



NORTH CAROLINA
Environmental Quality

ROY COOPER
Governor

ELIZABETH S. BISER
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

TO: Coastal Resources Commission
Environmental Management Commission
Marine Fisheries Commission
Coastal Habitat Protection Plan Steering Committee

FROM: Jimmy Johnson
Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership
Anne Deaton
Division of Marine Fisheries

DATE: June 7, 2023

SUBJECT: Coastal Habitat Protection Plan Steering Committee Meeting

The Coastal Habitat Protection Plan (CHPP) Steering Committee met virtually at 11:00 a.m. on Wednesday, May 31, 2023. The following attended virtually:

Commissioners: Bob Emory, Larry Baldwin, David Anderson, Yvonne Bailey, Doug Huggins,
Doug Rader

DMF Staff: Anne Deaton, Casey Knight, Jacob Boyd, Jimmy Harrison, Charlie Deaton,
Kim Harding, Casey Knight, Catherine Blum, Alan Bianchi, Brandi Salmon

APNEP Staff: Jimmy Johnson

DCM Staff: Daniel Govoni, Rebecca Ellin, Mike Lopazanski

DEMLR Staff: Samir Dumpor

DWR Staff: David May, Holley Snider, Tammy Hill, Michelle Raquet

NCDA&CS: Eric Pare (NCDS&WC)

NC L&W Fund: William Price

Public: Eliza Wilczek (NCCF), Sara Hallas (NCCF), Claire Rapp (NCCF), Anne Coan
(NC Farm Bureau), Julie Youngman (SELC), Kathy Herring (RK&K)

Jimmy Johnson began the meeting. A motion was made by David Anderson to approve the minutes and seconded by Larry Baldwin. Minutes from the December 6, 2022 meeting were approved unanimously.



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Chairmanship

Doug Rader was selected to be the chair of the CHPP Steering Committee by consensus.

Salt Marsh Planning informational presentation

Claire Rapp (NC Coastal Federation) gave a presentation on SASMI (the South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative) and the NC Salt Marsh Conservation Action Plan. The presentation provided an overview of the threat of sea-level rise (SLR) to salt marshes and the likely outcomes (drowning for some marshes and migration for other marshes).

The SASMI Plan launched May 16th and is available at www.marshforward.org, including a one-page information paper, an executive summary, and an informational short film. The SASMI Plan provides two main approaches: (1) protecting and restoring existing salt marshes, and (2) conserving marsh migration corridors. The SASMI Plan does not detail how it will be implemented, but the forthcoming implementation plan will be modeled on the America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative (ALRI).

The presentation also provided an update on the NC Salt Marsh Conservation Action Plan, which is still under development and expected to be released to the public by the end of 2023. Staff created Conservation Planning Units (CPU) based on coastal counties and HUC 10 watersheds and assessed salt marsh and development in each CPU. Currently there are 220,000 acres of salt marsh in NC. By 2050, projections from Warnell et al. (2022) forecast 400,000 acres (a loss of 92,000 acres and a gain of 270,000 acres) with 1.5 feet of SLR by 2050. Losses of salt marsh are forecast to be concentrated in the back sides of barrier islands and from the southern half of the coast (Carteret to Brunswick Counties), and gains are forecast to be concentrated along Albemarle and Pamlico Sounds, if area is available for marsh migration. The NC Coastal Federation will be hosting two stakeholder workshops, one in southeastern NC, focusing on restoration and loss mitigation strategies, and one in northeastern NC, focusing on marsh migration facilitation strategies.

Questions on the Salt Marsh Planning presentation:

Anne Deaton asked: Do those projections assume that landowners cooperate? Rapp responded that the projections assume no change in current conditions (no new inlets, no new development, etc).

