



**Emily and Richardson Preyer Buckridge Reserve
Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, 31 October 2012, 9:30-11:15am**

Attendance

<u>LAC Members</u>	<u>Affiliation/Interest</u>	<u>Present</u>
Mr. Jim Schreckengost	NCWRC – Enforcement	Yes
Mr. Dale Davis	NCWRC – Wildlife Management	Yes
Mr. David Kitts	PLNWR	Yes
Sheriff Darryl Liverman	Tyrrell County Sheriff's Office	Yes
Mr. Mike Clements	Community Member	Yes
Ms. Nina Griswell	Tyrrell County Government	Yes
Mr. Andy Hux	NCDFR	Yes
<u>Others Present</u>		
Kim Hedrick	DCM, Compliance and Enforcement Representative	
Rebecca Ellin	DCM, Reserve Manager	
Woody Webster	DCM, Buckridge Site Manager	

General Reserve Background – Woody Webster

As the first LAC meeting ever held for Buckridge, a variety of introductory information was disseminated. LAC members were given an overview of the Reserve program, including the location of each site and where it fits into the state and national reserve system. A description of the NC Coastal Reserve organizational structure was next, along with how the Reserve program works within the Division of

Coastal Management and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Additional information shared included the purpose of the Reserve and the history of Buckridge's acquisition. An inventory of priority habitats and protected species was also included. Specific stewardship challenges and an overview of LAC responsibilities and rules rounded out the introduction.

Reserve Program Update – Rebecca Ellin

Staffing News

- Lori Davis was hired as the Education Coordinator effective February 16, 2012. Lori served as the Reserve's Education Specialist for the past ten years through a contract with University of North Carolina Wilmington. In her new role, she manages all K-12 student and teacher and general public programming. Lori has a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Methodist College.
- Paula Gillikin was hired as the Central Sites Manager effective February 20, 2012. Paula served as the Reserve's Rachel Carson Site Manager in a temporary capacity since 2007. She will continue to steward the Rachel Carson site in her new role and is also responsible for our Permuda Island Reserve. Paula has a Bachelor of Science in Biology and Environmental Science from the University of North Carolina Wilmington and a Master of Science from Tufts University in Animals and Public Policy.
- Whitney Jenkins was hired as the Coastal Training Program Coordinator effective August 31, 2012. Whitney served as the Reserve's Coastal Training Program Coordinator for the past ten years through a contract with University of North Carolina Wilmington. She will continue her coastal training duties and coordinate communications for the program. Whitney has a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science from the University of Florida and a Masters degree from Duke University in Coastal Environmental Management
- Interviews were conducted for the permanent Northern Sites Manager position in October 2012.

Budget Update

The Reserve receives funding from both the State of N.C. and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for operation of the program and a budget update was provided for the current and upcoming fiscal years. The Reserve's total budget for FY12-13 is \$911,287 (\$265,000 from State appropriations and \$646,287 from NOAA, 91% of the NOAA funds support operation of the N.C. National Estuarine Research Reserve); this excludes any external grant funds. The Division is participating in a number of budget exercises to prepare for the upcoming biennium (FYs 13-14 and 14-15) and gubernatorial transition. Federal appropriations for next fiscal year for operation of the N.C. National Estuarine Research Reserve portion of the program are uncertain at this time; possible scenarios include level-funding and reductions of various amounts.

Local Advisory Committees

The Reserve program updated the membership of existing and created three new Local Advisory Committees to inform management of the ten Reserve sites. The Local Advisory Committees function as advisory groups, providing feedback and recommendations to staff on site management, research, and education activities, and reviewing policies and implementation strategies. The committees operate per the adopted Operating Procedures document (February 2012); the procedures document, committee membership, and minutes are available on the Reserve's website.

Rules and Policies Review Process

The Reserve is evaluating its rules (N.C. Administrative Code T15A 070) to provide recommendations for updating current rule and policy language for management of the Reserve sites. The Reserve rules have remained relatively unchanged since their adoption in 1986 and contain vague terminology and do not address new challenges at the sites. Additionally, other guidance documents for management of the sites are not consistent and are also out of date (i.e., state dedication letters, management plans). The objective of this evaluation is to update the rules and policies to provide clear and consistent guidance for the public on use of the sites, an effective management tool for staff, and ensure enforceability by the appropriate agencies when needed. The process includes definition of the vague terms currently found in the Reserve rules, examination of a variety of management topics, development of new or revised rule and policy language where needed, and input on the draft language from the following entities: the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Local Advisory Committees (LACs), the N.C. Coastal Resources Commission, and the public through a series of public meetings. Draft rule language is currently under review within the Division.

