



**Masonboro Island Reserve  
Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, October 30, 2018, 3 pm  
Habitat Conference Room, UNCW CMS**

**Attendance**

<b><u>LAC Partner Organization Members</u></b>	<b><u>Present</u></b>
NC Audubon, Walker Golder	No
New Hanover County Sheriff's Office, Sergeant Steve Schmidlin	No
New Hanover County Planning Department, Dylan McDonnell	No
NC Coastal Land Trust, Jesica Blake	No
Division of Marine Fisheries	No
Division of Parks and Recreation – CB, Chris Helms	Yes
Town of Wrightsville Beach Administration	No
Natural Heritage Program, Judith Ratcliffe	Yes
UNCW Center for Marine Science	Yes
<b><u>Community Members and Community Organizations Members</u></b>	
Neal Andrew	Yes
Thomas Carter	Yes
Dr. Lynn Leonard	Yes
Dr. Zachary Long	No
Masonboro.org, Richard Johnson	Yes
Haywood Newkirk	No
William Raney	Yes
Pat Rittenmeyer	Yes
Sam Romano	No
Surfrider, Cape Fear	No
Ted Wilgis	Yes
Martin Willard	Yes
<b><u>Others Present</u></b>	
Hope Sutton, DCM/NCCR & NCNERR Stewardship Coordinator & Southern Sites Manager	

Elizabeth Colhoun, DCM/NCCR & NCNERR Stewardship Specialist
Byron Toothman, DCM/NCCR & NCNERR Research Specialist
Ken Richardson, DCM Shoreline Management Specialist
Sarah Young, DCM Public Information Officer

**Welcome – Hope Sutton**

The site manager welcomed the committee to the Fall 2018 meeting and reviewed the agenda. The site manager shared materials from a brief orientation for new committee members that occurred prior to the regular meeting.

**Reserve-wide Administrative Update – Hope Sutton**

The Reserve-wide Administrative Update, which now includes a range of Reserve activities was shared with committee members prior to the meeting.

- *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 October 17, 2018 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).

- *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.

### **Shoreline Change at Masonboro Island – Ken Richardson**

#### *Informational presentation –*

Ken Richardson presented slides detailing erosion patterns and rates on Masonboro Island over the past several decades to provide members with background on this topic. Key points were: the northern 0.5 miles of the island is accreting, but the remainder of the island is experiencing erosion rates between 1 foot per year and 35 feet per year; the jetty is disrupting littoral sediment movement; and the southern end of the island is being rapidly eroded by the Carolina Beach inlet channel.

### **Site Update and Old Business – Hope Sutton**

#### *Periodic Rules Review –*

- Members were introduced to five topics under consideration for addition or revision as part of the Legislative Periodic Rules Review and Expiration of Existing Rules process (G.S. 150B-21.3A) that began in 2016. These topics are: Currituck Banks Reserve parking lot, abandoned vessels, personal property, special use authorization, and permit hunts. Members were asked to comment on each topic and asked if any additional topics should be considered. Committee members discussed the topics and provided general support for further development of rule language associated with the topics. The site manager explained that rule language would be presented at future meetings.

*General site conditions –*

- Site conditions and research and monitoring programs have been normal with the exception of storm impacts, which are discussed below. Visitation and operations through the summer season were similar to the past few summers.

*Storm effects –*

- Effects from Hurricane Florence were within the range of what would be expected for an undeveloped barrier island. In the northern reaches where the dune system is more developed and dunes are 15 or more feet in height, some frontal dune erosion occurred and ocean waves pushed through the dunes in a few small areas. In the center region, more significant erosion and areas of overwash occurred. In the southern sections where the island is the narrowest and the dune system is not well developed, significant overwash occurred across approximately 1.5 miles of the island. The Reserve worked with researchers from UNCW who conducted pre and post storm monitoring activities, including UAV-based aerial imagery, sediment sampling, and elevation profiles across the island. This work acknowledges the importance of the Masonboro Island Reserve as a natural laboratory for the study of barrier island processes such as the input of sediments to the marsh deck. Three vessels (sailboats between 24 and 32 feet) were displaced by the storm and washed up on dredge spoil islands within the boundary. Various deck and floating dock sections, pilings, and other debris was also deposited along the ocean beach and on dredge spoil island. Efforts are underway to coordinate with partner agencies and organizations to address these items. NOAA staff flew the area directly following passage of the storm. This imagery is available at <https://storms.ngs.noaa.gov/storms/florence/index.html#7/35.360/-77.820>. It is possible to see the areas of dune breach, overwash fans, vessels, and various items of debris on this imagery.
- Byron Toothman presented information about storm water and effects of the storm based on data collected by the water quality instruments the Reserve maintains as part of the NERRS System-wide Monitoring Program. To reduce potential loss while allowing for collection of storm data, one of the two instruments normally deployed at the Masonboro Island Reserve was left in the water throughout the storm. No equipment was lost to the storm and data collected makes it possible to track the progression of the storm through changes in water depth, salinity, pH, and dissolved oxygen. Committee members

