



JOSH STEIN
Governor

D. REID WILSON
Secretary

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Apply to support wild horses at Rachel Carson Reserve and Shackleford Banks

MOREHEAD CITY - The N.C. Coastal Reserve and National Estuarine Research Reserve, a program of the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality's Division of Coastal Management, is again partnering with Cape Lookout National Seashore and the Foundation for Shackleford Horses Inc. to offer the Pony Patrol volunteer program.

Pony Patrol volunteers help raise community awareness, protect wild horses and promote compliance with wild horse guidelines at the Rachel Carson Reserve and Shackleford Banks. In 2025, volunteers conducted 260 patrols and engaged with approximately 3,900 visitors at both sites.

Pony Patrol volunteers will serve three- to four-hour shifts, walking through the Rachel Carson Reserve and/or Shackleford Banks to inform visitors about respectful ways to experience the horses and their natural behaviors. Volunteers receive training in visitor communication, the importance of allowing wild horses to remain wild, and the knowledge and skills needed to protect both visitor safety and horse welfare. The training enables the volunteers to answer questions about the horses and their barrier island habitat.

Candidates must be at least 18 years old, be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident and be physically able to walk the islands in dynamic conditions, including sandy terrain, intense sun, heat, humidity, wind and insects. Pony Patrol volunteers are expected to serve at least three times per month. Positions are competitive due to limited availability.

Interested candidates should apply online at: <https://tinyurl.com/PonyPatrol2026>.

The application period opens Friday, Jan. 23, 2026, and closes 11:59 p.m., Monday, Feb. 23, 2026. Applicants must apply to both locations if they want to volunteer for Rachel Carson Reserve and Shackleford Banks. Selected candidates will be contacted for interviews in late February or early March.

For more information, visit Rachel Carson Reserve at www.deq.nc.gov/coastalreserve, Cape Lookout National Seashore at www.nps.gov/caloc and the Foundation for Shackleford Horses at www.shackleford-horses.org.

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