



**Bird Island Reserve
Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 17, 2024, 10:00 am
Town of Sunset Beach - Town Hall**

Attendance

<u>LAC Partner Organization Members</u>	<u>Present</u>
NC Coastal Land Trust – Jessica Blake	No
NC Coastal Federation – Lauren Kolodij	Yes (virtual)
Bird Island Preservation Society - Bill Ducker	No
Sunset Beach Police Department	No
Town of Sunset Beach Administration – Lisa Anglin	Yes
Natural Heritage Program – Scott Pohlman	No
<u>Community Members and Community Organization Members</u>	
Noelle Kehrberg	Yes
<u>Others Present</u>	
Elizabeth Pinnix, DCM/NCNERR Southern Sites Manager Morgan Penrose, DCM/NCNERR Stewardship Specialist Ed Gutknecht, Sunset Beach resident & Bird Island Steward Cathy Trent, Sunset Beach resident Richard Laton, Sunset Beach resident & Bird Island Steward	

Welcome

The southern sites manager welcomed the committee to the Spring 2024 meeting, reviewed the agenda, and led introductions.

Reserve-wide Administrative Update

The Reserve-wide Update was shared with committee members prior to the meeting. The update in its entirety is included as Appendix A. *Members had no questions or comments.*

The site manager provided a reminder from the Reserve-wide update:

- The 10th annual Terrapin Tally, a community science event hosted in coordination with the NC Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC), will be taking place at Bird Island Reserve. Data

collection sessions are scheduled to take place April 25-28, May 9-12, and June 6-9. To learn more, visit the [website](#).

- The site manager thanked all that helped and attended the Discover the Reserve event in December. It was a success, and the event will continue over the next few years to visit each of the ten reserve sites. Please check out the video for the Bird Island Discover the Reserve event [here](#).

Site Specific Update

General site conditions

Sunset Beach and Bird Island have experienced no major changes in visitor activity and beach erosion was minor from the few storms experienced during the winter months. Site stewards in coordination with reserve staff completed trail maintenance in October 2023 and the trail is in good shape for the summer season. Additionally, the end of the Main Street was revitalized by the public works department with the Town of Sunset Beach, and it provides a beautiful place for all to enjoy and see the reserve. New benches, educational signage, and a [Chronolog](#) can be found at the new revitalized area.

Ms. Anglin reported that the parking situation at the west end of Main Street has not been addressed yet but they plan to add up to 10-15 additional parking spaces that will have better flow.

Seasonal activities

The site manager reported the public field trips lead by the Bird Island Stewards will take place every Wednesday from May 29 - September 11. The field trips will meet at the end of Main Street rather than the beach this year to utilize the new revitalized area.

The site manager also provided information about a rare plant species, [Seabeach amaranth](#) that the UNC Botanical Gardens is working to better understand and reintroduce to areas that has been historically documented. Recently they deployed small, buried seed bags in the remnant inlet to test for viability. These will be left in place for different periods of time and recovered periodically.

New and ongoing projects

The site manager reminded the committee about the [Motus Network](#) and the partnership between the reserve and [Cape Fear Bird Observatory](#) to construct a new motus tower at Bird Island. Installation will be taking place in late spring 2024. April 27.

Ms. Kehrberg asked if there would be additional educational signage near the Motus tower to explain its purpose. She also asked if we could provide the website to view the new Bird Island tower. The site manager said yes, we will be developing the signs over the coming year. The link to the tower can be found above. Ms. Anglin added that if additional help was needed for the installation that public works could assist.

The site manager also informed the committee and attendees that there will be a reserve hosted volunteer appreciation social on April 26, 2024, that all are welcome to attend.

The site manager told the committee that the fall 2024 meeting will be held between November 4-22 and asked if there were any conflicts or dates to avoid when scheduling. The consensus was 10 am worked well and Wednesday mornings need to be avoided.

Roundtable

Ms. Kehrberg asked the town manager to please remind the beach driving officers and beach patrol not to drive so close to the dunes to help them keep their integrity.

