



**Emily and Richardson Preyer Buckridge Reserve  
Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes  
Monday, 5 December 2022, 10:30am-11:25pm**

**Attendance**

<b>LAC Partner Organization Members</b>	<b>Present</b>
Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, Wendy Stanton	Yes
NC Natural Heritage Program, Michael Schafale	Yes
NC Wildlife Resources Commission, David Turner, William Ridgeway	Yes
NC Wildlife Resources Commission – Enforcement, Brad Stoop	Yes
Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership, Jimmy Johnson	Yes
Tyrrell County Government, David Clegg	Yes
Tyrrell County Government, Nina Griswell	No
NC Division of Forest Resources	No
Tyrrell County Sheriff	No
<b>Community Members</b>	
Mike Clements	Yes
<b>Others Present</b>	
Woody Webster, DCM, Buckridge Site Manager	

**Reserve-wide Updates (Woody Webster)**

The Reserve-wide Update was shared with committee members before the meeting via email. Staff noted that there are several staff vacancies slowing some Reserve activities, but interviews for two positions should begin soon. It was also pointed out that work on the Scuppernong Regional Water Management Study Update will be supported by the Buckridge Site Manager as needed. The Update in its entirety is included as Appendix A.

**Site Update (Woody Webster)**

Property Updates

- The Primland Tract purchase was completed October 2022. While work on this acquisition took longer than is typical (seven years), staff are eager for the next phases at Primland. First, the majority of the 260-acre acquisition will be included in the Buckridge Letter of Dedication. The only portion to be excluded is the area of Grapevine Landing, where a regional water access project is to be sited. This area has long been a focus of community water access, but in a very informal way. With the Primland purchase, the Division can work toward a formal access that can be experienced by people of diverse abilities. Plans include a fishing/ wildlife viewing pier, shallow-draft boat

ramp, space for small commercial fishermen dockage, accessible loading dock adjacent the boat ramp, and up to six parking spaces. Project summary work for funding has been submitted to the Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) Facilities team. Staff will seek committee input on the site design in the future.

- Purple "No Hunting" paint was discovered on vegetation that is part of Buckridge's Woodley Tract last year. Staff reached out to the only private landowner in the area by mail. Staff have received no response, but plan to remediate the painted vegetation following this hunting season.
- Toward the end of last year's deer season, two water control structures were tampered with. No permanent damage was observed, but staff plan to secure those structures against similar tampering this year.
- New signs explaining new Reserve rules were installed this year, and these signs include QR codes for additional information, though staff acknowledged mobile data availability will be a barrier to their utility at Buckridge.

#### Invasive Controls

- Staff worked with volunteer labor to treat Eastern Road alligatorweed outbreaks with imazapyr. The nature of that canal makes treatment labor intensive, as do herbicide personal protection equipment requirements.
- The Division of Coastal Management (DCM) continued its cost-share agreement with Division of Water Resources for treatment of alligatorweed and *Phragmites* along the shoreline of the lower Alligator River and the Northwest Fork (up to the NC 94 bridge). In 2021, 1.65 acres were treated. Total treatment acreage is usually shared January.

#### Hunting Statistics

- An additional 7/10 of a mile along Eastern Road was opened to hunters this year. Staff noted appreciation from users.
- The 2021 season saw harvests of 2 deer, 19 bear and no turkey. This year's preliminary numbers have recorded 4 deer and 15 bear thus far.
- Additional mowing of roadside areas with specialized equipment will be done by Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) staff this year in lieu of their annual gravel purchase. DCM still plans to purchase gravel this year, and WRC staff plan to install it. Thanks to NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT) for streamlining the gravel purchasing process.

#### Research Update

- A \$50,000 grant for collaborative outreach and planning in the Scuppernong watershed was recently awarded, partly to the Reserve program. Local staff will assist as needed, but more information is in the Reserve-wide update
- NOAA has finished their seasonal tide gauge work at Grapevine Landing, and equipment was undeployed during the spring.

