



Local Advisory Committee Meeting
Kitty Hawk Woods Coastal Reserve

December 7, 2022 -10:00
Kitty Hawk Town Hall
101 Veterans Memorial Dr, Kitty Hawk, NC 27949

Attendance

<u>LAC Partner Organization Members</u>	<u>Present</u>
The Nature Conservancy, Aaron McCall	Y
UNC Coastal Studies Institute, John McCord	N
Town of Kitty Hawk Administration, Melody Clopton	Y
NC Forest Service, John Cook	N
Town of Kitty Hawk Police, James Helms	Y
NC Wildlife Resources Commission, Alex McPhail	N
Natural Heritage Program, Misty Buchanan	N
NC Forest Service, Kayla Barnes	N
<u>Community Members and Community Organizations Members</u>	
Dana Thomason	Y
Jeff Pruitt	N
Clifton Perry	Y
Mayor Gary Perry	N
Paul Henriques	N
<u>Others Present</u>	
Erik Alnes, NCCR, Northern Sites Manager	
Woody Webster, NCCR, Buckridge Manager	
Victoria Child, Citizen	
Valerie Robey, Citizen	
Lisa Robey, Citizen	
Roxanne Dorman, Citizen	

Reserve-wide Program Business

*** Please see appendix for complete Reserve-wide updates ***

Individual Reserve Business (Erik Alnes)

- *Fire Access Road*

Division of Coastal Management (DCM) and Town staff have been working hard to get the documentation completed for the project to commence. A scope of work was received from the Town in October, and MOU was signed with the Town in November, a Right-of-Entry went through the State Property office in November, and a project package was submitted to the State Construction Office (SCO). SCO received a corrected package December 6th. As soon as the approval from the State Construction Office, State Property Office, and the Department of Insurance, the State will issue a contract to the Town. The Town will likely have to vote on the contract at the January Town Hall meeting, but after that, the Town will be able to begin installing the Fire Access Road from Otila Way to S. Covered Bridge Road. This project will allow fire apparatus to access this portion of the Reserve and provide fire protection for the two private inholdings off Covered Bridge Road.

- *Hard Tract Structures*

There are several dilapidated structures on the Hard Tract in Kitty Hawk Woods that need to be removed. Staff have drafted a rehabilitation plan for the project area, secured approval from Dominion Energy to utilize the right-of-way, and has requested funding for this project. If funded, staff will look to bid the project for the removal of the structures, and rehabilitation of the site.

- *Walkovers*

Along the causeway, there are three depressions that regularly flood after rain events. Currently, logs and boards have been placed along the walkway to allow passage. These do not allow water to flow naturally between the swales and are difficult to traverse. A citizen recommended installing small walkovers to allow for drainage and provide a safer hiking experience. Time, lumber, and expertise have been donated by citizens, and with the help of the Site Steward Volunteers, staff plan to build and install these walkovers in December.

- *Management Plan Update*

NC Coastal Reserve (Reserve) staff have been working to update the Kitty Hawk Woods Management Plan, which was written and approved in 1998. Since the last meeting, all maps have been updated for the plan, and staff are currently working on incorporating program wide language and content to the plan. To better inform the management plan, a hunter survey was conducted last winter, and a recreation study was suggested by Local Advisory Committee (LAC) members. Staff have ordered a trail counter that will be installed in the spring in several locations, and plan to conduct an access survey to better understand the recreational uses of the property. This project will help inform the plan, as staff continue to work through updates.

Commented [ER1]: Does this include the access survey? If so, I would mention it specifically. Right now, it reads that just the trail counter was suggested.

- *Chronolog*

Three Chronolog stations were purchased for each of the Northern sites. Chronolog is a small phone mount that is installed in a natural area, that allows visitors to take pictures from the same place, upload them, and organizes them into a timelapse. This community science tool will allow visitors to contribute to the understanding of changes on the site, and help managers understand how certain ecological processes impact the site. Staff plans to install this in the Reserve in 2023.

