



**Masonboro Island Reserve
Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, November 5, 2012, 6 pm**

Attendance

<u>LAC Members</u>	<u>Affiliation/Interest</u>	<u>Present</u>
Jesica Blake	NC Coastal Land Trust	Yes
Chip Collier	Division of Marine Fisheries	Yes
Walker Golder	NC Audubon	No
Joanne Harcke	Friends of the Reserve (FOR)	Yes
Chris Helms	Division of Parks and Recreation – CB	Yes
Elizabeth King	Town of Wrightsville Beach	Yes
Chris O’Keefe	New Hanover County Planning Department	Yes
Lieutenant Matt Payne	New Hanover County Sheriff’s Office	Yes
Dr. Anthony Snider	UNCW Environmental Studies Department	No
Dr. Amanda Southwood-Williard	UNCW Biology Department	Yes
Neal Andrew	Community Member	Yes
Richard Cecelski	Community Member	No
Haywood Newkirk	Community Member	Yes
William Raney	Community Member	Yes
Pat Rittenmeyer	Community Member	Yes
Sam Romano	Community Member	Yes
Ted Wilgis	Community Member	Yes
Martin Willard	Community Member	Yes
Richard Johnson	Masonboro.org	Yes
Sean Ahlum	Surfrider	Yes (by phone)
<u>Others Present</u>		
Hope Sutton	DCM, Stewardship Coordinator and Southern Sites Manager	
Rebecca Ellin	DCM, Coastal Reserve Manager	
Debbie Wilson	DCM, Wilmington District Manager	

Reserve-wide Update

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.

Program Highlights

See attached for 2012 Reserve Program Highlights.

Welcome of new members - Reserve program and LAC refresher

New members were welcomed, including representatives from newly appointed partner agencies and several new community members and community group representatives. A presentation was given to familiarize new members with the Reserve and the operations of the Local Advisory Committee. The presentation served as a refresher for current members. See attached for LAC Refresher.

Site Update and Old Business

Routine activities

Visitor use and routine program activities, including research programs and stewardship activities, have experienced no unusual occurrences in recent months. Hurricane Sandy resulted in minor erosion and overwash. One anchored sailboat was washed ashore onto a dredge spoil island during the storm.

Species of concern monitoring programs

The field season was successful. The Reserve hosted three paid interns and one part-time monitoring coordinator, as well several unpaid interns. Sea turtle nesting monitoring was the primary activity for the summer staff. Over 300 volunteer hours were logged in support of this activity. Twenty-four nests were documented and protected. Two were washed out by Sandy. The predation level was 58%. The average hatch rate was 84%. The Reserve continued to provide one egg sample from each nest to support a loggerhead genetics project being undertaken throughout the southeast. American oystercatcher monitoring was conducted along the 1.5 mile section of the island monitored during the two previous seasons. Zero nesting success was documented. As in previous years, nests typically were predated prior to the start of incubation. The diamondback terrapin mark recapture study was abbreviated due to purchasing challenges and weather. Eleven deployments were completed. Six turtles were caught; one was a recapture.

Education and outreach programs

“Meet Me at Masonboro” outreach sessions were conducted on site near the north end of the island during July and August. Attendance ranged from 5-12 participants. Interns led these sessions. Topics included: sea turtles and conservation; estuary science; and animals and organisms of the Reserve. A public field trip was offered in conjunction with Big Sweep on September 29. FOR sponsored the event. A session was hosted by the Reserve on October 12 to encourage collaboration among the various public land and water access management agencies within New Hanover County. In attendance were staff members from: New Hanover County Planning and Parks and Recreation, City of Wilmington Planning and Recreation, the Town of Wrightsville Beach, the Town of Carolina Beach, the Town of Kure Beach, Carolina Beach State Park, Fort Fisher Recreation Area, and UNCW Environmental Studies Department. Opportunities for collaboration discussed included acquisition projects and education programs to highlight appropriate use. The Americorps project that would have supported an education and outreach position in the Southern Sites office was not selected for funding. It will be resubmitted during in early 2013. If funded, the position would begin in the fall of 2013.

Signage

Permission has been granted for installation of informational signs to occur in December. This represents a positive step forward in communicating the purpose and importance of the Reserve to visitors.

