



**Currituck Banks Reserve**  
**Local Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**November 9, 2018**  
**NC Coastal Reserve Office**  
**Kitty Hawk, NC**

**Attendance**

<b><u>LAC Partner Organization Members</u></b>	<b><u>Present</u></b>
Lt. Clarence Sutton, Currituck Sheriffs Department	y
Sharon Meade, NCWRC Center for Wildlife Education	n
Jennie Turner, Planner, Currituck County	n
Aaron McCall, The Nature Conservancy	y
Jimmy Johnson, APNEP	y
Nathan Shepard, NCNHP (on the phone)	y
Jarred Culbreath, NCWRC enforcement	n
Mike Hoff, USFW	n
<b><u>Community Members and Community Organizations Members</u></b>	
Brett Harrison	y
<b><u>Others Present</u></b>	
Kate Jones, N.C. Coastal Reserve Northern Sites Manager	

## **Reserve-wide Administrative Update**

### **Reserve Wide Update**

October 17, 2018

#### *Hurricane Florence and Tropical Storm Michael*

All Reserve sites and the Kitty Hawk, Beaufort, and Wilmington offices closed September 11 in preparation for Hurricane Florence. The Columbia office closed September 13. The eye of Hurricane Florence passed directly over the Masonboro Island and Zeke's Island Reserves on September 14.

The Kitty Hawk and Columbia offices received little to no damage because of the storm and reopened September 17. The Beaufort office at the NOAA Beaufort Lab sustained a variety of damage and fully reopened September 28. The Wilmington office at University of North Carolina Wilmington's (UNCW) Center for Marine Science also sustained a variety of damage and reopened to staff on October 1. Damage assessment and repair is handled by the respective partners that own the office facilities and not by Reserve staff; thank you to NOAA Beaufort Lab and UNCW staff for getting the facilities up and running again so that more regular business operations could resume.

Storm impacts to the Reserve sites varied geographically based on the track of the storm. The Currituck Banks, Kitty Hawk Woods, Buxton Woods, and Buckridge Reserves received little to no damage. The remaining sites located in the central and southern portions of the state experienced the following general impacts: erosion and deposition on oceanfront and estuarine shorelines, grounded vessels at the Rachel Carson and Masonboro Island Reserves, significant accumulation of marine debris such as lumber, staircases, floating docks and pilings, downed trees, missing signs, and damage to the boardwalk at the Rachel Carson Reserve. Eight of the ten Reserve sites reopened on September 24 following site assessments; Permuda Island and Bald Head Woods Reserves remain closed at this time.

Potentially hazardous conditions associated with storm damage remain at the Reserve sites and visitors should exercise caution. Grounded vessels are being addressed under Emergency Support Function #10 staffed by the U.S. Coast Guard, NOAA, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, and N.C. Department of Environmental Quality, including Reserve staff. Pollutants and a subset of vessels that remain grounded will be removed from the Reserve sites under this operation. Visitors should refrain from disturbing the vessels to protect personal safety and respect vessel owners' personal property while removal efforts are underway. Clean-up of smaller marine debris items has begun with the help of volunteers at select sites while storm recovery funding sources are being explored for removing the larger marine debris items described above and addressing the downed trees.

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Reserve programming was and continues to be impacted by the storm. K-12 student field trips, teacher workshops, public education programming, and Coastal Training Program workshops have been cancelled, postponed, and rescheduled. Research staff are measuring storm impacts on several current research projects including performance of marsh sills and living shorelines constructed of alternative substrates. Water quality monitoring equipment remained deployed at the Masonboro Island and Zeke's Island Reserves during the storm and staff will be evaluating those data in the near future. Stewardship staff are addressing the site-related items described above.

No additional impacts were observed from Tropical Storm Michael.

### *Local Advisory Committees*

In August 2018, the Secretary of the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality appointed new community members and re-appointed community members interested in continuing to serve to the local advisory committees following an application process earlier in the year to fill vacancies. Additional government agencies were also appointed to fill gaps on the committees.

The local advisory committee Operating Procedures document is to be updated every five years according to the Operating Procedures. An update was originally planned for fall 2018 but has been rescheduled to spring 2019 as staff focus on Hurricane Florence recovery.