#### Member Roundtable

- Mr. Turner asked who would own, maintain, and build the water access project at Grapevine Landing. Staff indicated that this will be the first project fully performed through DEQ Facilities, and they advised us to work toward a design/build contract with an outside firm. The Reserve would retain ownership, but long-term maintenance and management have yet to be finalized.

- Mr. Schafale asked about water control management and plans for future water control structure projects. Staff explained that there were positives and zero-sum aspects discovered about the structures when they were researched immediately after installation. However, no additional research has been done to assess current efficacy or determine next steps. Mr. Schafale indicated he might speak to some of his restoration contacts on our behalf, to discover if they have an opening to collect that data.
- Mr. Schafale also asked if the bear harvest numbers might be of concern given how high they seem. Mr. Turner indicated that Buckridge is excellent bear habitat, and staff pointed out that the Reserve is surrounded by bear sanctuaries that are densely populated. Any vacancy at Buckridge from a harvest is quickly filled from those adjacent sanctuaries. Additionally, wildlife trail cameras suggest a cohort that is very good at avoiding hunters' attention.
- Mr. Clegg shared that Tyrrell County has entered a 50-year lease with NCDOT of the barge landing, near the NW Fork Bridge on NC 94. Their intention is to develop a waterside rest area, where boaters may rest, but land-based travelers will not have access. Staff offered to assist their efforts where it made sense programmatically, given the project's proximity to Buckridge.
- Captain Sloop indicated there are no law enforcement concerns at Buckridge at this time.
- Mr. Ridgeway indicated that roadside spraying of alligatorweed may be something NCWRC could perform for DCM, in lieu of gravel purchasing for a given year, much like the roadside woody material removal they do periodically.
- Staff inquired about sprayer hardware capabilities, and LAC members indicated that to achieve the horizontal throw necessary to reach across a canal, electrically driven sprayers are insufficient. Mrs. Stanton asked whether the affected areas are open enough for helicopter or drone application of herbicide. Staff indicated that a helicopter wouldn't be able to reach the areas involved due to canopy restraints. While drones might be viable with canopies, other LAC members shared that the small payloads used for drone herbicide applications would be limiting, as would state licensing requirements.

### **Public Comments**

No members of the public in attendance.

### **Review of Action Items**

Staff will work with Mr. Johnson on an outstanding invoice with APNEP in Kitty Hawk. Staff will continue development of the water access plan at Grapevine Landing, with designs to be presented to LAC members as appropriate.

## Appendix A: Reserve-wide Administrative Update

### N.C. Coastal Reserve and National Estuarine Research Reserve Fall 2022 Local Advisory Committee Meetings Reserve-wide Update

#### Local Advisory Committee Membership

Thank you for your continued service to the Reserve's Local Advisory Committees! A number of community member appointments will expire at the end of 2023. As a reminder, community members may apply to serve consecutive or non-consecutive terms per the [Local Advisory Committee Operating Procedures](#). Details on a 2023 application period will be provided in the spring.

