



Local Advisory Committee Meeting
Buxton Woods Coastal Reserve

April 28th, 2021 - 1400
Virtual via WebEx with a call-in option

Attendance

<u>LAC Partner Organization Members</u>	<u>Present</u>
Caper Hatteras National Seashore, Boone Vandzura	Y
UNC Coastal Studies Institute, John McCord	N
NC Wildlife Resources Commission, David Turner	N
NC Natural Heritage Program, Scott Pohlman	Y
Dare County Sheriff's Office, Doug Oberbeck	Y
Dare County Government, Danny Couch	Y
NC Forest Service, Kayla Barnes	N
NC Forest Service, John Cook	N
<u>Community Members and Community Organizations Members</u>	
Karen Lebing	Y
Russ Kiddy	N
Michael Flynn	N
Harvey Scarborough, Jr.	Y
<u>Others Present</u>	
Rebecca Ellin, DCM, Reserve Program Manager	
Erik Alnes, DCM, Northern Sites Manager	
Whitney Jenkins, DCM, Coastal Training Program Coordinator	
Lindsay Dubbs, Co-Director, Outer Banks Field Site	

Reserve-wide Program Business (Rebecca Ellin)

The Reserve-wide Update was shared with committee members before the meeting via email. Ms. Ellin reviewed highlights from the document, which is included in its entirety in Appendix A.

Buxton Woods Reserve Business

- *Fall Research Project – Lindsay Dubbs (Coastal Studies Institute – Outer Banks Field Site)*

This fall, students from UNC Chapel Hill, in partnership with OBX Field Site and CSI, will be performing a capstone research project in Buxton Woods Coastal Reserve. The research will focus on exploring changes in the Reserve, including environmental factors, vegetative communities, and local perceptions. This research will blend science and policy to answer the question: “What do changes mean for present and future values and purposes of this conservation area?” The research will also draw from past studies and vegetation transects from the 1980’s. If the students are able, we plan on inviting them to the Fall LAC meeting to share their findings.

- *Wildfire Plan Update*

Staff will be working with Bob Mickler of NC State University to develop a Wildland Fire Management Plan (WMP) for Buxton Woods Coastal Reserve. A draft scope of work is currently being reviewed, and we hope to have work commence by this summer. In coordination with Erik Alnes, Bob Mickler will develop the WMP in accordance with the National Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan Template. We will work closely together with the NPS, National Heritage Program, NCFPS, and the Buxton Woods LAC. The project has a tentative timeline to be completed by Summer of 2022. We will provide an opportunity to comment on the progress of the WMP at an upcoming LAC Meeting.

- *Trail Signage Update*

Some of the trail signs in Buxton Woods Reserve have been removed or vandalized. To better define the walking paths, additional signs are needed and installation is expected to occur in the late summer to early fall.

- *Hunting Update*

This season, three does and three bucks were harvested in Buxton Woods.

Roundtable Discussion (*Staff response in italics*)

- Harvey Scarborough Jr. inquired about past vegetation studies that have occurred in Buxton Woods. He referenced Amanda Faucette’s work and asked if they would be useful for Lindsay Dubbs’ fall research project. Scott Pohlman added that Mike Schafele with Natural Heritage Program may still have vegetation data from the Carolina Vegetation Survey conducted in the 1980’s. *Staff will connect Lindsay Dubbs with the data.*
- Harvey Scarborough Jr. also asked if Lindsay Dubbs would be researching pH levels of water in Buxton Woods. *Erik Alnes mentioned Lindsay is still in the process of developing research ideas for*

her students. If there is anything specific any of the LAC has interest in, within the scope of Lindsay's presentation, please reach out to her and provide her with feedback.

