

MEETING SUMMARY

North Carolina Sandhills Conservation Partnership
Reserve Design Working Group Meeting
September 21, 2011 – 9:30am – 2:30pm
Weymouth Woods – Library

ATTENDEES

Ryan Bollinger	USFWS/TNC-ORISE	Scott Pohlman	NHP
Brenda Johnson	Sustainable Sandhills	Mike Schafale	NHP
Ryan Elting	The Nature Conservancy	Neville Handel	TNC-ORISE
Nick Haddad	SEI & NC State	Pete Campbell	USFWS
Jeff Marcus	WRC		

RESULTING ACTION ITEMS

- 1) **Run Reserve Design as a Conservation Target through Open standards model and complete conceptual diagram. Include basic strategies and objectives to see whether a Reserve Design Conservation target will accomplish the Partnerships Goals.**
- 2) **Work with the RCW Working Group to re-evaluate Tier 1 and Tier 2 RCW resources for the Green Growth Toolbox.**
- 3) **Schedule a time and location for rare species habitat connectivity seminar.**
- 4) **Send Scott comments on the draft RDWG Plan when he sends out updated draft.**
- 5) **Set up meeting for Carvers Creek Case Study Project.**
- 6) **Pete will send a link to the open standards webinar out to the reserve design working group once the webinar has been recorded.**
- 7)

NOTES

PRESENTATION ON OPEN STANDARDS MODEL AND HOW RESERVE DESIGN FITS IN

Pete gave an overview of the Open Standards and Miradi software to the RDWG, explaining how we planned to use these tools to develop the new five year strategic plan for the partnership. The goal of the core team (Pete, Ryan E., Ryan B., and Neville) is to develop a number of straw dogs to present to the working groups, and to have a draft plan completed by the end of 2011.

Mike wanted to know at what point would the planning process point to spatially explicit on the ground conservation actions. The response was that the reserve design would provide spatially explicit information upon which conservation actions could be based, and that the Miradi “bubbles” should contain spatially explicit information.

We then began discussing how we would identify a comprehensive list of important targets to use in the Open standards/Miradi framework. We discussed using coarse and fine filters, lumping and splitting, targets vs. key ecological attributes, etc. as tools for trying to consolidate our list. We also decided that coming up with 8 or

fewer targets that will represent everything we want to protect in the conservation plan is probably an unrealistic goal, so we are throwing that number out and will focus on finding the right number for this project.

Pete will send a link to the open standards webinar out to the reserve design working group once the webinar has been recorded.

A question was asked about how we prioritize land protection decisions if we are trying to decide between 2 different tracts of equal conservation value (i.e. both are identified in the reserve design) when we have limited resources. The answer provided was that this is an atypical scenario, and that land protection decisions typically rely on the best judgment of the buyer as informed by knowledge, expert advice.

Sara wanted to add a specific strategy to the plan to incorporate the Green Growth Toolbox to help achieve the partnership's conservation goals.

DISCUSSION ABOUT CONSERVATION TARGET IDENTIFICATION

CONSERVATION TARGET COMMUNITY AND SPECIES GROUPING EXERCISE

Pete asked the group whether they thought that protecting community types would be a good way to protect the species that live in them, as adopting this strategy could decrease the number of targets to a manageable list that would provide tangible results. He said that we would do this in a way that would take into account subtle factors that could affect different species even if their habitat was protected, so as not to dumb down the effectiveness of the plan. Mike responded that this strategy would not necessarily work for the rare species that only exist in a small subset of these habitats. He stressed that for these species, it is important to identify and protect the places where they are, warranting their status as a separate target.

When discussing the idea of lumping targets, it was pointed out that if we adopt this strategy we need to make sure the targets that are lumped together retain their identity and don't get lost.

We then started to look at the individual species lists put together by Gabrielle and Scott. We discussed the need to identify and fill information gaps on those species that had them, and to collate the information on the lists. It was clear looking at the list that some common species like brown-headed nuthatches could be used as indicators, but did not warrant target status.

Brenda brought up the point that using charismatic species that people can identify with might give us leverage to partner with more people and be more successful in our strategies.

The group began a process to group individual species with community types and identify whether the species should be considered targets, indicators, or could be removed from the list. Specific habitat and management requirements were suggested to be included in the working table. The process was time consuming for the group and Nick suggested that the process could be completed more effectively as individuals where more access to data was available regarding each species.

Nick's idea was to make the Reserve Design the Conservation Target and monitor outcomes based on # of species occurrences protected. The need for tracking the viabilities of species and areas that need to be restored was identified (Reserve Design 2.0)

The Conservation Targets topic was tabled.

Action Item: Run Reserve Design as a Conservation Target through Open standards model and complete conceptual diagram. Include basic strategies and objectives to see whether a Reserve Design Conservation target will accomplish the Partnerships Goals.

NICK HADDAD ANNOUNCEMENT

NEW STUDY ON MEASURING CONNECTIVITY OF RARE SPECIES

A graduate student at NC STATE has developed a model for predicting habitat connectivity for a few select rare species in the Sandhills. The results could inform the reserve design and even be a layer for connectivity. He is looking for the appropriate forum for a presentation of the results. Pete suggested a seminar. A date was not set but we are looking at late October.

Action Item: Schedule a time and location for rare species habitat connectivity seminar.

NEW CLIMATE CHANGE CENTER

The NC STATE Southeastern Climate Change Center has just gotten up and running. They are looking for a case study area and the Sandhills region is being considered. The Partnership would be directly involved. More information to come.

REVIEW OF THE CONSERVATION RESERVE DESIGN WORKING GROUP DRAFT PLAN

REFINING THE DESIGN – THREATS

Primary and Secondary home/resort Development should be bundled into one threat. Forestry Practices should be renamed “Incompatible Forest Practices” and pine straw harvesting should be lumped underneath. Invasive species should be added as a threat. Increased water use should be a threat. Climate Change should be included as a threat.

REFINING THE DESIGN – RCW

The RCW Working group should address how to handle RCW sites with respect to the Green Growth Toolbox and mapping of Tier 1 and 2 resources. Pete suggested that Tier 1 could be sites that contribute to restoring core populations and Tier 2 would be buffer support populations.

Action Item: Work with the RCW Working Group to re-evaluate Tier 1 and Tier 2 RCW resources for the Green Growth Toolbox.

REFINING THE DESIGN – RESTORATION AREAS

There is a need to map and track restoration areas. A mechanism for identification of restoration areas should be created.

REFINING DOCUMENT

The “Methods for Mapping” section of the Plan should be removed and placed as an Appendix.

MEETING CLOSE

A new meeting date was not set.

Action Item - Send Scott comments on the draft RDWG Plan when he sends out updated draft.

Action Item- Set up meeting for Carvers Creek Case Study Project.