Larry Baldwin asked: Were any threats to salt marshes discussed besides sea-level rise? Rapp responded that SASMI discussed development threats to salt marshes, but the focus was sea-level rise. Baldwin followed up by expressing that he thought that the 1.5ft SLR by 2050 projection was an extreme scenario. Rapp responded that a range of modelling scenarios (using projections from NOAA's 2022 SLR Technical Report) was discussed in the first stakeholder meeting (co-hosted by the NC Coastal Federation, SASMI, and Pew), and that these projections were considered intermediate scenario and were selected based on the consensus of the attendees of that workshop.

Doug Rader suggested that they should consider tradeoffs in habitat types as salt marshes drown and migrate (between different types of marsh, marsh to SAV, etc). Rader also suggested that they should map out existing governance units (drainage districts, federal reserves' water management units, etc). Rader further suggested that because this will result in change to



public trust areas, it is worth gathering a large group of stakeholders to discuss what that broad picture of habitat change will look like, especially with regards to the responsibilities of the three commissions represented here.

Bob Emory stated that he would share this information with the Coastal Land Trust, as they are working on maintaining marsh extent and thinking about marsh migration.

NC Marine Debris Action Plan presentation

Sara Hallas (NC Coastal Federation) gave a presentation to update the Steering Committee on the first three years of implementation of the NC Marine Debris Action Plan (MDAP), first released in 2020 with a five-year implementation timeline.

The five goals of the MDAP were: (1) lead and coordinate; (2) prevent marine debris; (3) remove marine debris; (4) prevent and removed abandoned/derelect vessels (ADV); and (5) conduct research and assessment.

Lead and Coordinate goal progress

Hallas reported that 77% of actions in the plan have been completed, 10% are in progress, 5% are continual actions, and only 9% of the plan has not been started yet.

Prevent Marine Debris goal progress:

Hallas reported that four beach towns banned the use of unenclosed foam blocks for floating docks, and that the NC Coastal Federation had produced a “Resilient Docks and Piers Report” with recommendations for improved construction methods to prevent future generation of marine debris.

Remove Marine Debris goal progress:

Hallas reported that in 2022 alone, volunteers picked up 1,200 pounds of debris, and contractors removed 682,000 pounds of debris. Hallas also reported that in the annual crab pot clean-up, over 2,000 crab pots were removed in January 2023, with the largest amounts from Roanoke, Croatan, Currituck, and Albemarle Sounds.

Prevent/Remove Abandoned/Derelect Vessels goal progress:

Hallas reported that the WRC had obtained authority to remove Abandoned Derelect Vessels (ADV) and got grants to fund removals. When an ADV is discovered, they contact the last documented owner. They have 30 days to respond, and if they do not, the vessel can be removed. As a result, they had removed 115 ADVS in 2021, 95 more in 2022, and they expected to remove a similar number in 2023.

Research and Assessment goal progress:

Hallas provided a brief overview of recent research projects from partners on microplastics and macroplastics, along with relevant citizen science projects. Sea Grant and NCSU recently did a study in the Neuse River and all water samples had microplastics in them. Hallas mentioned four free apps that citizens can use to document debris: Debris Free NC, Clean Swell, Marine Debris Tracker App, and Tangled in Trash.



Questions on the MDAP update:

Doug Rader asked: How much of this is storm related, and is anyone trying to determine the source of vessels (and is that source/stock of future ADVs changing?) Hallas responded that it is mostly storm related, but a lot of this debris has accumulated over many years of storms that hasn't been picked up until now. Hallas continued that hopefully now that they have a system for dealing with issues like ADVs and crab pots, they're catching up with previous years of unaddressed pollution. ADVs are mostly storm related, though some are left on purpose, and there are enforcement actions available if it can be determined that it was intentional abandonment. Rader followed up by asking if Hallas knew if anyone was working on a sentinel/monitoring system in NC for microplastics accumulating in fish? Hallas responded that she didn't know. Rader said that this is an important issue for protecting fishing communities. Hallas mentioned that there will be a NC Marine Debris Symposium Oct 11-13, 2023.