July Fourth

Attendance and behavior on July Fourth 2012 was similar to several years ago, with a larger crowd and more problematic behaviors than in the previous two years. Behavior of visitors included excessive alcohol consumption, littering and fistfighting. New Hanover County Sheriff's deputies were on site much of the day, including supplemental officers contracted by the Reserve. 135 medical assists were given; 15 citations were written; 113 verbal warnings were given; and 21 individuals were trespassed from the island. Masonboro.org handed out trash bags and collected and transported approximately two tons of trash throughout the day. Reserve staff and Sheriff's Office staff have begun to discuss strategies for change the law enforcement approach for July Fourth 2013. Multiple options will be considered. The Division is committed to seeing the party end and will be committing resources to ensure this goal is reached. Many logistical considerations must be explored and a plan will be created in the coming months.

Red fox management

A grant of \$15K was obtained through the US Fish and Wildlife Service to support removal of red foxes to protect sea turtle nests. USDA APHIS predator removal specialists have been on site with the site manager to develop a work plan for this effort. Work will be conducted between December and February during the period of lowest visitor use. The goal of the effort is eradication of this species, although success will be measured by the reduction in sea turtle nest predation level. The effort will continue until no new signs of fox activity are seen, foxes are known to have become sensitized to the presence of the traps, or funds are exhausted. The contract will be set up such that this effort can be continued over two seasons. Samples from

foxes removed during the operation will contribute to research projects looking into the genetic origin of the animals in the region.

Dredge spoil disposal

The current policy regarding disposal of dredge spoil materials within the boundary of the Reserve allows for approval to be given on a case by case basis. Two private entities are currently seeking approval for use of the Reserve for this purpose. The Reserve staff will analyze the potential impacts of these projects and provide this analysis to the State Property Office. Permission or denial of permission will be the decision of the State Property Office. The Reserve will be undertaking a more extensive policy analysis regarding this topic, with a potential policy update occurring as part of the Management Plan update in 2014. The LACs will be asked to provide input if a policy change is proposed.

Visitor Use Monitoring

Work is underway with UNCW researchers to develop a methodology for quantifying annual visitation to the Reserve. A generalized framework is being designed as well as a methodology and statistical tool to produce an annual visitor count for the Masonboro Island Reserve as a pilot of the methodology. Preliminary data collection occurred in September. Fall baseline data collection took place in October. Additional data collection will take place through 2013. Another visitor use project is underway with researchers from NCSU. This effort includes developing methods to allow volunteers to assist with monitoring specific visitor related activities at the Rachel Carson and Masonboro Island components. Topics under consideration include visitor-horse interactions and proliferation of social trails.

New Business

Army Corps projects

The Army Corps will be undertaking repairs to the jetty during the winter. Rock will be added to portions of the jetty where the wall is exposed, east of the island and extending into the ocean. Rock will be temporarily staged on the island adjacent to the jetty within the Corps' existing easement area. No heavy equipment will be on the island during the operation. In addition, some shoaling near the ICWW end of Shinn Creek just north of the Reserve boundary will be addressed. Disposal of this material will occur outside the Reserve boundary, so this project will result in no direct involvement with the Reserve.

Member Roundtable (with Reserve staff response in italics)

- Mr. O'Keefe suggested that Airlie Gardens be considered as a location for informational signage. Many local 3rd and 8th grade students visit this site for educational programs related to the state science curriculum.
- Lt. Payne suggested that the Sheriff's Office may be able to help with locating the owner of the stranded sailboat.

- Mr. Helms expressed appreciation for the opportunity for the Division of Parks and Recreation to work with the Reserve, acknowledging the Park's ownership of a parcel of approximately 120 acres on Masonboro Island.
- Mr. Wilgis noted that the Coastal Federation is glad to continue to relay volunteer announcements sent out by the Reserve to their volunteers and members. He also expressed interest in working in conjunction with the Americorps staff person, if the position becomes funded.
- Ms. Harcke reported that the FOR fundraiser was successful, despite Sandy passing through the area the weekend that it was held. The total amount of funding that will be available to support programs is not yet known, but funding outreach programs and providing for seasonal needs such as intern salaries is the organization's priority.
- Mr. Raney asked whether any acquisitions were coming up. *No acquisitions are underway. The NC Coastal Land Trust continues to pursue acquisition of inholdings.*
- Ms. King expressed her willingness to relay information about Reserve operations back to the Town of Wrightsville Beach.
- Mr. Willard stated that he is happy to be serving on the Local Advisory Committee.
- Mr. Johnson shared Masonboro.org's willingness to help focus resources on the effort to end the Fourth of July party. He also expressed the willingness of this organization to support education efforts.
- Mr. Romano inquired whether research was being undertaken to study overwash patterns. *Some research has been conducted in the past related to sediment movement. No research is currently underway to analyze overwash patterns specifically at Masonboro Island.*

Meeting Follow Up

- Proposed meeting dates for 2013 are March 11, June 10, and November 4.