#### Program Highlights

- The Coastal Reserve partnered again with the NC Maritime Museum this summer to offer “**Summer Science School**”. The Reserve took the lead on 3 camps: Seashore Life 1, Seashore Life 2, and Coastal Adventures. A total of 62 students ranging from first grade to ninth grade participated in the camps. Favorite activities included field trips to the Rachel Carson Reserve, plankton viewing, and squid dissections.
- Earlier this month, partners and supporters of the **Masonboro Island Explorers** program gathered in Carolina Beach to celebrate the 10,000th student going to the Masonboro Island Reserve since the program's inception in 2013. This program aims to take every 5th grade student in New Hanover County to the Reserve to experience hands-on learning and exploration in a natural barrier island ecosystem. The Reserve partnered with Carolina Ocean Studies early on to create the curriculum that has been taught by Richard Cecelski and his staff for nearly 10 years. This program is funded through donations to Masonboro.org by corporations, businesses, and grass roots support from the public at various events. Masonboro.org's persistence for continuing this program has resulted in over 1,000 volunteer hours and a lasting impact on participating students. The Reserve is pleased to be a part of this program and thankful for the great partnerships and individuals that provide fulfilling experiences and education to New Hanover County 5th grade students. Congratulations on reaching this exciting milestone!
- The Reserve hosted summer and fall **educator workshops** and 30 participants received continuing education credits for attending.
  - In June, Carteret County teachers participated in the Reserve's free TOTE or Teachers On The Estuary Program. The day included a field trip to the Rachel Carson Reserve to explore North Carolina's coastal habitats, learning about local research projects, and conducting curricular activities for use in the classroom. TOTE is a teacher education program implemented at all 30 reserves in the National Estuarine Research Reserve System.
  - In October, educators joined Reserve and N.C. Maritime Museum staff for a free Coastal Explorations workshop to learn about estuaries and local maritime history. Classroom activities and a field trip to the Rachel Carson Reserve were provided for participants to bring lessons to their students.
- The **Coastal Training Program** continues to offer trainings in partnership with Division regulatory staff to support management of estuarine shorelines and barrier islands.
  - “*Promoting Living Shorelines for Erosion Control - A Virtual Workshop for Real Estate Professionals*” was held on September 9. Close to 100 participants learned about the benefits and limitations of using living shorelines for erosion control; different shoreline stabilization techniques, including living shorelines; living shoreline permitting process; and living shoreline projects in North Carolina. This workshop supported the Division's [estuarine shoreline strategy](#) and the [recent Coastal Habitat Protection Plan amendment](#).
  - An in-person “*Living on a Barrier Island*” workshop was hosted in partnership with Cape Fear Realtors Association in Wilmington on September 28. One hundred one participants learned about barrier island ecology and geology; the rules and policies that govern

development on barrier islands; updates to the National Flood Insurance Program; and native plantings for the coastal landscape.

Participants in both workshops received continuing education credits from the NC Real Estate Commission and workshop content is available on the Reserve's website [here](#).

- The Reserve began implementing the **Special Activity Authorization** when the Reserve rule amendments became effective February 1, 2022. To date, 26 authorizations have been issued with 3 applications pending. Information about the Special Activity Authorization is available [here](#).
- The Reserve is committed to working with the NC Wildlife Resources Commission on **permit hunts** at the Reserve sites, yet this work is currently on hold until several vacant staff positions are filled.
- The State recently closed on the **Primland tract** (260 acres) for inclusion in the Buckridge Reserve. Funding for the acquisition was provided by the NC Land and Water Fund (previously the NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund), the Department of Defense Readiness and Environmental Preparedness Initiative, and The Nature Conservancy. Planned future site improvements at the tract include an improved boat ramp, fishing pier and educational signage. The Division will make a public announcement about the acquisition once the Reserve boundary is updated on the website.

### Upcoming Student Opportunities

Application periods for Summer 2023 student opportunities in the Beaufort office are currently open.

- The Friends of the Reserve (FOR) is requesting applications for the **2023 NC Coastal Reserve Undergraduate Internship Award**. This internship encourages promising and talented students from traditionally underserved and underrepresented populations to pursue study and careers in coastal and estuarine science by gaining professional experience working with the Coastal Reserve for the summer. The 2023 intern will work with staff at the Rachel Carson Reserve in the Beaufort office. More details are available on FOR's website [here](#) and the deadline for submitting applications is **December 15, 2022**. FOR is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that supports the N.C. Coastal Reserve and National Estuarine Research Reserve, including its sites and programs.
- Two **State of NC Internship** opportunities are available at the Beaufort office for summer 2023. Applications are due **January 9, 2023**, and more details are available [here](#). One intern will work with the Education Coordinator on summer camps, field trips and classroom activities and the other will work with the Coastal Training Program Coordinator on living shoreline communication products.

Wilmington office opportunities will be shared on our website in early 2023.

### Research Fellowships Awarded

- **2022 NC Coastal Research Fellows Announced**

Madison Lytle and Andrew McMains are the 2022 North Carolina Coastal Research Fellows. Their research will look at reduced water clarity's influence on seagrass growth; and the effects of dredging on inlet-inhabiting fish, respectively. [North Carolina Sea Grant](#) and the [N.C. Coastal Reserve and National Estuarine Research Reserve](#) jointly fund this opportunity, which is open to graduate students across North Carolina. With funding for one year, recipients conduct research within one or more of the Coastal Reserve's 10 sites. Learn more about this year's fellows and projects [here](#).

