



Rachel Carson Reserve
Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
May 15, 2017 3:30p
Administration Building, NOAA Beaufort Lab

Attendance

<u>LAC Partner Organization Members</u>	<u>Present</u>
Town of Beaufort Administration, John Day	Yes
Town of Beaufort Police, Paul Burdette	No
NC State Parks, Fort Macon, Ben Fleming	Yes
NC Maritime Museum – Beaufort, Ben Wunderly	Yes
<u>Community Members</u>	
Ann Carter	Yes
Perry Barrow	No
John Fussell	Yes
Stan Rule	Yes
Margaret Garner	No
Dan Rittschof	Yes
Robin Newton	No
<u>Others Present</u>	
Rebecca Ellin, DCM/NCCR & NCNERR Program Manager	
Paula Gillikin, DCM/NCCR & NCNERR Central Sites Manager	
Michelle Brodeur, DCM/NCCR Communications Specialist	
Sue Stuska, National Park Service	
Rudi Rudolph – Carteret Shoreline Protection Office	

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 re-adoption 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 (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

- *Hunting permit system*
Hunting is still allowed at Carrot Island, but now requires a permit that is issued through the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission. The permit system is new as of Fall 2017 was implemented to better balance the interests of various user groups. The

system seems to be working well so far and no complaints have been received by members of the public.

Site Update/New Business

- *Stewardship and Management Highlights*

Earth Day Cleanup. In April, an Earth Day cleanup was held and 2,000 pounds of marine debris were removed from the northern shoreline of Carrot Island which contributes to a total of 15,560 pounds that have been removed as part of a project funded by the NOAA Marine Debris Program.

Coyote Monitoring was conducted by an N.C. State University undergraduate student during the winter and spring to better understand the population (they arrived on the site in the fall of 2016). Wildlife cameras were deployed at three separate locations at the site, not including Middle Marsh. Analysis of camera images revealed that there are at least two coyotes that either live at the site or visit the site. It is difficult to determine the total population, as individual coyotes are difficult to identify and a mark-recapture population study is nearly impossible using cameras. Fox appeared regularly on wildlife cameras in the past, but the student only documented one during the course of the multi-month study.

New Signage designed by local school children will be placed on the site this summer to encourage visitors to act responsibly while visiting.

Vessels. Three sailing vessels have washed ashore after coming loose from their moorings or dragging anchor. One boat was claimed and removed by the owner. One boat was removed at the expense of the Reserve and Town after many months of trying to work with the owner on removal. The third vessel still sits on the shore of the Reserve at low tide. The owner claims that they do not have the financial resources to move the vessel.

Public Waterway Meeting. The Town of Beaufort held a public meeting in partnership with the Reserve to understand the public's views on several areas of interest related to the harbor: water quality and habitat, economics, accessibility, aesthetics, and safety. In general, the public would like the harbor to be managed to work towards improving a variety of conditions that fall within the above listed topics. The Town will integrate public feedback into future management efforts.

Wild Horse Herd. The wild horse herd is currently at 32-head, including 18 females and 14 males. The oldest is a 28-year-old mare and the youngest is two weeks old. Since the fall local advisory committee meeting, there has been one death, one birth, and one in declining health. Birth control was administered to select mares in February and March.

- *Education Highlights*

Since the fall meeting of the local advisory committee, 237 participants in the K-College education program visited the Rachel Carson Reserve through field trips that were led by staff. Over 100 students and members of the public were educated about the site through presentations.

- *Research Highlights*
Currently, there are 7 active research permits for work that is being conducted at the site, including a project that will measure the efficacy of alternative shoreline stabilization materials in slowing down or possibly even reversing erosion along a marsh shoreline at Carrot Island.
- *Friends of the Reserve*
The non-profit organization that raises funds to support Reserve needs will host an oyster roast fundraiser in September of 2018. Stayed tuned to the Facebook page of [@FORNorthCarolina](#) for updates.

Roundtable Discussion

- Members discussed whether or not the coyotes would be managed and the challenges of managing the animals due to their elusive nature and ability for compensatory reproduction. Ben Fleming and John Fussell mentioned that coyotes could potentially be impacting the raccoon populations at Fort Macon State Park and Roosevelt State Natural Area.
- John Day described the Town's authority to regulate Beaufort's harbor and to develop harbor management regulations. Ann Carter is happy that the Town is partnering with the Reserve on this effort and appreciates the positive public engagement.
- John Day suggested that it would be beneficial for the Division of Coastal Management to host a Clean Marina Workshop with support from the Town to encourage responsible stewardship of local waterways.
- Ann Carter expressed concern that a non-motorized vessel may have washed ashore on the Reserve in the last week.
- Stan Rule inquired about the age groups that Reserve summer camps target and if there is any difficulty attracting particular age groups to programs.

Public comment

- Rudi Rudolph from the Carteret County Shore Protection office described the county's interest in relocating the channel at the east end of Taylor's Creek to its previous location (close to Carrot Island) and the potential for the spoil material to potentially be deposited at the Reserve. Committee members asked Rudi clarifying questions and offered initial comments and concerns about the potential for the sediment to be deposited on the Reserve. Some concerns articulated by committee members include the potential for: spoil deposition to impact research studies; relocating and deepening

the channel causing the erosion rate of the east end of Carrot Island to accelerate; impact on shorebird feeding resources. Some committee members suggested that deposition of the material just south of Bird Shoal could be beneficial, because it could lead to improvement of habitat conditions for birds that once existed when Bird Shoal was located much further to the south. The committee also discussed the benefits of extending the No Wake zone to the east and south if the channel were to be relocated and deepened, with the intent of better protecting the shoreline of the Reserve from boat wakes. Relocating No Wake zones can be difficult and it was suggested that this could be made easier if the east end of Carrot Island was voluntarily annexed into Beaufort Town limits (it is currently within County limits).

Action items

- Paula Gillikin will investigate possible vessel washed ashore on the north side of the site.
- Paula Gillikin will connect the Clean Marina Program coordinator with the Beaufort Town Manager.
- Reserve staff will work with members to schedule a fall meeting of the local advisory committee.