



Local Advisory Committee Meeting
Kitty Hawk Woods Coastal Reserve

December 2, 2021 – 10:30 a.m.
Virtual via WebEx with a call-in option

Attendance

<u>LAC Partner Organization Members</u>	<u>Present</u>
The Nature Conservancy, Aaron McCall	N
UNC CSI, John McCord	N
Town of Kitty Hawk Administration, Andy Stewart	Y
NC Forest Service, John Cook	N
Town of Kitty Hawk Police, Joel Johnson (Sub. Lt. James Helms)	Y
NC Wildlife Resources Commission, Anna Barbosa	N
Natural Heritage Program, Misty Buchanan	Y
NC Forest Service, Kayla Barnes	N
<u>Community Members and Community Organizations Members</u>	
Dana Thomason	Y
Jeff Pruitt	Y
Clifton Perry	Y
Mayor Gary Perry	Y
Paul Henriques	Y
<u>Others Present</u>	
Rebecca Ellin, NCCR, Reserve Program Manager	
Erik Alnes, NCCR, Northern Sites Manager	
Whitney Jenkins, NCCR, Training Coordinator	
Steve Jarvis, DCM, Northern Sites Assistant	

Reserve-wide Program Business (Rebecca Ellin)

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

Individual Reserve Business (Erik Alnes)

- *Connector Trail and Birch Lane Trail Update*

The connector trail from Kitty Hawk Park to the Birch Lane Trail has been completed and is open to the public! A ribbon cutting event, sponsored by the Town of Kitty Hawk, provided an opportunity for public engagement, and a nature walk was held by Reserve staff. Substantial improvements have been made on the Birch Lane trail, including a widening of the trail, installation of quarter mile markers along the trail, mulching at the wet entrance off of Birch lane, and informational signage was posted at the entrance from Kitty Hawk Park. The Coastal Reserve thanks the Town of Kitty Hawk, volunteers, and Reserve staff for the improvements on this trail.
- *Management Plan Update*

Staff have begun updating the Kitty Hawk Woods Reserve Management Plan. The plan will be arranged to mirror the NC NERR plan, with Statewide programmatic information at the beginning, followed with Kitty Hawk Woods specific management direction. Maps have been updated to show land-holdings acquired since the original plan was written. Staff continue to work on updating ordinances, current practices, and long-term initiatives. Staff hopes to share updated content at the next LAC meeting.
- *Infrastructure Update*

Several infrastructure projects have been completed or are in the works. First, the guard shack on Covered Bridge Road received a new roof, and staff plan to power-wash and re-paint the structure in the Spring. Second, plans are in place for a fire access road to be built between Otila Way and Covered Bridge Road South. A quote has been received from the Town of Kitty Hawk to build the road, and we are waiting on final approval to commence construction of the road. Last, a community-based project is in the works to install three small, raised walkways over the Causeway Trail in Kitty Hawk Woods. The Northern Sites Manager plans to work with volunteers to build the walkways.
- *Abandoned and Derelict Vessel (ADV) Removal Results*

The North Carolina Coastal Federation assisted with contracting the removal of ADV's in our area. Twenty vessels, including 11 in the Kitty Hawk Woods Reserve, were removed from Dare County waters, resulting in over 80,000 pounds of waste removed from our estuary.
- *Site Stewards Volunteer Program*

The Northern Sites Manager is excited to announce the Site Stewards Volunteer Program! Site Stewards are volunteers who are educated in the N.C. Coastal Reserve that have interest in monitoring site conditions, maintaining public access and trails, and assisting with community-based projects in the Kitty Hawk Woods Reserve. A training will be held on December 15th at The Kitty Hawk Town Hall. The Friends of the Reserve (FOR) has provided funding for volunteer t-shirts to increase the visibility of volunteers and promote public engagement in the field. We are very excited to increase community engagement and grow volunteerism at our site!

Roundtable Discussion (Staff response in italics)

- Dana Thompson noted that visitors are coming back to the Aquarium with daily programming. There is an upcoming Winter School's Out Day Camp, and information is available on the

aquarium website. The second round of applications for the Aquarium Scholars' program are due January 9th, 2022.

- Clifton Perry stated that he enjoys being part of the committee and appreciates that people can use and enjoy the woods, while keeping it as natural as possible.
- Andy Stewart voiced his appreciation of the work that went into the projects covered in the presentation.
- Paul Henriques detailed his appreciation of the work that has gone into trail management. He asked if RSVPs were necessary for the training. *Erik Alnes requested RSVPs, but if more people showed up than RSVP'd, that would be fine.* Last, he was excited to hear about the FOR funding for volunteer T-shirts, mentioning that volunteers needed t-shirts, or hats, so that others know they were legitimate.
- Lt. James Helms expressed his enthusiasm over the removal of ADVs from Dare County waters, and the Reserve.
- Misty Buchanan announced that the NC Land and Water Fund received a historic \$58 million award for conservation projects. There will be a similar amount available next year, and the grant cycle opens in December, closing the first Monday of February. She also shared that the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund also has similar funds available.
- Mayor Gary Perry concluded the member roundtable by recognizing the great working relationship building between the Reserve and the Town. He mentioned that the new Birch Lane Trail is beautiful, and he wants to keep it as natural as possible, while providing access for residents and visitors of Kitty Hawk.

Final comments, Action Items, and Wrap-up

- Jeff Pruitt stated that the signage and improvements to the Birch Lane Trail were fantastic. He inquired about placing signage on the property to make visitors aware of hunting and recommendations to wear blaze orange clothing for safety.
 - *Erik Alnes noted there was information on the website but would be happy to create and place formal hunting signs next season.*
 - Paul responded that with improved public access to the site, he has seen more hunters than he had historically seen. The hunters are concerned that visitors are hiking, and vice versa. Signage about sharing public land, and the safety aspects of using the woods during hunting season would be important to highlight.
 - *Rebecca Ellin offered a short-term solution for this hunting season; instead of ordering signs, Erik should put laminated signs out for the rest of the season. Also in the future, we should consider highlighting that these are multi-use trails when giving out hunting authorizations. Last, she noted that when LAC members interact with users of the site, please let them know about the multi-use nature of the trails. The more knowledge out there, the better it is for all.*

Adjourn