- Karen Lebing noted that WRC has been working on a 5-year study to create a NC Bird Atlas. This atlas will show 10 square mile blocks with "Priority Blocks" for specific areas where emphasis is placed on specific bird species. Karen will follow up when they publish the Bird Atlas to inform if a Priority Block is within the boundaries of Buxton Woods Coastal Reserve. If so, there will be a need for monitoring of specific species.
- Scott Pohlman indicated that current state legislation may provide funding opportunities for resilience projects for sites like Buxton Woods. Also, he noted that they are catching up from last year, and a lot of applications for the Land and Water Fund were submitted for this cycle.
- Boone Vandzura stated that because National Park Service is a federal agency, federal Covid guidance is being followed at their parks and within their facilities, as opposed to state guidance. Also, he noted that fuel breaks in the Buxton Woods area will be assessed. The assessment will look at how fire managers have used fuel breaks in the past and inform future management; this work could inform the Wildland Fire Management Plan for Buxton Woods.
- Danny Couch noted that the County is interested in being included in the fire management plan due to the county owning adjacent parcels to Buxton Woods and their office's knowledge of residences in the area.

Public Comments

- None

Final comments, Action Items, and Wrap-up

- Boone Vandzura will connect Lindsay Dubbs with the Deputy Resource Manager regarding studies and publications the NPS has conducted in Hatteras in the past.
- If the research projects are completed prior to the Fall LAC meeting, staff will request the students present their findings at the meeting.
- Staff will connect Lindsay Dubbs to the Natural Heritage Program to provide information regarding the 1980's vegetation monitoring data.
- Karen will provide an update at next meeting, to notify all members if Buxton Woods falls in a Priority Block area for any species.

Adjourn

Appendix A

N.C. Coastal Reserve and National Estuarine Research Reserve Spring 2021 Local Advisory Committee Meetings Reserve-wide Update

COVID-19 Update

Below is a summary of how the Reserve is working during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Staff continue to telework and all offices remain closed to visitors.
- All Reserve sites are open to visitors. The Reserve will continue to closely monitor state and local COVID-19 guidelines and directives and encourage Reserve visitors to comply with these measures to protect themselves and their communities; current guidelines and directives are located [here](#).
- All in-person trainings and public programming remain canceled; education and training staff are conducting virtual programming as well as assisting partners with virtual meeting support.
- Research and stewardship work is continuing at the sites, although activities are more limited as they must meet social distancing requirements.

Local Advisory Committee Member Application Period – April 5-May 5, 2021

Community members are needed to serve on local advisory committees for each of the Coastal Reserve's ten sites. Community members with knowledge and experience of relevant topical areas and an interest in serving as a local advisory committee member are encouraged to consider applying. More information about the application period and how to apply is located on the Reserve's website [here](#).

Periodic Rules Review

The Rules Review Commission approved a readoption timeline of November 30, 2021 for Coastal Reserve rules (15A NCAC 07O) as part of the Legislative Periodic Review and Expiration of Existing Rules process (G.S. 150B-21.3A). The required fiscal analysis for the proposed rule amendments is under review.

N.C. NERR Federal Program Evaluation

NOAA conducts periodic evaluations of coastal management programs and National Estuarine Research Reserves as required by the federal Coastal Zone Management Act. The virtual site visit for NOAA's evaluation of the N.C. coastal management program and N.C. National Estuarine Research Reserve took place the week of October 5, 2020 with a public meeting for both programs held on October 7. Final findings were provided by NOAA to the Department of Environmental Quality in March 2021; NOAA concluded that the department is adhering to the programmatic requirements of the federal Coastal Zone Management Act in implementing both of the programs. The findings include a number of accomplishments and four recommendations, with no required actions.

Program Highlights

- **Hurricane Florence Marine Debris and Vessel Clean-Up:** The Division of Coastal Management received \$1,873,764 from the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Emergency Watershed Protection program, matched by \$543,120 in State funds to remove debris and abandoned vessels resulting from Hurricane Florence along North Carolina's coastline from Brunswick through Carteret, including Craven and Pamlico Counties. Four Reserve sites (Zeke's Island, Masonboro Island, Permuda Island, and Rachel Carson) benefited from the project with a total of 4 vessels and 371,460 pounds of debris being removed by N.C. Coastal Federation contractors. The total for all removals along the coast to date is 7 vessels and 691,260 pounds of debris.