### *Periodic Rules Review*

Per the Division's request, the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality is seeking the Rules Review Commission's approval of a readoption timeline of November 30, 2021 for Coastal Reserve rules (15A NCAC 070). This item is scheduled for the Rules Review Commission's November 2018 meeting. Staff will begin preliminary discussions regarding 15A NCAC 070.0202 at the fall 2018 meetings. This work is part of the Legislative Periodic Review and Expiration of Existing Rules process (G.S. 150B-21.3A).

### *Comments from Suggested Rules Edits/Additions:*

#### Currituck Parking lot -

Support was received by the committee for generating a rule in this situation. Committee suggests not using the two-hour enforcement here as people could be hiking for more than two hours. Suggest that the Reserve work with local towing companies to get their info on the no parking signs, and keep it simple - For Reserve Use Only. Also, cameras could be used but this would require someone checking them. Either way, enforcement will require more time spent on site.

#### Abandoned Vessels –

Why does the Reserve need this rule? Seems like it would already be covered in our existing rules through private property and dumping. Also Reserve needs to be careful to not be on the hook for removing everything that washes up. Committee felt that Reserve will need to be very clear in the language of the rule that if an owner is identified, they need to pay for removal and even potential restoration of habitat if damaged. Also, the question of who

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pays for this in general is important as the Reserve has no dedicated funding source for this activity.

### Special Use Permit –

Committee supports a rule, but rule should not handcuff staff. What will the trigger be for needing a permit? Clearly define this. Will it be number of people in the group, money being made from the event? If it is public land, why does anyone need to have a special permit? (This comment was addressing what the public may think.)

### Private Property –

Seems as though this rule could create more work for staff. Committee wondered if leaving what constitutes private property vague is better. It should be anything left on Reserve property- period. You leave it, and it will be removed. No reason to go through a formal process that stretches staff too thin. If a site manager comes across anything left in the Reserve they should be able to remove immediately.

### Permit Hunts –

Supportive. Committee would like to see this program expand to Northern Sites.

### *N.C. NERR Management Plan*

The Reserve received feedback from NOAA on the draft management plan for the N.C. National Estuarine Research Reserve that will cover 2018-2023 in late August 2018. Staff are currently working to address the feedback. Review by the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality will follow. A 30-day public comment period for the draft management plan will be scheduled after all reviews are complete and 3 public meetings, in the northern, central and southern regions of the coast, will be scheduled during the comment period.

### *Federal Budget*

FY19 budget include the House and Senate conferencing between the chambers, chamber votes to agree on a final budget, and a final budget going to the President for signature into law. 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.

### *State Budget*

The N.C. General Assembly appropriated \$2.5M to the Division in the State Fiscal Year 18 budget for acquisition of the Sunset Beach West tract to be included in the Bird Island Coastal Reserve. The early stages of the acquisition are underway. The appropriation supports implementation of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Town of Sunset Beach and Sunset Beach and Twin Lakes, INC to resolve a legal battle regarding the tract. The tract is adjacent to the Bird Island Coastal Reserve and includes similar pristine beach and salt marsh habitats.

### *Visitor Access Study*

Reserve Site Managers are working with a team of researchers from UNCW (Environmental Science Department, School of Health, Applied Human Science Recreation, Tourism Management Program) to implement a visitor access assessment project at select Reserve sites titled “Understanding Access and Visitor Use on North Carolina’s Coastal Reserve System.” The project focuses on six of the ten Reserve sites – Bird Island, Zeke’s Island, Masonboro Island, Rachel Carson, Kitty Hawk Woods, and Currituck Banks. The goal of the project is to understand visitor access patterns and inform planning and projects to accommodate visitor access of the sites. Interviews and stakeholder sessions with community members and government and business leaders, and on-site surveys of visitors are complete. Data collected will be analyzed by the research team and a study report will be complete in 2019. Results will be used by Reserve staff to inform visitor access management and planning.

### *Upcoming Program Activities*

Find upcoming event information on the event calendar at [www.nccoastalreserve.net](http://www.nccoastalreserve.net).

