



Zeke's Island Reserve
Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
May 21, 2018 – 10 am
Fort Fisher Recreation Area Education Room

Attendance

| <u>LAC Partner Organization Members</u> | <u>Present</u> |
|---|-----------------------|
| Division of Archives and History, Billy Ray Morris | Yes |
| Division of Parks and Recreation – FFRA, Jason Howard | Yes |
| NC Aquarium at Fort Fisher, Renee Weeks | Yes |
| <u>Community Members</u> | |
| None | |
| <u>Others Present</u> | |
| Hope Sutton, DCM/NCCR & NCNERR Stewardship Coordinator/Southern Sites Manager | |

Welcome – Hope Sutton

The Site Manager welcomed the committee to the Spring 2018 meeting and reviewed the agenda.

Reserve-wide Update – Hope Sutton

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 (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 and Old Business – Hope Sutton

General site conditions –

Research activities have continued as usual with no problems or interruptions. Conditions at the site have been typical of the season, although use appears to be continuing to increase, based on spot checks of high tide and weekend activity. Ms. Weeks commented that the aquarium staff have seen use increase as well, which results users having to “take turns” using the sand beach adjacent to the boat ramp. Mr. Howard reported that they have seen an increase in the amount of use of the driving beach and the water access to the marshes from the beach side, particularly by visitors engaged in kayak fishing. Both reported that preparations for the summer season were well underway. Mr. Howard also reported that the Fort Fisher Recreation Area had undertaken predator management during the winter. Despite this effort, predation of shorebird nests was common.

Invasive plant treatment –

Reserve staff scheduled several invasive plant treatments during the winter months. Each date was cancelled due to weather, as conditions have to be within specific parameters to allow for use of herbicides.

Access study – update provided within the Reserve-wide update.

Shellfish leases – The lease within the boundaries of the Zeke’s Island Reserve was set to expire during 2018 but a one-year extension has been granted to allow the leaseholder to complete a transition to another site. Conversations regarding shellfish leases at the sites of the Reserve are ongoing between the Departments of Environmental Quality and Natural and Cultural Resources. The site manager stated that the departments are working to clarify processes for resolving complex issues such as this.

New Business – Hope Sutton

None

Roundtable

No further comments

Public comments

None

Action Items

- The Site Manger will contact committee members to identify a date for the fall meeting.