- **Spring Virtual Field Trips:** Education Coordinator Lori Davis is bringing the Rachel Carson Reserve to the classroom with virtual field trips to the site in lieu of in-person trips as a result of the pandemic. Fifteen classes are scheduled to learn about estuaries and see sand, mud, salt marsh cordgrass, fiddler crabs and pickleweed virtually.
- **Living shorelines training for marine construction professionals:** To increase the knowledge of living shoreline construction practices among marine contractors, engineers, environmental consultants, and regulators, the Reserve, North Carolina Coastal Federation, and North Carolina Sea Grant are partnering to offer a new training course. This course will focus on living shoreline design for typical structures in residential settings along North Carolina's estuarine shorelines. The training combines three online classroom sessions with on-the-ground field training. The online classroom sessions will be held April-May 2021 with field trips in May or June as COVID-safety guidelines and directives allow.
- **7th Annual Terrapin Tally:** The Terrapin Tally is a citizen science project conducted in partnership with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission to measure the status of diamondback terrapin populations. Volunteers work in pairs to conduct headcount surveys on specific kayak routes to document diamondback terrapin sightings. This volunteer opportunity is compatible with current COVID-19 safety guidance and Governor Cooper's executive orders and can be completed by members of the same household or while maintaining appropriate social distancing in an outdoor setting. For the 7th season of the Terrapin Tally, the project is expanding to include numerous federal, state, and local partners with the addition of ten sites, spanning the coast from Carteret to Brunswick County. The 2021 Terrapin Tally will be conducted April 28-May 16 and sites include Cape Lookout National Seashore, Rachel Carson Reserve, Pine Knoll Shores, Hammocks Beach State Park, Lea Hutaff Island, Masonboro Island Reserve, Carolina Beach State Park, Ft. Fisher State Recreation Area, Zeke's Island Reserve, Bald Head Island, and Bird Island Reserve.
- **iNaturalist:** Help us document plants and animals on the Reserve sites using the free app, iNaturalist, and start submitting your pictures while visiting the Reserve sites. You can explore other locations and see what others have found while visiting, as well.

Friends of the Reserve –N.C. Coastal Reserve Undergraduate Internship Award and New Website

Friends of the Reserve, or 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.

FOR is sponsoring a new **N.C. Coastal Reserve Undergraduate Internship Award** to encourage promising and talented students from traditionally underserved and underrepresented populations to pursue study and careers in coastal and estuarine science. **Juanita Gonzalez** was selected as the first Internship Award recipient and will be working with Reserve staff at the Masonboro Island Reserve this summer. Juanita is a sophomore at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, double majoring in environmental studies and biology. Thank you to Friends of the Reserve for its support of this award program, and congratulations and welcome to Juanita!

FOR also [recently launched a new website](#) with assistance from the National Estuarine Research Reserve Association; explore the website to learn more about the organization and its work.

Staffing News

Erik Alnes joined the Reserve in February as the Northern Sites Manager. Erik comes to us from the NC Forest Service where he worked for the past 2 years as the Currituck County Ranger. Prior to that, Erik worked for the US Forest Service on the Lewis and Clark Hotshot Crew in Montana. He has a Bachelor's degree in Resource Conservation from The University of Montana and a Master's degree in Resource Conservation, specializing in Natural Resources Policy, also from The University of Montana. Welcome to Erik!

Federal Budget

The budget table below is a summary of the current status of the federal budget* for fiscal years 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21 as it relates to the Coastal Reserve.

Federal Budget Lines	Final Omnibus Appropriations FY2017	Final Omnibus Appropriations FY2018	Final Omnibus Appropriations FY2019	Final Omnibus Appropriations FY2020	FY2021 Enacted (Consolidated Appropriations Act)
NERRS Operations	\$23.5 M	\$25 M	\$27M	\$27.5 M	\$28.5 M
NERRS Procurement, Acquisition, & Construction (PAC)	\$1.7M	\$1.7M	\$1.9M	\$4.5M	\$4.5M
CZM Grants	\$70 M	\$75 M	\$75.5M	\$77 M	\$78.5 M

- 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.

* 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 cooperative agreement that DCM receives provides funding for Reserve staffing, state site operations, and administrative support.