commented that the data presented was very interesting and expressed support for the approach the Reserve chose in maintaining instruments in the water through the storm.

#### *Seasonal activities –*

- In addition to Elizabeth continuing to act in a long-term fulltime temporary position, the Southern Sites office had two seasonal staff, one paid intern, 3 interns working for credit, 3 volunteer interns, and approximately 40 community volunteers who supported seasonal activities during 2018. **Sea turtles** – Sea turtle patrols were conducted Monday through Friday between May 15 and August 31. Twenty-five loggerhead nests and 7 green sea turtle nests were located. Fourteen nests were lost to Hurricane Florence. No predation occurred. The Reserve continues to participate in the regional DNA fingerprinting project that has been going on since 2010; one egg sample is collected from each nest for this effort. **Shorebirds** – Monitoring of American oystercatcher reproductive success continues to be the focus of our monitoring program. Predation, overwash, and undetermined factors resulted in a fecundity rate of 0.0 fledglings per pair.

#### *Fourth of July operation –*

- This operation continues to be managed through a systematic, multi-agency collaboration approach with New Hanover County as the lead agency. Multiple other law enforcement and emergency response agencies supported this County-wide effort to coordinate law enforcement and emergency services response to holiday activities at and around the Masonboro Island Reserve and throughout the County's waters. On site medical assistance was again provided by the New Hanover County Regional Medical Center State Medical Assistance Team. The Reserve spent \$6480 for contract law enforcement officers to supplement the County's scheduled staff. Reserve staff participated in planning meetings, installed temporary signage on site, conducted media relations activities, and completed a site visit following the holiday to assess impacts, which were minor. Mr. Johnson stated he believes that the presence of the Sherriff's Office has decreased the size of the gathering and he expressed an interest in seeing the law enforcement agencies look more closely at the hired captains who are providing transport for a large number of the holiday visitors. Mr. Andrew stated that the mid-week holiday and less desirable weather decreased the size of the gathering and he commented that the tone of the article and photo essay in the Star News could be addressed to ensure that it does not serve as advertising to promote the gathering and increase the number of participants.

#### **New Business**

- None

### **Roundtable** *(staff comments in italics)*

- Mr. Andrew commented that he is concerned about a lack of urgency regarding the question of shellfish leases within the Reserve boundary and asked when this might change. *A determination made by the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources/Natural Heritage Program (NCDNCR) found that this activity is inconsistent with the site's purposes as a nature preserve. No further information is currently available.*
- Mr. Johnson stated that he felt that an opportunity for research will be missed by the discontinuation of the shellfish leases currently within the boundary. He stated that he believes the oysters produced at Masonboro to be the best tasting in the state and that by not renewing the leases an opportunity is being missed. *The lease program is administered by the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF). The DMF sent the two current shellfish leaseholders letters stating that their leases will not be renewed after the five-year lease period based on the NCDNCR determination. The Reserve continues to support research on shellfish, including shellfish restoration and aquaculture through various partnerships and projects.*
- Mr. Wilgis reminded the committee about the derelict crab pot removal project coordinated by the N.C. Coastal Federation in conjunction with the DMF to occur during February. This effort typically removes several thousand crab pots from the State's waters each winter.

### **Public input**

None

### **Action Items**

- The Site Manager will be in touch with committee members during the winter to plan the spring meeting date.