Program Highlights

See attached for 2012 Reserve Program Highlights

Site Updates – Woody Webster

Hunting

The largest user group at Buckridge is made up of hunters. Buckridge has an MOU with WRC outlining the Reserve's participation in the game lands program. In lieu of payment, WRC helps with site maintenance and enforcement issues. Trends in black bear and white-tailed deer harvests were reported in relation to area game lands. Buckridge has shown the second highest bear harvest for game lands in the coastal region. The reported deer harvest is fairly average in comparison.

Invasive species

Four problem species have been actively controlled at Buckridge. Nutria control was done in conjunction with beaver reduction efforts, and showed limited success. Newly identified outbreaks of privet were found in the interior of Buckridge, and controls began this year. Alligatorweed is a recognized problem throughout Tyrrell County, and Buckridge has a long-standing contract with the Division of Water Resources to treat this invasive along the northwest fork of the Alligator River. Success has been measured by the reduced effort level now required. Initial control contracts of \$5000/year have been reduced to only \$500/year. Staff are now licensed pesticide applicators and have begun treating new

alligatorweed outbreaks as they are discovered on the Reserve's interior. Phragmites has been treated opportunistically so far, usually during alligatorweed spraying. A question arose about presence of feral hogs. There have been reports of feral hogs at Buckridge, but signs don't yet indicate a serious problem. Based on research, DCM will likely institute a trapping program if a real problem with feral hogs is detected.

Restoration

Upon acquisition, DCM committed to the restoration of Buckridge. Mortality in the globally-rare peatland Atlantic white cedar forest provided initial direction to restoration efforts. Research indicated a need for hydrologic restoration, specifically to control saltwater intrusion and excess drainage via the canal system. Three tide gates and nine flashboard risers are now installed to mimic native hydrology. ECU monitored recent water control structure installations and will wrap up a report in December. Their report will indicate project efficacy and suggest the next steps for restoration. This type of research has driven all restoration efforts at Buckridge.

Upcoming activities

A list of upcoming activities was reported out, including an upcoming red-cockaded woodpecker workshop, planned expansion of invasive species control efforts, and writing a management plan, including a fire management plan.

Member Roundtable

Mr. Davis questioned the long-term goal of water control structures, and whether potential tree deaths from high water had been accounted for. Explanation was given that long term restoration might involve tree mortality in areas, but the water control structures chosen can be adapted for a variety of stewardship projects. Additionally, the overall goal of the structures is to return the Reserve hydrology to a more natural state, i.e. closer to conditions prior to canal construction.

Mr. Hux stated that NCDNR already has an extensive fire management plan for the county that could be used to inform the Reserve's fire plan. Staff will follow up on this.

Ms. Hedrick questioned what liability coverage was available in the event of an accident on Reserve property. It was explained that the State has a tort claims statute which covers this possibility.

There was some discussion about where hunters go and their proximity to others, especially during the crowded bear season. Most members of the LAC commented on the high numbers of hunters during bear season and the challenges they can present throughout the county.

Mr. Davis offered his opinion on the successful partnership between DCM and WRC at Buckridge, and his feelings of it being a long-standing, mutually beneficial arrangement.

The open gate policy was discussed, and it was explained that certain gates remain open throughout deer season, but are shut at its conclusion to prevent additional road damage. Shutting gates due to road damage during deer or bear season had been tried in the past, but the number of complaints that resulted led to the current policy.

Mr. Clements asked whether a permitting system like that at the Dare Game Land is something that could be used to control crowds or bear harvest numbers. Mr. Davis explained the agreement with the Department of Defense (owners of Dare Game Lands) has always included the permitting system, but that a limited season (like at Buckridge) is another method to manage crowds and hunting pressure.

It was mentioned that a public lands hunter education program was initiated this year, and staff hoped it would grow in the future.

Ms. Hedrick offered that any LAC organization in need of aerial surveillance might be able to partner with DCM during its regular enforcement flights. If an agency would like to explore this partnership, they can contact Ms. Hedrick at Kim.Hedrick@ncdenr.gov or (252) 948-3936. The possibility of monitoring alligatorweed control efforts using aerial reconnaissance was mentioned as well.

Ms. Hedrick asked what student groups use the Reserve. Lack of infrastructure has limited use so far, but contact has been made with Pocosin Arts to explore expanding student usage.

LAC members then agreed they preferred to be contacted through email for LAC business, and that they would like meet annually.

Public Comments

No members of the public in attendance.