

**NCSCP Steering Committee Meeting Summary  
December 2, 2015  
Weymouth Woods - Sandhills Nature Preserve**

Steering Committee Attendance:

Present

Jon Chase	Chair	Fort Bragg/DPTM
Susan Miller	(Alternate for Pete Benjamin)	USFWS
Jeff Marcus		TNC
Nancy Talton		SALT
Phil Doerr		SEI
Gabriella Garrison	(Alternate for Brady Beck)	NCWRC
Jimmy Dodson	(Alternate for Jon Blanchard)	NCDPR

Absent

Dave Heins	Fort Bragg/DPW
Mark Bost	NCFS
Susan James	USAEC

Other Attendees

Barry Hull (Fort Bragg), Jessie Wimberley (SALT), Jay Carter (SEI), Casey Cook (NCWRC), Chuck Church (Fort Bragg), Amy Wing (USFWS), January Myers (USFWS), Steve Anchor (SEI), Tad Davis (Spring Lake), Nathan Shepard (NCWRC)

Notes

**Prescribed Burn Association: (Jesse Wimberley & Susan Miller)**

- Prescribed burn associations are common in the western United States, but are not found in the Southeast.
- The association would not be doing the burning, but would assist landowners that are interested in managing their properties with fire.
- The first meeting for outreach to landowners will be on February 11.
- The Nature Conservancy is requesting funding for a Longleaf Academy class which would help to educate landowners about burning and habitat management.

**South Atlantic Leadership Team: (January Myers & Amy Wing)**

- January Myers is part of a team at the US Fish and Wildlife Service which is tasked with working with the South Atlantic LLC.
- The South Atlantic LLC has chosen indicator species for the various ecosystem/habitat types that occur within the Southeast.
- The overall goal is to quantify how the Fish and Wildlife Service is improving habitat for indicator species, as well as the ecosystems in which they exist.

### **Sandhills Game Land Road Project Update: (Gabriella Garrison)**

- Efforts to widen roads on the game lands have been suspended.
- There are some additional road improvements being planned (6 Points, Nursery Lane, Dixie Pond Road).
- Disturbance will be minimized during these road updates.

### **Gopher Frog Head-start Program: (Nathan Shepard)**

- Habitat for gopher frogs in the Sandhills has declined. Currently, they only occur at one pond in the Game Lands.
- The game commission is working to restore and create wetlands on the Game Lands.
- The game commission has designed a head-start program where gopher frog egg masses are removed from the field, raised in captivity until metamorphosis, and then released back to their natal (source) pond.
- The head-start program was located at the Hoffman depot in 2015. Next year, NCWRC will be collaborating with the NC Zoological Park.

### **Ephemeral Wetland Update: (Matthew Moskwik)**

- A model was developed to identify at-risk amphibian species in the Sandhills. Preliminary results indicate that gopher frog, southern and ornate chorus frogs, oak toad, dwarf salamander, and little grass frog are at-risk of decline in the Sandhills.
- These results are backed up by field data and statistical analyses.
- An additional analysis showed regions of the Sandhills which need protection and management in order to properly protect migration corridors for amphibians.
- The main areas in need of protection are between Blocks B, C, and O.

## **WORKING GROUP UPDATES**

### **Resource Management Working Group – Chris Jordan**

- There will be a meeting on Dec 15. It will be a native grass restoration tour. If interested, meet at 9AM at the Hoffman depot.

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

- The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary safe harbor event took place in early November. Approximately 60-80 people attended.
- Future priorities include establishing a state of the Sandhills annual report.

### **RCW Working Group – Jay Carter**

- The RCW Working Group is currently compiling the 2015 breeding data. The largest increase of birds occurred on Block A. There was a slight decrease on private lands around Southern Pines. Camp MacKall maintained the same number of breeding groups.
- The drop in number on private lands is probably due to habitat degradation.

- Four of seven birds translocated in 2014 from Fort Braggs to Southern Pines survived.
- Additional translocations are planned.
- Two RCWs have recently been found near Jordan Lake. They originally came from Fort Bragg.

**Land Protection Working Group** – Jeff Marcus

- TNC has closed on the McDonald and Hutchinson tracts.
- There are several properties that will close soon: Arrowhead, Hawkes, Austin, Haskell, Downing, and Stolting tracts.
- There are also some property transfers taking place. Sassafras, Gibson, and Poplin are being transferred to NCWRC. Mutzberg will be transferred to the City of Spring Lake.

**Reserve Design Working Group** – Scott Pohlman & Matthew Moskwik

- The final draft of the reserve design document was presented to the steering committee in May 2015.
- Future priorities include assessing remaining potential upland habitat and working with the steering committee to identify additional conservation needs in the Sandhills.

**PARTNER UPDATES**

The meeting ran short on time and most partner updates did not occur.

WRC - highlights included:

- Sandhills GIS website has updated data from the Partnership.

**REGIONAL PARTNER UPDATES**

The meeting ran short on time and regional partner updates did not occur.

**Other News and Points of Discussion**

- The new MOU for the partnership is still in progress.
- The next meeting will be a joint meeting with the Greater Uwharrie Conservation Partnership. It will be on March 9.

Meeting Adjourned at 12 PM