

**NC Coastal Resources Advisory Council
K.E. White Center, Elizabeth City State University
Elizabeth City, NC
January 23, 2002
Meeting Summary**

Council Call to Order

The CRAC meeting began with an announcement of replacements for members who have left the Council. Chuck Askey has been replaced by Bill Morrison, Julie Hunkins has been replaced by Harrison Marshall, Tom Richter has been replaced by Elwood Padrick, and Tom Casell has been replaced by Melba Laney. Replacements have not been identified for Haskell Rhett, Bob Pacioccio, and Joe Hughes.

Nominations and Election of New CRAC Officers

Jim Mulligan, the nominating committee chairman, announced committee recommendations for new CRAC officers. The nominating committee recommended Ginger Webster as Chair and Robert Shupe as Vice Chair. A move to accept nominations was seconded and passed unanimously by the Council.

Update on Coastal Habitat Protection Plan Process

Mike Street updated the Council on the status of the Coastal Habitat Protection Plans. A Source Document will be produced that will provide background information and will address six major threats affecting the coast: 1) nonpoint source pollution, 2) habitat loss, 3) shoreline stabilization, 4) fishing gear impacts, 5) marina siting and docks, and 6) closure of shellfish waters for harvest. The Source Document will also provide options for dealing with these threats. Following the Source Document will be the development of 11 area plans, and the first two area plans will be the Chowan and Coastal Ocean plans. The Source Document and the two area plans will go to various committees in early summer, and the CRAC will receive the documents at this point. Mr. Street emphasized that the drafts will not contain any recommendations – this task falls on the Intercommission Review Committee (IRC). The IRC will be making recommendations during the summer and fall. The next drafts, which will include recommendations, should be completed by late this fall. In early 2003, all three

documents will go to the CRC, EMC, and MFC for formal action. Mr. Street will be giving a thorough presentation of the draft documents during the July CRAC meeting. He emphasized that these habitat protection plans are important to local governments because they will tie in with stormwater rules, beach nourishment, shoreline stabilization, shellfish closures, etc.

Community-based Oyster Reef Restoration Project

Jeff DeBlieu, with The Nature Conservancy, gave a presentation on a new effort to begin habitat restoration work on oyster reefs in Pamlico Sound. The Nature Conservancy entered into a cooperative agreement with NOAA to do several community-based restoration projects. Mr. DeBlieu stated that Pamlico Sound was selected as a project site because NOAA had existing relationships with partners in South Carolina and Virginia to do oyster reef restoration work and wanted to include the entire region. First year goals for the Pamlico Sound project include identifying an area to construct oyster reefs, gathering baseline data and developing research and monitoring protocols; designing a GIS-based model of the estuary to assist with identification of high priority restoration sites; and developing public outreach and volunteer programs. Mr. DeBlieu also identified several longer term goals. These include securing funding for a comprehensive oyster reef habitat protection plan for the Pamlico Sound; establishing an interconnected network of estuary management areas; increasing knowledge of subtidal oyster reef ecology; increasing native oyster biomass; building broad public support for the conservation of oyster habitat and estuarine ecosystems; and solving shellfish disease problems.

Mr. DeBlieu concluded with his vision for the future. This vision includes: 1) a comprehensive, science-driven restoration plan implemented at a large enough scale to reverse the catastrophic degradation to oyster reefs that occurred in North Carolina 100 years ago; 2) a cooperative, community-based program that includes public and private agencies, commercial fishers, and the public; and 3) a sophisticated understanding of the value of the estuaries and the ecosystem services.

Old Business/New Business

Some clarification was requested for local governments regarding mapping activities in the 30-foot buffer. It was unclear whether any mapping activities were taking place or not. If field representatives have been engaging in mapping

activities, it was requested that information be provided as to the criteria being used to determine when man-made ditches are included in the buffer. Charles Jones responded by saying that it depends on whether the ditch serves primarily as a drainage function or has become part of the estuarine system. Mr. Jones further stated that it can be difficult to determine when a ditch becomes part of the estuarine system, but that vegetation and animal species are factors to consider. Mr. Jones explained that DCM's jurisdiction has not changed as a result of the 30-foot buffer rule, and that he would be happy to meet with local governments and constituents to better explain this issue.

Next, Ginger Webster, new Chair of the CRAC, stated four goals that she has for the next meeting: 1) work with state staff to fill existing CRAC vacancies; 2) review the CRAC guidebook, although she does not anticipate making many changes since the guidebook is relatively new; 3) have individual conversations with each CRAC member, either by phone or e-mail, on topics they would like to see addressed; and 4) develop long term agenda plans. Ms. Webster then expressed a debt of gratitude for the leadership of Wade Horne over the past three years. Having no further business, the CRAC adjourned at 11:40 am.