Public Comment

No public comments were made. Anne Deaton said that former MFC Commissioner, Mikey Daniels, wanted to provide written comments, and she offered to circulate that to the Steering Committee members after the meeting. As of June 7th, no written comments have been received.

CHPP Implementation Update

Anne Deaton provided an update to the Steering Committee on progress on implementation of the recommended actions from the 2021 CHPP Amendment.

Regarding actions from the SAV chapter, Deaton told the Steering Committee that DMF is working on modifying trawl boundaries to exclude mapped SAV and include a buffer through the Shrimp FMP. Deaton also stated that DWR had made changes to the 205j and 319 grant programs (which address creation and implementation of local watershed restoration plans) to allow 319 funding to be used to both develop plans and implement them, which will lead to improved water quality. Anne Deaton also added that SAV monitoring and assessment is ongoing through continued collaboration with APNEP.

Johnson added that a resolution from the CHPP public-private partnership (recommendation 9.1) asking for increased funding for state cost-share programs has been endorsed by the EMC, CRC, MFC, and other groups. Johnson continued that the goal is to continue to get more signatures and then bring the resolution before the NCGA in their next session.

Regarding actions from the Wetlands chapter, Deaton said that DMF had formed an Interagency Wetland Mapping Workgroup, that the group supported seeking funding for NOAA C-CAP mapping, and that DMF is seeking grant funding to fulfill that now. Deaton also added DMF and other DEQ division staff participated in SASMI Plan production, providing input and reviewing the draft plan.

Rebecca Ellin provided an update on the NC Coastal Reserve's work on planning for marsh migration, stating that the national NERRS just began work on an American the Beautiful Challenge grant to begin identifying wetland migration pathways near NERRS around the country. In NC, that is focused on the areas around Rachel Carson, Masonboro, and Zeke's Island Reserves, but they have flexibility to expand that geography as appropriate.



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Mike Lopazanski reported that DCM didn't have any additional progress on CHPP actions at this time, but that they were expecting between \$5M and \$10M for the Resilient Coastal Communities Program from the upcoming budget.

Anne Deaton relayed an update from Mackenzie Todd that the RCCP manual had been updated to include an emphasis on nature-based solutions.

Jacob Boyd provided an update on the work of the Natural and Working Lands Coastal Habitats subcommittee, which has worked on estimates to quantify the carbon sequestration potential of high-salinity SAV across NC to the NC Greenhouse Gas Inventory.

Regarding actions from the Enforcement chapter, Samir Dumpor told the Steering Committee that DEMLR has increased some fees and received ARPA funding. They are struggling to hire and keep personnel, but DEMLR has added 7 positions in Wilmington and 3 in Washington.

Regarding actions from the Wastewater chapter, David May told the Steering Committee that DWR acknowledges that smaller municipal wastewater systems have some issues (particularly under-reporting accidental discharges), but that DWR does not feel like now is good timing to revisit the current rules, so DWR is emphasizing education and outreach for smaller municipalities. He summarized that further down the road it might be worth revisiting a rule revision process, but not in the short term.

Regarding actions from the Mapping and Monitoring chapter, Deaton told the Steering Committee that DMF has been unsuccessful so far in receiving more legislative funding for habitat mapping positions, but that oyster mapping is ongoing through current programs, as is SAV mapping through the aforementioned collaboration with APNEP.

Regarding the action for the Public-Private Partnership, Johnson reported that for SECCHI (Stakeholder Engagement for Collaborative Coastal Habitats Initiative), the Working Lands and Waters subgroup has focused on producing and advocating for the previously mentioned cost-share funding resolution, and the Conservation and Resiliency Planning subgroup is meeting soon to establish next steps.

Questions on the CHPP Implementation Update:

Rader commented that the MFC will be developing an array of FMP amendments over the next year and that each has habitat sections that will detail needed actions to address habitat-related issues, supporting issues highlighted in the CHPP.

Wrap-up

Johnson indicated that the next meeting would likely be in the October/November timeframe, and that the meeting would hopefully be in person. The meeting was adjourned.

