



Local Advisory Committee Meeting
Buxton Woods Coastal Reserve

December 3rd, 2021 - 1400
Virtual via WebEx with a call-in option

Attendance

<u>LAC Partner Organization Members</u>	<u>Present</u>
Caper Hatteras National Seashore, Boone Vandzura	N
UNC Coastal Studies Institute, John McCord	N
NC Wildlife Resources Commission, David Turner	N
NC Natural Heritage Program, Scott Pohlman	Y
Dare County Sheriff's Office, Doug Oberbeck	N
Dare County Government, Danny Couch	N
NC Forest Service, Kayla Barnes	N
NC Forest Service, John Cook	N
<u>Community Members and Community Organizations Members</u>	
Karen Lebing	Y
Russ Kiddy	N
Michael Flynn (Sub. Erin Fleckenstein)	Y
Harvey Scarborough, Jr.	N
<u>Others Present</u>	
Rebecca Ellin, DCM, Reserve Program Manager	
Erik Alnes, DCM, Northern Sites Manager	
Whitney Jenkins, DCM, Coastal Training Program Coordinator	
Matt Janson, WRC	
Bob Mickler, NCSU	
Jane Bailey, CSI OBXFS Student	

Reserve-wide Program Business (Rebecca Ellin)

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

Buxton Woods Reserve Business

- *Coastal Studies Institute (CSI) Student Studies – Jane Bailey, Outer Banks Field Site*

A presentation was given by Jane Bailey, one of the students who worked on the capstone project “A temporal analysis of vegetation dynamics and community perceptions of Buxton Woods.” The research was conducted in two ways. First, the students collected ecological and environmental data to compare vegetation changes in three plots established during the North Carolina Vegetation Survey in 1988. From the three plots, data indicated an increase in herbaceous species, a decrease in large canopy trees, and showed that overall species richness had remained relatively constant since 1988. For the second half of the study, the students interviewed Buxton residents to better understand community perceptions of the reserve. Analysis of the 11 qualitative interviews illustrated key values of recreation, sustenance, and personal well-being. Interviews also revealed perceptions of canopy loss due to storm impacts over the last 30 years. Their research can be found on the UNC Institute for the Environment’s Outer Banks Field Site website.

- *NC Bird Atlas – Matt Janson, NC Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC)*

A presentation was given by Matt Janson, the Coastal Technician that is working on WRC’s North Carolina Bird Atlas. From 2021-2026, volunteers and WRC staff will be conducting bird species counts throughout the breeding and winter seasons. Two of the 937 “priority blocks” in the State overlap with the boundaries of Buxton Woods Reserve. The reserve provides critical bird habitat, and the counts will help develop an atlas which can be used for conservation planning and the analysis of bird populations in North Carolina. If you are interested in volunteering with the program, contact Matt Janson with WRC, and check out the North Carolina Bird Atlas website: <https://ebird.org/atlasnc/home>.

- *Wildfire Management Plan Update*

A contract was finalized with Bob Mickler in November to begin writing the Wildfire Management Plan for Buxton Woods. Erik Alnes met with Bob on site to familiarize him with the reserve and worked through logistics and timeframes. We plan to meet with partner agencies, starting with Natural Heritage and the Forest Service. We will be reaching out to other partner agencies in the spring to discuss larger scale fire management options to develop a cohesive plan.

- *Trail Signage Update*

Since last meeting, Reserve staff identified areas in need of new signage in Buxton Woods. New signs were ordered and installed. The project replaced a majority of the trail signs that had been destroyed.

- *Site Stewards Expansion Project*

Plans to develop a cohesive volunteer program have begun in the Northern Sites. Later in December, the Northern Sites Manager will host a training for volunteers in Kitty Hawk Woods Reserve. The volunteer program, called the Site Stewards Volunteer Program, focuses to educate volunteers in the N.C. Coastal Reserve and National Estuarine Research Reserve System programs, and train them to maintain public access and trails, monitor site conditions, and help with community-based projects. After the pilot training in Kitty Hawk, Reserve staff plan to host an additional training for Buxton Woods in the Spring. Friends of the Reserve (FOR) supplied funding for T-shirts to provide visibility of volunteers in the field. If you or someone you know is interested in volunteering with the Reserve, please email Erik Alnes at erik.d.ales@ncdenr.gov.

Roundtable Discussion (*Staff response in italics*)

Karen Lebing was happy to see new signage in place. She stated the Christmas Bird Count in Buxton will be held on December 27th, and Pat Moore will be running the event this year.

Scott Pohlman with Natural Heritage stated he was looking forward to working with the Reserve and Forest Service on the Wildfire Management Plan. Also, the Land and Water Fund was awarded nearly \$60 million for conservation efforts in N.C.

Final comments, Action Items, and Wrap-up

- None.

Adjourn