

**NCSCP Steering Committee Meeting Summary  
March 8, 2017  
Weymouth Woods - Sandhills Nature Preserve**

Steering Committee Attendance:

Present

Pete Edmunds	Chair	Fort Bragg/DPTM
Dave Heins		Fort Bragg/DPW
Brady Beck		NCWRC
Pete Benjamin		USFWS
Jimmy Dodson		NCDPR
Jay Carter		SEI
Sarah Crate		NCFS
Jeff Marcus		TNC
Stephanie Wagner	(alternate for Nancy Talton)	SALT

Absent

Scott Pohlman		NCDENR/CPCA
Susan James		USAEC

Other Attendees

Susan Miller (USFWS), Andrew Schock (Longleaf Council Partnership), John Hammond (USFWS), Kyle Sonnenberg (SALT), Gretchen Cole (TNC), Julie DeMeester (TNC), Rhonda Sturgill (TNC), Caroline Krom (USFWS), Jesse Schilachi (Fort Bragg), Kerry Brust (SEI), Janet Grey (Fort Bragg), Ryan Bollinger (Longleaf Alliance), Rex Badgett (NCDOT), Barry Hull (Fort Bragg), Jay Carter (SEI), Stephanie Wagner (SALT), Andy Van Lanen (SEI)

**Notes**

**Overview of NCSCP Conservation Plan: (Jeff Marcus)**

- The plan targeted 4 major habitat types: Blackwater Streams, Upland Depressional Wetlands, Upland Longleaf Pine, and Streamhead Pocossins.
- For each habitat type, there were goals set for assessing their condition. In addition to assessment, there were restoration targets set for each.
- In addition to assessment and restoration targets, the plan outlines low, medium, high, and severe threats to these habitats within the Sandhills.
- Target species have also been set for each habitat type.
- The plan also provides suggestions for ways to address the threats, as well as meet restoration targets after assessment of the habitat has taken place.

### **Blackwater Stream Analyses: (Matthew Moskwik)**

- Matthew presented several analyses which detailed current and recent trends in water quality and quantity.
- There are significant positive relationships between the amount of forest and natural cover in a watershed or active river area and the fish and macroinvertebrate bioclasses. Similarly, the amount of impervious surface in a watershed or active river area is negatively related to the fish and macroinvertebrate bioclasses.
- Forest/natural landcover loss and impervious surface have increased across the Sandhills, especially in the Fayetteville area.
- Within the Drowning Creek watershed, flow has declined, as well as there has been an increase in the amount of nitrogen and phosphorus.
- Within Little Creek watershed, flow has declined for Flat Creek, and dissolved oxygen has decreased and nitrogen has increased.
- Within the Hitchcock Creek watershed nutrients have declined, but sediments (total suspended solids, turbidity, and conductance) have increased.
- Overall findings are that raw monitoring data is becoming more limited and land protection/restoration is one of many 'tools' to improve water quality and quantity. Additionally, there are opportunities for the partnership to expand its role by getting involved in agriculture/urban policies and land-use planning.

### **Longleaf Partnership Council Update: (Andrew Schock)**

- Andrew was introduced to longleaf pine in the Sandhills and worked on RCWs.
- The Longleaf Partnership Council's role is to implement America's Longleaf Initiative, which is to restore 8 million acres of longleaf.
- The Council is working with local implementation teams to reach that goal.
- The Council is pushing federal agencies to assess and restore longleaf on their properties and work with private landowners.

### **RLUAC Joint Land-use Study: (Jim Dougherty, provided by Susan Miller)**

- The project is on-schedule. It is a 3-year study. They've had some kick-off events and over 80 people have been interviewed. There are new noise contours being established for Fort Bragg. New details will be presented at the next RLUAC meeting.

### **Party for the Pine/Fire for the Forest: (Jesse Wimberley, provided by Brady Beck)**

- A website is up for the event ([partyforthepine.org](http://partyforthepine.org)), which will be on Saturday, April 22 from 10AM – 3PM at Weymouth Woods Boyd Tract. There will be a number of events for families.

