

Agenda
North Carolina Sandhills Conservation Partnership Meeting
1:00PM – 4:30PM Wednesday, December 19th, 2018
Weymouth Woods - Sandhills Nature Preserve

➤ Welcome and Introductions

Steering Committee Attendance:

Present

Pete Edmonds - Chair	Ft. Bragg/DPTM
Sean Gough	NCDPR
Jeff Marcus	TNC
Jay Carter	SEI
Jesse Wimberly (Alternate for Nancy Talton)	SALT
Pete Benjamin	USFWS
Monica Stephenson	Fort Bragg/DPW
Sarah Crate	NCFS

Absent:

Brady Beck	NCWRC
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Other Attendees

Susan Miller (USFWS), Barry Hull (ACUB), Mike Martin (NC State Parks), Michael Spisak (USFS), Andy Van Lanen (SEI), Mike Martin (NCWRC), Brian Yeich (NCFS), Kerry Brust (SEI), John Hammond (USFWS), Ana Prinz (SEI), Mark Prinz (NC State Parks), Jimmy Dodson (NCDPR), Jackie Britcher (Ft. Bragg ESB), Rex Badgett (NCDOT), Sarah Achlinger, Rhonda Sturgill (ORISE Fellow)

➤ RLUAC Joint Land Use Study Results - Vagn Hansen, Benchmark Planning

- Vagn Hansen presented Benchmark Planning's 4th Land Use Study that is funded by the Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment. It is a forum for military installations to identify ways to mitigate barriers and provide sustainment of military training. It also enhances communication between communities and the installation and raise awareness in communities of compatibility issues.
- Joint land studies look at a host of different issues pertinent to that installation including endangered species, wildlife habitat, noise from military training operations, aircraft activities, air and water quality, urban encroachment, and white pollution.
- 5-mile study area boundary that corresponds to the 5-mile statutory land use notification boundary around military installations that certain land use decisions related to zoning, subdivision activity, tall structures. Communities are required to notify Fort Bragg of activities with the 5-mile area of Fort Bragg and the RULAC committee returns recommendations, but the communities are not bound to follow them.
- Key Findings of JLUS

- With the exception of Richmond and Scotland counties, population growth in the region is projected to continue increasing
- Changes in develop landcover particularly eastern Hoke county and western Cumberland, and the south side of Fort Bragg, eastern Moore county and southern Hartnett county are hot spots where growth has occurred
- Fort Bragg and regional partners have done an excellent job of maintaining conservation lands that support RCW longleaf pine habitat.
- Changes in Training Mission
 - The Army has shifted training from 15 years of counterinsurgency training to a Decisive Action Training Environment (DATE).
 - An increase in combined arms live fire maneuver training
 - New noise contour study did not reveal any major expansions
 - Significant use of Small Unmanned Aerial Systems (SUAS) and Tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (TUAV). Need for continued monitoring/management of airspace
- Recommendations from the JLUS. This study focused on areas that needed to be preserved (categories: critical and important)
 - Critical: areas at the end of runways, RCW foraging areas, areas under Special Use Airspace corridor and Low Level Aviation Routes, and wildlife habitat connector areas
 - Important: lower noise sensitive areas farther from runways, areas under aviation routes, areas with biodiversity rates greater than 7
 - Compatibility map is on <https://www.sandhillsgis.com/> The plan is to take the study's recommendations and implementing them on the local level.
 - Plan is on the RULAC website.
- Uwharrie and Sandhills Joint Landscape Priority Effort – Jesse Wimberly, SALT and PBA, and Jeff Marcus, The Nature Conservancy
 - Jesse said that NFWF is the main funder of longleaf restoration. The partnership takes turns applying for funding for public land restoration and private land restoration. Working with private landowners between Fort Bragg and the Gamelands and now Uwharrie to rebuild the natural corridor. Last year USFS came to the big goal of restoring longleaf on 8 million acres by 2025. Last year million acre initiative was announced. The funding potential has increased and he is trying to bring Uwharrie's into the grant that has a February 9, 2019 deadline. Jesse will have a draft of the grant by mid-January and will need letters of support from various agencies. The PBA has become a national model with 5 new PBAs using it as a model.
 - Jeff said that the big picture context is that the grant will help the work that Jessie started with Prescribe Burn Association with part of it looking at a geographic focus that expands the work into this new landscape. They are looking into another shared burn crew that can assist Mike's team with burning and timber markings and other type of activities, but whether the crew run through the NC Forest Service, Federal employees, or TNC still needs to be decided.

