



**Kitty Hawk Woods Reserve
Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
May 23, 2018
Kitty Hawk Town Hall
Kitty Hawk, NC**

Attendance

<u>LAC Partner Organization Members</u>	<u>Present</u>
Chief Joel Johnson, Kitty Hawk Police Department	y
Andy Stewart, Kitty Hawk Town Manager	y
Jeff Pruitt, Kitty Hawk Town Commissioner	Y
John McCord, Coastal Studies Institute	n
Aaron McCall, The Nature Conservancy	y
John Cook, N.C. Forestry Commission	y
Gary Perry, Mayor of Kitty Hawk	n
Anna Barbosa, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission	y
<u>Community Members and Community Organizations Members</u>	
Clifton Perry	y
<u>Others Present</u>	
John Van Riper, N.C. Forestry Commission	
Kate Jones, N.C. Coastal Reserve Northern Sites Manager	
Kate Hefner, N.C. Coastal Reserve Northern Sites Natural Resources Management Intern	

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 readoption 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.

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

- 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 (colhoune@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)

- *UNCW Public Access Study*

Reserve site managers are working with Dr. Hill from UNC Wilmington on a public access survey at Kitty Hawk Woods. This survey will also be conducted at Currituck Banks Reserve. Students will be interviewing the public to understand which access points are being used and by whom. This survey will be used for planning and projects to accommodate visitors to the Reserves. The students will be conducting surveys on weekdays, weekends and holidays. The site manager is looking to develop and send out an online survey for the public as well. This could also include phone calls. *No comments.*

- *Maritime Forest Vegetation Monitoring- Carolina Vegetation Survey Protocol*

Three sites in Kitty Hawk Woods will be monitored in August. *No comments.*

- *Land Acquisition*

The Coastal Reserve is looking to acquire four parcels of land that would become a part of Kitty Hawk Woods. *Chief Joel Johnson asked who owns the land.* This plot of land was purchased by Tim Sweeny. He invests in purchasing land for conservation. He is looking to sell the 46 acres for 1.2 million dollars. The Site Manager has submitted a grant proposal to the Clean Water Trust Fund. The fund would pay for 25% of the cost of acquiring the land. The site manager is also in the process of applying for a federal grant that is due at the end of June. *Commissioner Jeff Pruitt asked how you would get to this piece of land. The site manager noted that there was no current infrastructure, but it could be reached by boat or kayak. Jeff Pruitt also discussed how beautiful of a piece of land it is and how you won't find a place like it. The Site Manager noted that the price is*

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high and the three parcels towards the back of the peninsula are the most valuable. John Van Riper suggested maybe buying three parcels now since it would be cheaper and then acquire the last parcel later. The Site Manager noted that there will be more information by the next meeting.

Site Update - New Business

- *Coverboard Study*

The Reserve is currently putting out 2"x4" boards and PVC pipes to monitor the populations of reptiles and amphibians in Kitty Hawk Woods. This will help the Reserve understand the current population of herps and overall function of habitat and water quality of the area. High species diversity, especially salamanders, can be great indicators of good water quality. The boards and PVC pipes will be checked in about two weeks and then checked every week after the initial time. The Reserve is building off data from the previous site manager. *No comments.*

- *Trail maintenance with student volunteers*

Students from Western Carolina University helped clear the Birch Lane Trail in Kitty Hawk Woods in March. Aaron McCall also brought a group on an alternate spring break trip from Appalachian State University to clear the area. *Aaron McCall spoke about how the college students really enjoyed the volunteering and put in 100% effort. He also stated how great the university is for sending some of their best kids. Chief Joel Johnson asked if anyone had ever thought about using inmates to clear the trail for community service hours. This would be considered by the Reserve. About three-fourths of the Birch Lane Trail was cleared, but towards the Sandy Run end, the trail gets a little rough. Site Manager discussed clearing the rest of the trail to make a nice connection to Sandy Run. Commissioner Jeff Pruitt suggested extending the town road in Kitty Hawk Estates straight back to make another access point. Hunting laws and enforcement were discussed as well. Chief Joel Johnson plans to revisit this topic with the Wildlife Commission on how rules can be enforced. Anna Barbosa stated how Dare County does not have hunting rules posted like Currituck County does.*

- *Pollinator habitat along Dominion Energy right-of-way*

The Reserve will be broadcasting pollinator seeds in the fall along the Dominion Energy power lines in Kitty Hawk Woods. This will be a one-half acre plot test. Dominion Energy has mowed the testing plot area and is putting money into the project. *Site Manager discussed how soil and fertilizers may need to be applied if the seeds will not germinate.*

