmites) were found to be both a current and future problem. We were least certain about threats from environmental contaminants due to a lack of information in this area- meaning we should increase monitoring efforts to assess environmental contamination (such as runoff). We were most certain about (1) climate change increase in temperature influencing habitat, (2) degree of fragmentation (low), and (3) barriers to migration (low). We hope to make this tool available to land managers to assist them with understanding the various threats and helping to prioritize actions. *No comments.*

Site Update - New Business (Site Manager)

- *LAC membership update:* We are currently updating LAC membership and will have 1 new community member joining in the fall pending approval of the Secretary of DEQ. *No comments.*
- *Staffing:* We have an intern, Kate Hefner, joining us for the summer. She will be assisting with monitoring and day to day operations. Rachel Veal is also joining us again part-time at the Northern Sites office through the fall. *No comments.*
- *Public Access Study:* UNCW is undertaking a public access study for several Coastal Reserves throughout the state, and Currituck Banks has been selected as a location. This study entails a focus group, phone interviews, and on-site questionnaires. Anyone who would like to be involved with the study please let the Site Manager know. *Jenny noted that she had worked with Alexia at the focus group where they began to get an understanding of how Reserve is used.*
- *Water Quality Training:* There is potential for water quality training at the Northern Sites. If you have any ideas of who would be a target audience/ who would benefit please let the Site Manager know. *No comments.*
- *Feral Pig Removal:* USDA did helicopter culling of pigs and the Reserve was closed for a week due to safety concerns. 22 pigs were killed, and none were recovered, though on ground efforts to attempt recovery did exist. All pigs were killed on FWS property (not on the Reserve) near Swan Island. They plan to fly again this week, but not on Reserve Property. Josh Besiker is the USDA contact for this project. *No comments.*

- *Monitoring Activities at the Northern Sites.*
 - *Invasives:* Marsh vegetation monitoring (plant composition and distribution) will be conducted in the marsh. We will compare 3 native stands to 3 Phragmites stands to get baseline information and continue to track changes over time. We hope to clarify: expansion of species on the Reserve, pre/post storm event, human impacts, etc. We will also be measuring sediment and hope to get a water level gauge in the future (funding dependent). Lastly, we will be putting rebar at the marsh edge to look at shoreline changes. This monitoring is based on marsh veg surveys at the other Coastal Reserves. *Sharon says that she can send the king tide info that they collect in Corolla. Site Manager responds that this information would be helpful and that they are planning to take part in the king tides citizen science project at Kitty Hawk Woods also.*
 - *Vegetation Monitoring in Upland Areas:* We will be creating plots following CVS (Carolina Vegetative Survey) protocols so that we can track species changes over time. This can also help us see changes in water levels within the maritime forest. *No comments.*
 - *Herpetology Survey:* We have begun a low-tech herpetology survey using cover boards and pvc pipe. The coverboards have just been set out, and they will hopefully be colonized by amphibians and reptiles which we will count once every week-2 weeks. Presence of frogs and salamanders can be an indication of water quality and this method is a low tech/inexpensive way to track this as well as get an idea of species composition at the Reserve. *No comments.*

Roundtable Discussion *(Staff response in italics)*

Sharon Meade: How is parking at the CB parking lot?

Site Manager: Our plan is to look into enforcement of parking violations. We have chalk for helping us pinpoint which cars are left in lot illegally (i.e. parked longer than 2 hours).

Jennie Turner: *Currituck County is working on ordering signs for road; and there are new air stations at the County parking lot at the Corolla Lighthouse.*

Rachel Veal: *I can amend the parking lot signs to reflect the new air stations and make a larger map. I can also update realty companies and 4x4 rental companies as to the new air stations, and to our plans to tighten enforcement in the lot.*

Attendees agree that towing or booting is needed at the lot to prevent beach goers from leaving their cars in the lot all day while they carpool to the beach, and the prevent airing up and down in the lot.

Sharon Meade: Shared pictures of a mink and mink nest that was sighted at Oregon Inlet.

Sgt. Culbreath: Wonders about the possibility of getting Currituck Banks into Gamelands; and notes that enforcement of rules (by NC Wildlife Commission) is not possible currently.

Site Manager: Has mentioned that this would be a desirable outcome at the last meeting with the Commission, and everyone there seemed in agreement. We will need a survey boundary of Currituck Banks, and it is possible this is already done.

Sgt. Culbreath: It would make enforcement easier. The rules are not enforceable by us, and all we can do is get people to leave who don't have a permit, but cannot enforce any action. If it were in Gamelands, we could enforce 6-day hunting week, no baiting, no permanent stands- all the rules you already have. If it were in permitted lands, we would be able to enforce the laws, but we would need to figure out what to do about permitting. Currently, you know who is registered to hunt at CB and KHW and can keep track, but it might be more difficult if it were in Gamelands. We could use the parking permit, which they would still need to keep track of who was hunting.

Site Manager: I will talk with Gamelands about this, we are currently in the process of updating our MOU with them.

Sgt. Culbreath: It would help a lot, as we are not able to crack down on shenanigans at the current time.

Sgt. Sutton: I had a meeting with the guys who are doing the beach patrol (on 4x4 beach), and I let everyone know not to direct people to park at the CB Reserve parking lot. Officers have been directed to tell people to go to the Corolla Village lot where the air stations are. Let us know of any situations that arise from the parking lot, and we can assist you. It will be myself, along with Sgt. Davidson and Sgt. Thornton.

Site Manager: Should I just call dispatch number?

Sgt. Thornton: Yes, and officer will be nearby who will be able to get there quickly. My advice is to not engage with anyone who is causing problems, but let us handle it.

Jennie Turner: If you end up using towing, it will be good to know where impound lots are so that no one gets towed to mainland.

Sgt. Sutton: I know that North Beach Towing has been hired in the past to do booting. This may be a viable option worth pursuing.

Site Manager: We will follow up with towing companies to see what our options are.

Jennie Turner: In focus group (for access study), some questions came up. (1) is there a sign on the inside of the fence about closing it to keep the horses in?

Site Manager: No, but that would be a good idea and we can see about getting one.

Jennie Turner: (2) Do you know Edward Ponton? If not, I would like to get you 2 in touch as he is a long-time resident and uses it a lot. (3) There is a request for a platform for the end of the CB Maritime Forest Trail (where the trail meets the sound).

Site Manager: Having a platform/overlook at the end of this trail is a priority and we are considering avenues for funding for this project. I am going to inquire about construction funds and will keep you updated.

Action Items

- Site Manager will check on Gamelands situation for Currituck Banks and Kitty Hawk Woods.
- Site Manager and staff will decide on enforcement situation for CB parking lot and let LAC members know the outcome, and update signs to reflect this.
- Site Manager will inquire about getting sign made for inside of gate to let people know to shut the gate behind them to keep horses inside fenced area.
- Site Manager will inquire about funding for construction of overlook.