



Kitty Hawk Woods Reserve
Local Advisory Committee Meeting
October 30, 2018
Kitty Hawk Town Hall
Kitty Hawk, NC

Attendance

<u>LAC Partner Organization Members</u>	<u>Present</u>
Chief Joel Johnson, Kitty Hawk Police Department	y
Andy Stewart, Kitty Hawk Town Manager	y
Jeff Pruitt, Kitty Hawk Town Commissioner	Y
John McCord, Coastal Studies Institute	n
Aaron McCall, The Nature Conservancy	n
John Cook, N.C. Forestry Commission	y
Gary Perry, Mayor of Kitty Hawk	n
Anna Barbosa, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission	n
<u>Community Members and Community Organizations Members</u>	
Clifton Perry	y
Dana Thomason	y
<u>Others Present</u>	
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 asked what types of signs are already in the parking lot and site manager confirmed these includes, two-hour parking, no camping and informational signage. What about no overnight parking? Site manager responded that there is no specific sign addressing overnight parking. Committee asked if vehicles would be considered private property and if this could be included in the private property rule.

Abandoned Vessels –

Committee supports a rule, however will need to define what amount of time before removing a boat. Town has an ordinance and county has a one as well. Sea Tow would be a good company to work with for removal. How would the Reserve fund these removals? Would this rule put more pressure on limited Reserve staff?

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Special Use Permit –

Overall, the Committee was supportive, but emphasized that the Reserve would have to work closely with the Town of Kitty Hawk because there are many uses that are not allowed by town code.

Private Property –

Committee was supportive, but thought the emphasis should be on preventing dumping of debris since it happens a lot in the Reserve. It is often trash that is the problem and of course no one wants it back. Site Manager mentioned a new dump site found off Twiford Rd and agreed this would be discussed later in the meeting.

Permit Hunts – no comments.

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 three 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.

- **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)

- *UNCW Public Access Study*

Reserve site managers worked with Dr. Hill from UNC Wilmington on a public access survey at Kitty Hawk Woods. Three students interviewed the public at three access points in Kitty Hawk Woods – Barlow Ln, Ridge Rd, and Kitty Hawk boat ramp. The goal was to understand which access points are being used and by whom. The students

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conducted surveys from Memorial Day through Labor Day 2018. This survey will be used for planning and projects to accommodate visitors to the Reserves. *No Comments.*

- *Land Acquisition*

The Coastal Reserve applied for a total of \$1.2 million dollars to acquire the Meter Point tract located in Kitty Hawk Bay. The breakdown of funding is as follows:

\$312,750 Clean Water Management Trust Fund February 2018

\$912,750 USFW Coastal Wetlands Grant Program June 2018.

Decisions should be made this winter 2018-19. *Jeff Pruitt commented on the native artifacts commonly found on and adjacent to this piece of land, and hoped the state would be successful in purchasing it.*

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 Kitty Hawk Woods. 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. *No comments.*

- *Vegetation Monitoring 2018*

Vegetation surveys continued over time will assess the rate of change in plant communities 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*

- *King Tides Project*

Just installed a water level gauge at the Kitty Hawk Boat ramp with the NC King Tides Project (<http://nckingtides.web.unc.edu/>). Looking for volunteers to take simple water level readings and record online. Let site manager know if you may be interested or know someone who is. *Several members will reach out to citizens who may be interested.*

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- *Hunting 2018-19*

Hunting Season for 2018-2019 is underway and there are currently 51 Registered Hunters as of 10/29. Site Manager offered a hunter information session in August of 2018. NCWRC 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)*

- Chief Joel Johnson – Think he knows of a track of land for sale near Poor Ridge Rd. The owner is Karen Ethridge. It contains significant uplands along with wetlands. Maybe a cemetery as well. *Site manager reminded the LAC that as a state employee, she is not able to directly contact landowners, but that anyone can pass along my information and the landowner can reach out.*
- Andy Stewart – The town is working on implementing an emergency alert notification system and encouraging residents to sign up. This will prevent surprise flooding like what occurred with Tropical Storm Michael.
- Jeff Pruitt informed the group that the town has received \$41,000 in funding from the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau as match towards the State Trails Recreational Trails grant to complete the boardwalk connection from Dare County Park to the Birch Lane trail. *Site manager asked to please let her know when the town hears about the RTP grant.*
- John Cook – Need the MOU in place to burn the Kitty Hawk Bay islands. Have a good window after Duck Season ends in early February. N.C. Forest Service has money to burn these islands. *Site Manager noted the habitat benefits from burning, and additional wrack that now exists on these islands. Burning the downed vegetative debris will prevent it from migrating to homeowner's shorelines during the next storm.*

Action Items

- Site manager will complete the MOU and forward to the department.
- Site manager will send address found on documents that were dumped in kitty hawk woods.