- **NOAA Tools Training Workshop (11.6, Wilmington)** - Participants will learn about NOAA’s resources available to improve local decision-making. Participants will get hands-on experience with various tools, including the Sea Level Rise Viewer and the Coastal Flood Exposure Mapper, as well as learn about resources available through NOAA’s Digital Coast. American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) will receive 4 Certification Maintenance credits. Registration is required.
- **Low Impact Development Basics for Water Quality Protection - Workshop for Real Estate Professionals (12.4 and 12.5, Wilmington)** - Participants will learn the following: how land use decisions impact water quality; Low Impact Development techniques that help protect water quality; the costs and benefits of implementing LID; managing storm water control measures to meet state and local regulations and to maintain functionality and aesthetics; and tour storm water control measures on the Wrightsville Beach Loop. Real estate professionals will receive 4 elective continuing education credits from the N.C. Real Estate Commission. Registration is required.

\* 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 grant funds DCM receives provides funding for Reserve staffing, state site operations, and administrative support.

**Site Update - Old Business (Site Manager)**

- *Parking Lot*

Site manager mentioned the work staff did this past summer documenting parking lot misuse. One to two days per week, staff took pictures and recorded numbers of people coming and going that were not using the parking lot for Reserve purposes. Lt. Sutton asked if people were leaving their vehicles overnight. Site Manager responded that most were not left overnight, but for several hours in the day. Also, most violations are people airing up/airing down.

**Site Update - New Business**

- *Coverboard Study*

The Reserve has been monitoring reptiles and amphibians via the 2"x4" boards and PVC pipes. Six locations exist in Currituck Banks. This goal being to assist the Reserve to understand the current population of herps and overall function of habitat and water quality of the area. High species diversity, especially salamanders, can be great indicators of good water quality. The Reserve is building off data from the previous site manager. *Aaron commented that we could add tin and snakes would likely be found underneath. Nathan Shepard asked if this is the first year the Reserve has monitored for herps. Site manager responded that it has been done in the past, although not consistently.*

- *Vegetation Monitoring 2018*

Marsh Vegetation transects were put in place in the Marsh near the end of the Maritime Forest trail. Three transects in native marsh vegetation, and three in Phragmites dominated marsh. These will be continued over time will assess the rate of change in plant composition which can inform future land management decisions. By confirming the distribution of existing plant species, the prevalence of rare or threatened species, and/or the introduction or spread of invasive species, more informed management actions can be implemented. For example, deciding where to orchestrate a specific restoration project, or whether to conduct prescribed burning, or whether to allocate funding towards controlling an invasive species can hinge on knowing the community composition and distribution of the area. Having a collection of data from vegetation surveys can support research initiatives in the reserves, as it forms a framework for classifying biodiversity patterns and trends. It can aid in broad-scale ecosystem mapping by combining remote sensing techniques with the vegetation surveys, to depict the distribution of habitats or key species. As environmental conditions change, mapping the migration of new plant species into the reserves, or the loss of native ones, is an important factor in conservation projects or acting to support the ecological integrity of the area. *No Comments*

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- *Hunting 2018-19*

Hunting Season for 2018-2019 is underway and there are currently 57 Registered Hunters as of 11/9. Site Manager offered a hunter information session in August of 2018. N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission biologist and enforcement were also at the meeting and offered information about the health of the deer herd, and updates to any state rules and regulations. *No Comments.*

### **Roundtable Discussion** (*Staff response in italics*)

- Aaron McCall – Please make sure the Site Manager position description is emailed to committees ASAP.
- Nathan Shepard – I'm sorry I was not more involved in the discussion, it was tough hearing everyone speak and following along. I think the reserve is involved in good things from what I heard today. I hope the vegetation and cover-board surveys continue. Did you get the three plants identified from heritage? If not, I can help or find someone that is an expert. An Eastern Hognose is a good find in that area, is there an entire species list available? I'd like to view it. And if there are any questionable identifications from that work I can help with them. I have more questions about other agenda items but I'll save those for now since it is your last day. Thanks again for coordinating this meeting.

### **Action Items**

- Site manager will complete the minutes and send to LAC today.