Member Roundtable

- Mr. Perry asked about the cemetery on the Hard Tract, given the future removal of the nearby structures. Staff indicated that a fence installation is planned for the cemetery, which Mr. Perry was supportive of. He then asked about the adjacent Aguirre Tract, which staff related had been recently sold while funding was being sought for a state purchase. Mr. Perry indicated it was good that many of those parcels were in state ownership, and that he sold his parcel nearby after a salt intrusion event killed some mature cypress, where he'd not witnessed it before.
- Mr. Perry spoke on the decline of cattail marsh in the Highbridge area. He felt it might be a combination of salt intrusion and nutria damage. He remembered a South Carolina project from around 30 years ago that added sediment to a marsh to help it. Staff indicated such a research project is being studied by the Reserve to the south, though it is in a more saline environment. Several LAC members thought it might be a good research project for someone to pursue here, in a lower salinity environment.
- Mr. McCall of The Nature Conservancy began his comments by offering that he would have a group of students from Appalachian State University coming to volunteer in January, and he might offer their services to Kitty Hawk Woods for a day or two. Staff was appreciative and indicated that they would begin to plan for that possibility and may use them to finish trail crossover projects if local volunteers are unable to complete by that time. When asked about the numbers involved, Mr. McCall indicated it is usually a group of 10-12 student who are good workers.
- Mr. McCall also reported interactions with unauthorized wedding parties at Nags Head Woods, some of which were illegally harvesting plants for decorations. It was suggested that staff and Mr. McCall might reach out to the Outer Banks Wedding Association, who have a large tradeshow in the winter, to help educate some of the vendors about allowable activities.
- Ms. Thomason of the NC Aquarium at Roanoke Island shared that they will experience an AZA certification inspection next month, and the Aquarium will close to the public for that week. She indicated that the 2023 Summer Camp will have access to a van for field trips, and she hopes that will allow the camp to explore Kitty Hawk Woods more. After the AZA inspection she will be preparing for school field trip season.
- Town Manager Clopton indicated her interest in the quick approval of the fire access road construction agreement. She then mentioned that the Town will soon undergo a year-long update of its Land Use Plan. She indicated community input and participation is highly sought after, directing her invitation primarily to community members in the audience.
- Officer Helms of the Kitty Hawk Police Department indicated that deer crashes are down compared to last year, but that there have been a few issues with hunters parking along the roadside to access

Commented [ER2]: Did she state this or was it an observation? If the former keep it, if the latter, delete.

the Reserve. Mr. Perry asked if it was in the right-of-way, where they cannot really prevent such parking. The officer said that it was, and that a vehicle must stay there for more than 24 hours before its presence warrants a citation. He then suggested that perhaps additional signs to let all users know of the hunter presence. Staff indicated they would follow up with the police department after the LAC meeting.

- Several LAC members made comments in support of the Chronolog installation and made various suggestions for its placement. Options mentioned included the connector trail from Kitty Hawk Park, an interdune pond, or a wetland edge. Town Manager Clopton indicated it may be worthwhile to publicize its installation with a county spotlight program (Destination Dare) she's involved with. Staff indicated they would continue to accept location suggestions until its planned installation, after the completion of the Currituck Banks boardwalk refurbishment.

Public Comment

Roxanne Dorman asked whether the trail counters described would trigger with wildlife passage. Staff and Mr. McCall indicated that their installation location makes such interference unlikely.

Valerie Robey shared that she felt there was an increase in litter around Covered Bridge recently, particularly litter from the 7-11 store. She also voiced concerns regarding nutria populations and aggression from the animals, maps that show Covered Bridge Road as an access point for the Reserve, and commercial photography taking place around the bridge, particularly bridal sessions. They indicated that they have been contacting the police department regarding commercial photography and vehicle concerns on Covered Bridge Road but have also had some interactions with users they feel are breaking the rules. They also shared that they instructed users not to share photos of the bridge on social media. Town staff indicated they have responded to some of these issues, but acknowledge some items are not actionable. As an example, Officer Helms indicated the police department does not tow a short-term unattended vehicle from the area when the user may simply be hiking in the woods nearby. Lisa Robey asked that additional outreach stating the restricted nature of the Covered Bridge area be made more widely known, but Officer Helms shared that such announcement may well backfire, citing a recent example at a Nags Head restaurant. In it, a conflict between nearby residences and the restaurant patrons, in which the restaurant owners were complying with all regulations, generated much publicity. This publicity increased restaurant traffic, increasing the issues adjacent owners experienced, the opposite effect they desired. Staff offered to reach out to any identifiable commercial user who is operating outside of a Special Activity Authorization. [Officer Helms and Town Manager Clopton left the meeting due to other obligations.] Mr. McCall suggested to the Robeys and Dormans that many of their concerns about bicycles and e-bikes, other users at the bridge, misunderstood signs, maps, etc. might be alleviated if they had a discussion with the Division, while the access road is being made, about their use of the fire access road as a driveway instead of Covered Bridge Road. That road will already be gated to restrict vehicular access, and it would eliminate their concerns over the long-term maintenance of the bridge(s) they currently use. Staff indicated a willingness to discuss such a proposal, and Mr. Perry asked if the old subdivision road had been maintained. Staff replied that vegetation has been removed this spring, and that the road is in good condition.

Final Comments, Review of Action Items, and Wrap-up

Commented [ER3]: Who is they? See whit's comment below and adjust accordingly

Commented [JW4]: Use she instead of they?

Commented [ER5]: ? What does this mean?

Commented [JW6]: DCM?

Commented [ER7]: Anything here?

Adjourn