- **Margaret A. Davidson Fellow announced for the NC Reserve for 2022-2024**

Daniel Bowling, a PhD student at North Carolina State University, is assessing the effectiveness of using remote sensing to monitor intertidal oyster habitat as a Margaret A. Davidson Fellow at the NC Reserve. Daniel will also develop a model to generate sample designs to support future coast-wide population assessments and for Reserve sites to be able to quickly detect and respond to changes in habitat health. This fellowship will advance his dissertation research working to develop methods for a fishery-independent survey program for oysters in North Carolina. The [Margaret A. Davidson Graduate Fellowship](#) provides funding to graduate students to conduct estuarine research within one of the 30

reserves in NOAA’s National Estuarine Research Reserve System. Fellows address a key coastal management question to help scientists and communities understand coastal challenges that may influence future policy and management strategies.

Upcoming Grant-funded Projects

- **NC Reserve to benefit from 2 NERRS Science Collaborative-funded projects**

The [NERRS Science Collaborative](#) announced its awarded projects for the 2022 funding cycle. The NC Reserve is benefiting from 2 projects that address management needs identified by the program - see details below. Reserve staff are partnering with NC State University and other reserves in the region for the projects and will serve as collaborative leads for the projects, bringing together project stakeholders and end users. The projects will begin this fall and last for 2 years. More detail is provided [here](#).

PI/Host Institution	Project Title	Reserves Involved
Celso Castro-Bolinaga, <i>North Carolina State University</i>	Improved Understanding of Sediment Dynamics for the Rachel Carson Reserve, North Carolina	North Carolina (NC)
Peter Kingsley-Smith, <i>South Carolina Department of Natural Resources</i>	Collaborative Development of Novel Remote Sensing Workflows for Assessing Oyster Reef Condition to Inform Management and Restoration	ACE Basin (SC); North Inlet-Winyah Bay (SC); North Carolina (NC); Sapelo Island (GA); Guana Tolomato Matanzas (FL)

- **NC partners funded to develop engagement strategy to support the Scuppernong Regional Water Management Study**

The NC Reserve, Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership, The Nature Conservancy, and NC Sea Grant have received Digital Coast Connects funding from the [NOAA Digital Coast Partnership](#) to develop an “Engagement Strategy to support the Scuppernong Regional Water Management Study”. The Study was requested by local governments and land managers to help with water related issues in the Albemarle-Pamlico region. This grant will develop a collaborative stakeholder engagement process that is recognized as a need by the Study partners. The Engagement Strategy will be centered around equity and inclusion, assist with communication and potential conflict resolution, provide opportunity for stakeholders to shape Study development, and support development and implementation of a collaborative, regional water management strategy. The Engagement Strategy will rely on connections with multiple NOAA Digital Coast partners and use Digital Coast data, tools, facilitation guides, and training resources to inform the Strategy and workshop development and implementation. The project begins this fall.

- **NC Reserve participating in multi-Reserve wetland migration pathway project**

“Wetland Migration Pathway Planning, Prioritization and Community Engagement (FL, MA, NC, NJ, RI, SC)” is an America the Beautiful Challenge project awarded to the Narragansett Bay, RI Reserve by the

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The project will create a pipeline of tidal wetland migration pathway protection projects in areas served by National Estuarine Research Reserves in the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic and Southeast regions of the US. Working with communities and partners, the NC Reserve will convene those interested in wetland migration pathway protection, share existing information, and identify technical products such as maps and models that are needed to support pathway planning. This will inform future steps of product acquisition and identification and prioritization of pathway projects. Information and lessons learned through project activities will be shared with all 30 Reserves within the National Estuarine Research Reserve System and their partners. More information is located [here](#). This work will begin shortly and supports the NC Reserve's focus on habitat and coastal hazards resilience, the Coastal Habitat Protection Plan, and the NC Climate Risk Assessment and Resilience Plan.

