



**Masonboro Island Reserve
Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, March 11, 2013, 6 pm**

Attendance

<u>LAC Partner Organization Members</u>	<u>Present</u>
NC Audubon, Walker Golder	No
Friends of the Reserve (FOR), Joanne Harcke	Yes
New Hanover County Sheriff's Office, Lieutenant Matt Payne	No
New Hanover County Planning Department, Chris O'Keefe	No
NC Coastal Land Trust, Jesica Blake	No
Division of Marine Fisheries, Chip Collier	No
Division of Parks and Recreation – CB, Chris Helms	No
Town of Wrightsville Beach, Elizabeth King	Yes
<u>Community Members and Community Organizations Members</u>	
Neal Andrew	Yes
Richard Cecelski	No
Masonboro.org	No
Haywood Newkirk	Yes
William Raney	Yes
Pat Rittenmeyer	Yes
Sam Romano	Yes
Dr. Anthony Snider	No
Dr. Amanda Southwood-Williard	Yes
Surfrider, Cape Fear	Yes
Ted Wilgis	No
Martin Willard	Yes
<u>Others Present</u>	
Hope Sutton, DCM/NCCR & NCNERR Stewardship Coordinator/Southern Sites Manager	

Presentation – Byron Toothman

NCNERR Research Program and SWMP

Research Specialist, Byron Toothman, delivered a presentation on the research program and activities of the NC National Estuarine Research Reserve. The presentation included information about the System Wide Monitoring Program, an effort of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System nationwide, of which the Masonboro Island Reserve is a part. The program monitors water quality, weather, and biological factors at 28 reserve sites across the nation. The presentation also discussed the fish kill that took place near the north end of Masonboro Island in January 2013. The data from the long-term water quality monitoring station located at Loosins Creek recorded the rapid drop in dissolved oxygen that resulted in this massive die-off of menhaden.

Reserve-wide Update

- The DENR Americorps project that would include a position for the Southern Sites office will be resubmitted as a three-year project. If funded, an Americorps member would begin in fall 2013 and would work on education and outreach programs, as well as coordinating volunteers.
- A fulltime temporary environmental educator will begin work in April. The part-time seasonal field coordinator will also begin in April. Three paid interns are expected to begin at the end of May.
- Budgets at both the state and federal level are not finalized; Reserve staff are preparing for expected, but uncertain, reductions to operational funds.

Site Update and Old Business

Routine activities

Use of the site has been minimal, as expected during the winter season. Routine program activities, including research programs and stewardship activities, have experienced no unusual occurrences in recent months, with the exception of the fish kill previously discussed.

Species of concern monitoring programs

Preparations for the summer field season are underway. The Reserve will host three paid interns and one part-time monitoring coordinator, as well several unpaid interns from UNCW's Environmental Studies and Biology Departments. These individuals will conduct the sea turtle monitoring program, assist with monitoring of diamondback terrapins, and support public outreach efforts. Funding for seasonal positions is derived from several sources and through several programs. If conditions change and one or more of these positions cannot be funded, sea turtle monitoring activities may need to be scaled back. Monitoring of American oystercatcher nesting will be conducted by Audubon.

July Fourth

In discussions with the New Hanover County Sheriff's Office (NHSCO), the Division has stated an objective of ending the "party" aspect of this holiday gathering, including illegal activities such as littering, underage drinking, and drunk and disorderly behavior. For the 2013 holiday, the number of law enforcement officers and the number of hours officers are present will be increased. The Division is committed to directing additional resources to the law enforcement operation. The Division is also working with the Department and the NHSCO to explore additional options for addressing these issues. It is recognized that a change in strategy may be necessary to reach the state goal; many approaches are under discussion.

Visitor Use Monitoring

The pilot project to establish a baseline annual visitor use number is underway, with seasonal data collected in October and March. This project will continue through fall of 2013.

Signage

Informational signs and bulletin cases were installed in November and December. Signs containing seasonal content will be posted inside the bulletin cases.

Red fox management

Two weeks of red fox management were completed. Three foxes were removed. This effort is being undertaken in order to bring the level of predation of sea turtle nests in line with the recommendations of the Loggerhead Recovery Plan, which specifies a level no greater than 10%. Samples were taken from removed animals to support genetic research at UNCW related to understanding the origin of these animals in the region. Some funding will remain for follow-up removal during winter 2014.

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 requested use of the Reserve for this purpose. The Reserve staff provided a recommendation to the State Property Office. One-time permission was granted for access to the Reserve for this purpose at the cost of \$2/cu. yd. These funds are directed to the State's general fund. The Reserve will be undertaking a more extensive policy analysis regarding this topic. If a policy update is proposed, the LAC will be asked to comment prior to the inclusion of the policy in the update of the NCNERR Management Plan, due to be revised in 2014.

New Business

Review of LAC Operating Procedures

When the LAC Operating Procedures was adopted, Reserve staff specified a review of the document after one year of service. Members were asked to review the document and send any comments or suggested revisions to the site manager. LACs for all sites were asked to provide comments to the respective site manager. Site managers will review comments and

produce an updated document. The revised document will be presented at the fall LAC meeting.

Member Roundtable (with Reserve staff response in italics)

- Ms. Harcke requested that Friends of the Reserve be informed if funding for seasonal staffing becomes problematic so that funds can be raised and donated for this purpose.
- Mr. Willard asked about sea level rise and whether its effects on access to the Reserve are being considered. *This topic has not yet been addressed, but can be added to climate vulnerability assessment work being discussed.*
- Ms. King asked about communication with the Town of Wrightsville Beach regarding the Fourth of July efforts. *The site manager communicates with Wrightsville Beach staff and the Mayor as needed for coordination of efforts.*
- Mr. Romano suggested that oyster restoration opportunities be explored.
- Mr. Andrew inquired whether local citizens should encourage New Hanover County Commissioners to become involved with the effort to end the Masonboro Fourth of July gathering. *Reserve staff will continue to explore all options for addressing the issue.*
- Mr. Ahlum suggested that when jetty repairs or similar activities are occurring, signage should be installed to provide information to the public. He also suggested that Masonboro Island provides economic benefit to the County; a study by UNCW Cameron School of Business faculty discusses these benefits.

Meeting Follow Up

- Upcoming meeting dates June 10, and November 4.