Ms. Anglin reported on various projects that are underway or ongoing in the Sunset Beach community. She also reported that the town plans to have additional law enforcement presence on the water during busy weekends and holidays for safety and to decrease visitor conflicts with high-speed personal watercrafts. The town has also submitted a petition to the NC Wildlife Resources Commission to create a no wake zone in the creek system running behind the island and near the Bird Island Reserve boundary. The town plans to acquire the buoys and install them in the newly designated area. The site manager asked if there was any way that the reserve could provide support in this cause (ie. letter of support). Ms. Anglin responded she would reach out if they needed further support.

Public comments

Mr. Layton asked about the QR codes on the 4x4 posts along the nature trail and what website they lead to. He added that the new educational signs along the trail look great and the QR codes are not necessary. The site manger responded that they do not lead to our website and are out of date. They plan to be removed soon.

Mr. Layton also inquired about where seabeach amaranth is found. The site manager responded that it is a dune plant that is typically found on the frontal dune and in inlet areas.

Mr. Gutknecht mentioned that he has noticed less trash present on the beach recently.

Action Items

Provide the town with more brochures for distribution.

Reach out with fall meeting date and time.

N.C. Coastal Reserve and National Estuarine Research Reserve Spring 2024 Local Advisory Committee Meetings Reserve-wide Update

Local Advisory Committee Membership

Welcome to our newly appointed and reappointed community members/organizations of the Local Advisory Committees! Updated committee membership is available on the reserve website [here](#). To all members, thank you for your service to the reserve's Local Advisory Committees.

Program Highlights

- Spring **student field trips** to the Rachel Carson Reserve and Masonboro Island Reserve via the Island Explorer Program are starting, and **summer camps** at the Rachel Carson Reserve will start in June in partnership with the NC Maritime Museum.
- The Coastal Reserve and NC Wildlife Resources Commission are gearing up for the 10th annual **2024 Terrapin Tally** to help better understand the overall population status and condition of the diamondback terrapin within the state. This citizen science project takes a snapshot of the diamondback terrapin population numbers in a given area by conducting kayak surveys at specified times and prescribed routes. Terrapin Tally paddling routes are available at 11 locations including: Cape Lookout National Seashore, Rachel Carson Reserve, Calico Creek, Hammocks Beach State Park, Lea Hutaff Island, Masonboro Island Reserve, Carolina Beach State Park, Fort Fisher State Recreation Area, Zeke's Island Reserve, Bald Head Island, and Bird Island Reserve. Data collection will occur during established windows April- June. More information is available [here](#).
- The reserve is hosting its third stop on the “**Discover the NC Coastal Reserve**” tour at the Rachel Carson Reserve in April. The tour is a multi-year campaign spanning 2023-2026 to connect target audiences with the program and places with events to be hosted at reserve sites along the coast. Two events were hosted in 2023, enjoy these short videos from the first tour stop at the [Currituck Banks Reserve](#) in June and the second tour stop at the [Bird Island Reserve](#) in December. Local Advisory Committee members will be invited to the site-based events so stay tuned for upcoming event information.
- The reserve is hosting a **Research Symposium** May 8-9, 2024 to highlight work conducted across reserve sites with posters and presentations from researchers including students, faculty, partner agencies, and staff. This will also be an opportunity for the research community to network and provide input on future research priorities.

Student Internships

Several interns and seasonal staff will be working with the reserve in Manteo, Beaufort, and Wilmington this summer. Thank you to Friends of the Reserve, the N.C. Internship Program, and UNCW for their support and partnership for the internships. Students will work on a range of stewardship and education projects. Stay tuned to the reserve's website and social media to meet the interns and staff once they start in May.

Federal Budget

- The budget table below is a summary of the status of the federal budget* for fiscal years 2020-2025 as it relates to the N.C. Reserve. 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	FY2022 Enacted	FY2023 Enacted	FY2024 Enacted	<i>FY2025 President's Request</i>
NERRS Operations	\$27.5M	\$28.5M	\$29.7M	\$32.5M	\$33.3M	\$32.5M
NERRS Procurement, Acquisition, & Construction (PAC)	\$4.5M	\$4.5M	\$6.5M	\$8.5M	\$8.5M	\$3M
CZM Grants	\$77M	\$78.5 M	\$79M	\$81.5M	\$81.5M	\$81.5M

* 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.