### **Model for Identification and Condition of Longleaf Stands in NC: (Matthew Moskwik)**

- TNC has undertaken a project in collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service to map the locations of longleaf stands and the condition of those stands throughout most of eastern North Carolina. The model is being built using FIA data and NAIP imagery.
- The first products from the model should be available within a few months. Completion of the entire project is not expected until early 2018.

### **WORKING GROUP UPDATES**

#### **Resource Management Working Group** – Brady Beck

- Brady has recently taken over as the chair and will plan a fall field tour. Topics may include fire, RCW foraging guidelines, and ephemeral wetland restoration/management.

#### **Communications Working Group** – Debbie Crane

- No report provided.

#### **RCW Working Group** – Jay Carter, provided by Kerry Brust

- Since the 2016 RCW breeding season, the RCW Recovery Working Group (WG) has focused on management of Safe Harbor properties supporting RCW groups and properties that have potential for future RCW recruitment, as well as management of RCW habitat on public lands.
- The number of active clusters on private lands around SOPI is declining, probably due to increased development and housing. The group is focusing on how best to work with landowners for management of RCW habitat on these private lands.
- The group has also worked on introducing birds to new locations in the SOPI region.

#### **Land Protection Working Group** – Jeff Marcus

- Buck Rub and Hutchinson will be transferred to WRC soon.
- There are 8 properties that are currently in negotiation for purchasing.

#### **Reserve Design Working Group** – Matthew Moskwik

- The working group is finishing up a number of projects including: conducting upland longleaf surveys, writing a report from last year's ephemeral wetland surveys, updating the smoke awareness layer for the conservation plan, building a model to identify and assess the condition of longleaf pine, and conducting the blackwater stream analysis presented at this meeting.

### **PARTNER UPDATES**

#### **NCFS** – Sarah Crate, highlights include:

- Spring Happening longleaf events will be taking place in the region. The events are geared toward landowners. The goal is for 75 landowners to attend. The events take place on May 3.

#### **USFWS** – Pete Benjamin and John Hammond, highlights included:

- There is a new deputy field supervisor and assistant field supervisor.
- There has been verification of northern long-eared bat in several new counties in the coastal plain of the state. Very few new records are coming from the Piedmont. They may be active and present throughout the entire year.

SALT – Stephanie Wagner, highlights included:

- SALT has put together their NFWF application for land acquisition and outreach to private landowners.
- A lot of planning for Party for the Pine is also taking place.

NC Parks – Jimmy Dodson, highlights included:

- Weymouth Woods hired a new ranger.
- The parks are noticing growing season effects already because of the early spring.
- Carver's Creek is back in full operation; fully recovered from Hurricane Matthew, except for the dam.

SEL- Kerry Brust, highlights included:

- They are putting in recruitment clusters, including a new cluster in the North Country, part of the Walter Moss Foundation.
- Woodpecker monitoring is about to begin – Year 38.
- A new website is operational.

TNC – Jeff Marcus, highlights included:

- Nothing to report.

Ft. Bragg - Pete Edmunds and Dave Heins, highlights included:

- More live fire will be occurring on the base.
- A proposal has been received to remove a few dams on the Little River.
- The burning on Fort Bragg has been aggressive this year.

WRC- Brady Beck, highlights included:

- The cooperative agreement with the TNC burn crew is going well.
- There were very few dormant season effects this year due to the early spring.
- There will be Wildlife Action Plan Workshop in Raleigh on June 15.

### **Other News and Points of Discussion**

- Longleaf Partnership Council meeting will be April 3-4 in Montgomery, AL.
- Cape Fear Wildlife Expo will be in Fayetteville this year. The date is March 17-19.
- Longleaf Alliance has a brand new website. On it are links to all the local implementation teams. A longleaf academy will be held in Cheraw, SC in a couple of weeks.
- A longleaf academy will be held in SOPI in late September. The topic will be longleaf groundcover.

Meeting Adjourned at 4:05 PM