

# Masonboro Island Reserve Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes Wednesday, 8 June, 2011, 6-8 pm

# **Attendance**

LAC Members	Affiliation/Interest	<u>Present</u>
Ms. Jesica Blake	N.C. Coastal Land Trust	Yes
Mr. Richard Cecelski	Commercial User	No
Lieutenant Matt Payne	New Hanover County Sheriff's Department	Yes
Mr. Ted Wilgis	Non-profit/Education/NC Coastal Federation	Yes
Ms. Amanda Southwood-Williard	UNCW Biology Department	No
Mr. Rich Carpenter	Division of Marine Fisheries	No
Dr. Steve Everhart	Division of Coastal Management	No
Mr. William Raney	Community Member	No
Mr. Walker Golder	Non-profit/Audubon	No
Dr. Anthony Snider	UNCW EVS	Yes
Others Present		
Jason Dail	DCM, Southern Sites Stewardship and Education Specialist	
Hope Sutton	DCM, Stewardship Coordinator and Southern Sites Manager	
Sean Ahlum	Surfrider National, Recreational User	
Neal Andrew	Community Member, Recreational User	
Haywood Newkirk	Community Member, Recreational User	

# Reserve Program Update - Hope Sutton

# Rules review process

The objective of the Rules Review Process is to produce recommendations for updating the current rule language for the ten Reserve sites to make rules that are: clear and consistent for the public, effective for management of the sites, and enforceable by the appropriate agencies.

Following a series of rules review meetings in January and February, Reserve staff drafted recommended rule updates. Staff took the following approach in evaluating the current rules and determining the need for rule updates: for each previously identified management topic, staff 1) discussed how the Reserve's current rules do or do not support effective management; 2) identified the intent of a rule related to each topic; and 3) drafted/edited rule language for each topic determined to be appropriate to achieving management goals. Draft language will next be refined in cooperation with N.C. Division of Coastal Management (DCM) policy analysts and provided to the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for review. Local Advisory Committees (LAC) will review the draft rule language and public meetings will be held prior to beginning the formal rule making process. There is a need to communicate with the public about the reasons a rule update is being pursued and explain that the goal of the process is to clarify the uses that are and are not allowed in order to remove the ambiguity in the current language. Informal meetings with concerned community members have been considered as a way to try to allay fears that the rule update will lead to greatly restricted access and use of the Reserve by the public. As Masonboro is the only site among the Reserve at which camping is allowed, a task force of local citizens is being considered as a way to refine the policies and rules regarding this use.

## Local Advisory Committee procedures document

The document detailing operational procedures for the LACs is in review at the DENR Secretary's office. Once approved, the document will go into effect immediately and open positions will be announced so that interested parties can submit applications to be considered for appointment.

# <u>Site Update – Hope Sutton</u>

#### Visitor count project

Methodology for the visitor count project continues to be pursued. The site manager and interns will collect data this summer as time allows.

## Signage project

The Reserve's signage update project continues. "Welcome" signs are under contract and bids are underway for the informational signs.

### <u>Pre-season preparations</u>

The spring/summer monitoring season is underway. The temporary staff person has been working to finalize protocols for species of concern monitoring programs and managing data and field activities. Three seasonal interns are largely responsible for day-to-day field activities. Planning for the July Fourth holiday is complete and will be very similar to last year.

### House Bill 901

A Bill was introduced into the State House by Representative Danny McComas (R) to commission a study to evaluate "the protection of Masonboro Island in order to assure that the

ecological systems of the island are maintained and preserved and to assure that the public retains access to the island." The bill has an associated cost of \$25,000 per year for two years.

### Member Roundtable and other comments

- Mr. Wilgis asked about whether local officials were being engaged about House Bill 901.
   He also suggested that if informal community meetings were to take place regarding the rule changes, members of the LAC be present as a panel to help the public understand the management reasons for rule updates and present alternate perspectives.
- Ms. Blake agreed with the idea of LAC members assisting with educating the public about the rules updates and other management issues.
- Lt. Payne addressed the preparations for July Fourth and general boat patrol operations.
  The boat patrol will conduct regular patrols through and around the Reserve through
  the course of the summer. The "task force" of area agencies will increase law
  enforcement effectiveness overall. Aerial footage should be available for the Fourth, as
  well as other weekends to aide in understanding use patterns.
- Mr. Andrew expressed interest in being involved with the camping task force if it comes to be.
- Dr. Snider and Mr. Newkirk discussed the need for the public to understand the reasons research is a priority over recreation. Mr. Newkirk stated that the public needed to be reassured that access would not be taken away.
- Mr. Ahlum suggested that a public relations campaign was needed to raise the public's
  understanding and appreciation of the Reserve. He expressed the desire to see more
  interaction between the Reserve's friends group, Friends of the Reserve, and the LAC
  members. He raised ideas about how endowment funds to be raised at the FOR fall
  fundraiser would be used and ideas about how the endowment should be structured
  and controlled.
- The LAC as a whole expressed support of Mr. Ahlum's comments about the need for a comprehensive public relations/marketing campaign for the Reserve.

## **Meeting Follow Up**

Other 2011 meetings are scheduled for August 17<sup>th</sup> and November 7<sup>th</sup>.