### Staffing News

- Hope Sutton, Reserve Stewardship Coordinator, started a new job in August with the NC Wildlife Resources Commission, focusing on species of interest. We thank Hope for her tireless work in establishing a stewardship program for the Reserve and management of the four southern sites during her many years with program.
- Michelle Brodeur, Reserve Communications Specialist, started a new job with Division of Marine Fisheries as their Outreach and Communications Specialist in August. We thank Michelle for her work in elevating the visibility of the Reserve and its work and partnerships through various communications efforts over the years.
  - We look forward to collaborating with both Hope and Michelle on mutually beneficial projects moving forward, and wish them both the best of luck in these new endeavors.
  - We are currently working to fill the vacant Research Coordinator and Communications Specialist positions. Work to fill the vacant Stewardship Coordinator position will begin after these positions are filled.

### Staff Awards

Congratulations to Reserve award winners!

- **Paula Gillikin**, Central Sites Manager, received a **DEQ Distinguished Employee Award** in November for the Division for her leadership on the externally funded project awarded to the Division to clean up Hurricane Florence-related large marine debris and abandoned vessels from public lands and waters along the coast. 1,254,280 pounds of debris and 24 vessels were removed from Brunswick through Carteret, including Craven and Pamlico Counties and 4 of the Reserve sites managed by the Division as part of this project. This project was highly visible with high impact, and was part of the largest coordinated coastal debris removal effort in the State's history. Paula's leadership on all aspects of this project, from facilitating new partnership agreements to identifying Florence-specific debris to protecting coastal habitats during debris removal, guaranteed its success and significant on-the-ground impact.
- **Rebecca Ellin**, Coastal Reserve Program Manager, received the 2022 National Estuarine Research Reserve Association/National Estuarine Research Reserve System's **Award for Outstanding Achievement**. This national award honors leaders that demonstrate sustained commitment to the National System. Rebecca was instrumental in the development of NOAA's Margaret A. Davidson Fellowship that supports all 30 Reserves within the System. She works with NOAA to problem-solve administrative, staffing, and partnership challenges the System is facing. As a past NERRA President, she developed the national non-profit organization's strategic plan that continues to serve as a guiding document today. Locally, the NC Reserve addresses a range of complex coastal management topics with partners to guide management of the sites and the state's coastal resources, and collaborates at local, regional, and national levels to leverage its work. Since 2005, Rebecca is a recognized leader at the NC Reserve and in the national system, working at multiple levels to advance coastal management.

Federal Budget

- The budget table below is a summary of the current status of the federal budget\* for fiscal years 2020-2023 as it relates to the NC Reserve. A budget for FY2023 has not yet been passed and a continuing resolution is in place for FY2023 through December 16, 2022. 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.

Federal Budget Lines	FY2020 Enacted	FY2021 Enacted	Final Omnibus Appropriations FY2022	FY2023 President's Request	FY2023 House Mark	FY2023 Senate Chair Mark
NERRS Operations	\$27.5M	\$28.5M	\$29.7M	\$28.5M	\$31.5M	\$34.5M
NERRS Procurement, Acquisition, & Construction (PAC)	\$4.5M	\$4.5M	\$6.5M	\$4.5M	\$7.5M	\$8.5M
CZM Grants	\$77 M	\$78.5 M	\$79M	\$78.5M	\$89M	\$84M

- The [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#) includes \$77M for the NERRS for habitat restoration to be spent over five years. The Act states that equal amounts of funding shall be provided in Fiscal Years 22-26, approximately \$15.4M annually for the NERRS. All Reserves are eligible to receive \$100k annually for 5 years to build capacity for habitat restoration. The NC Reserve anticipates receiving these funds in early 2023 and will develop habitat resilience plans and implement projects on the ground at the national sites of the Reserve.

\* The federal fiscal year is October 1-September 30. The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) budget line provides funding to the 30 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 cooperative agreement that DCM receives provides funding for Reserve staffing, state site operations, and administrative support.