- *Wildfire Management Plan*

The Site Manager discussed how the Wildlife Management Plan for Kitty Hawk Woods is one of the top things to do. The Reserve has also been working on a Buxton Woods Wildfire Management Plan. Phase one of the plan would be finding potential marsh lands that could be burned. Fire breaks would need to be present. Potential areas for fire breaks include one tract that is bordered by Tackle Ridge Road, and the second tract is contiguous marsh area. A large amount of debris has built up by the marsh, so the

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marsh habitat could benefit from a controlled burn. In Buxton Woods, there is a focus on what the public can do to defend their homes from fire. *John Van Riper stated that he thought it would be wonderful to do a fire wise program to educate the public in Kitty Hawk, Southern Shores and Duck. He believes it would be an eye opener to people and it would cost homeowners very little to clean up brush around their yards. Site Manager also stated that mailers or brochures could be sent out about the fire wise meetings. John Cook noted that you must get info from the public on where to prioritize the fire lines. This includes identifying the highest hazard and most populated locations. There is a higher risk in places that receive the most traffic.*

Site manager also brought up the point that the plan must go through the Natural Heritage Program. This program adds an additional layer of protection for the habitats at Kitty Hawk Woods. The Reserve is hoping to explore with the Natural Heritage Program if fire would be a good thing in a controlled setting. Site manager also stated that the Natural Heritage Program understands that something needs to be done. The committee then discussed whether Kitty Hawk Woods had ever been burned before. Commissioner Jeff Pruitt stated that in the 1980s the marsh burned from the sound to West Kitty Hawk Road, but other than small brush pile burns, he has not seen a fire there since then. He also discussed how the land was once used for cattle grazing so the area had been burned then. Clifton Perry stated that the area used to burn safely every year in the 1940s and 1950s. John Van Riper added that this was because the community would keep the fuel down by burning every year. Site manager would like to consider marsh burning in the winter. The Bay Islands may qualify for mitigation funding via smoke. Anna Barbosa added that there are boats out on the Bay Islands that might burn. John Cook stated that there should be no big cost and if the Reserve lights it then the N.C. Forest Service will be there to help. Site manager will send types of plant communities to the N.C. Forest Service.

Roundtable Discussion (Staff response in italics)

- Anna Barbosa- There needs to be a new bike lock along the power line right away at the North End of Kitty Hawk Woods. *Site manager will be ordering a new gate because the current one needs to be replaced. Dominion Energy does not own the gate so they will not be paying for the new one. John Van Riper added that the N.C. Forest Service will need keys to the new gate. Site manager stated that everyone who needs a key will get one.*
- Chief Joel Johnson- Make sure that those hunting in Kitty Hawk Woods have a permit, but it becomes extremely difficult to enforce. How many deer were killed? *Site manager was unsure because N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission has not tallied this.*
- Andy Stewart- Currently working on a \$100,000 grant for Sandy Run Park. There is a proposed boardwalk idea that is planned to occur within two phases. Jeff Pruitt adds that the boardwalk should be done in sections. Aaron McCall noted that they should estimate it straight through rather than in sections to get a better ballpark on the price. Andy also wondered if it would be cheaper to have a sidewalk from Kitty Hawk Park to Birch Lane. He does not want more boardwalk at Sandy Run. *Site manager asked if accessibility and parking came up. Jeff Pruitt*

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stated that there is a need for accessibility and the biggest restriction is parking. Andy believed the best solution is a connection from the county Kitty Hawk Park, into the Reserve Birch Lane trail, and then one could walk on sidewalk back around to Woods Road.

- Jeff Pruitt had a question about the living shorelines. He asked if the site manager had been referring to places that could be living shorelines nearby. *Site manager explained that the living shorelines program was a training workshop. There is one workshop for real estate companies and another workshop for marine contractors.* Jeff also wanted to know about the vegetation monitoring. He has seen a change in vegetation mainly due to salinity changes. Is there any spraying possible of *Phragmites*? *Site Manager explained that the Reserve would be starting marsh vegetation monitoring by recreating transects through both Phragmites and natural vegetation to understand species composition. Some research done on Phragmites and natural species from the Reserve concluded that it should be left alone. If it is burned, it tends to come back even worse.* Aaron McCall noted that if you spray and burn *Phragmites* along the shore, then you will lose that shoreline. He has seen it successfully managed along inland ponds. Aaron believes that if you want to manage *Phragmites*, then find areas of importance, especially with high biodiversity, and try and keep *Phragmites* out of it. *Site manager stated that the monitoring will be done in Currituck Banks Reserve in June.*
- Clifton Perry- Where is the power line and gate in Kitty Hawk Woods? *Site manager stated that it is located at the North End of Kitty Hawk Woods.*

Action Items

- Site manager will distribute keys to the gate along the powerline in Kitty Hawk Woods ASAP.