- TNC is also applying for a NFWF grant in the Cape Fear Arch landscape and will be doing a Bachman's sparrow survey evaluating them there and in the Sandhills. Bachman's sparrow is an indicator species that NFWF uses to measure progress with longleaf restoration. Wildlife commission had done a baseline status of Bachman's sparrow about 6 years ago when NFWF started. It will be a help to the partnership because our monitoring plan has also used Bachman's sparrow as an indicator. The baseline will help evaluate longleaf in the Sandhills.
- Jesse mentioned that he was excited about the landscape scale of the project. There is a funding mechanism that the USFS has with joint chiefs that he is hoping to tap if connectivity to the Uwharries can be shown. A landowner contact priority list is close to being completed for the area.
- Mike Spisak added that there is big support behind the Million Acre Challenge in from the USFS Regional Forester, Ken Arnie, down to Mike's supervisor, Allen Nicholas. It adds capacity through the way NFWF grant has come out this year through working closer with the Forest Service there is more opportunity to expand opportunities for restoration on Forest Service land.

Break

➤ Working Group Reports and Discussion

- **Resource Management** (Brady Beck, absent)
No update
- **Communications** (Debbie Crane, absent)
 - No update
- **RCW Recovery** (Kerry Brust)
 - Kerry provided a brief summary of 2018 RCW monitoring activities in the context of Sandhills East and West. She said that RCWs occupancy in the gap that connects Sandhills East and West, as well as, the new connector in a more western corridor down to the Gamelands that Jeff Walters mentioned in his presentation on the species status and demographic connectivity study have been retained, but is still tenuous. The rest of the presentation centered the primary core areas.
 - Sandhills East: Since last year, 3 additional nonfederal recovery (Carvery's Creek, McCain, and Baker CE (private property), Calloway was stable last year, Southern Pine Fort Bragg estimate from Endangered Species branch was 453 (8 more than last year)
 - Sandhills West (Southern Pines, Pinehurst, western Moore County, Gamelands, Camp Mackall, private, Blue), : Sandhills Gamelands – biggest jump with 10
 - Total number of Potential Breeding Groups is 742. Good year for nesting.

- **INTRA-POPULATION TRANSLOCATION (2012 – 2017)**
All translocations from donor groups on Fort Bragg (FB) to SOPI and MOOR Safe Harbor Properties
 - **34** juvenile RCWs translocated to **16** Safe Harbor recipient clusters on **8** properties
 - **27** donor juveniles from western FB and **7** originated from FB North East Area (NEA)
- **2018 RESULTS:**
 - **13 of 34 (38%)** juveniles moved between **2012 and 2017** were observed within either SOPI or MOOR during 2018; **11 of 13** were breeders.
 - Donor RCWs produced **16** fledglings within SOPI and MOOR
 - **6 of 7** NEA donor birds retained in population through 2018

- **Land Protection** (Jeff Marcus)

Since the last meeting June 20, 2018 there has been the following Land Protection activity

- TNC purchased 182 ac. Crutchfield tract in Hoke Co on 6/22/2018. Property includes a house that will be used by seasonal burn crew.
- TNC purchased the 16 ac. Lawrence tract in Scotland County adjacent to Camp Mackall and Sandhills Game Land on 11/15/18. This property will eventually become part of Sandhills Game Land.
- TNC is currently actively working on 5 projects, 3 of which will be NC Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation trust fund working lands easements.
- No known Salt protection update.



Land Protection
Work Group update

- **Reserve Design** (Ana Castillo, absent)

- Jeff said that some data files have been updated.

➤ Partner Updates

NCFS –

- The Walthour Moss Foundation is the recipient of the North Carolina Longleaf Coalition’s NC Longleaf Honor Roll. The Honor Roll is awarded to private landowners who actively manage longleaf forests following a forest management plan and using prescribed fire. The ceremony will take place on January 17, 2019 at 10 am – 12 pm at the North May Street entrance.
- An updated longleaf pine range ArcGIS layer was released and is available on line. The layer was created for the Fire Maintained Savannas and Woodlands chapter of the book,

Eastern Old Growth Forest (edited by Andrew Barton and William Keaton) that was released in November 2018.

- The next NC Longleaf Coalition meeting will be February 13th from 1-3:30 p.m.
- National Wild Turkey Federation is still looking for the right candidate for their Sandhills Forester position. Please share this job posting to help spread the word.
<https://nwtf.applicantpro.com/jobs/952280.html> The application deadline is January 11, 2019.

Cost share money for private landowners will be available

NCDOT–

- No update

AEC–

- No update

USFWS – John Hammond

- The RCW species status assessment process is wrapping up, the team met for last time recently and the document is out for peer review. Representatives from affected regions are meeting in Atlanta to come up with results.

Longleaf Alliance –

- A longleaf 101 class will be held soon.
- They are mapping longleaf stands throughout the Sandhills.

SALT –

- No updates

NC Parks –

- No update

SEI–

- No update

TNC –

- No update

Ft. Bragg DPTM-

- No update

Ft. Bragg ESB –

- No update

WRC–

- No update

RLUAC:

- No update

Sustainable Sandhills:

- No update

- Next Meeting: June 20

➤ Adjourn 4:27 pm