

Minutes
North Carolina Sandhills Conservation Partnership
Steering Committee Meeting
1:00PM – 4:00PM Wednesday, March 18th, 2020
CONFERENCE CALL

- Welcome and Introductions
- Steering Committee Attendance

Present

Jeff Marcus	TNC
Brady Beck	NCWRC
Clyde Sorensen	SEI
David Heins	Fort Bragg/ED
Pete Benjamin	USFWS
Sean Gough	NCDPR
Brian Yeich	NCFS
Pete Edmonds - Chair	Ft. Bragg/DPTM

Absent

Monica Stephenson	Fort Bragg/DPW
Susan James	USAEC
Crystal Cockman	Three Rivers Land Trust

Other attendees:

Jackie Britcher, Jessie Schillaci (Fort Bragg ESB), Susan Miller (USFWS), Rex Badgett (NCDOT), Ana Castillo (ORISE Fellow), Sarah Crate, Ryan Bollinger (Longleaf Alliance), John Hammond, Caroline Krom, Susan Miller (USFWS), Kacy Cook (NCWRC), Rhonda Sturgill, Debbie Crane (TNC), Rex Badgett (NCDOT), Jesse Wimberley (PBA), Wendy Dunaway (FPWC), Kimberley Rust (USFS), Alan Schultz (Fort Bragg)


- Longleaf Element Occurrence (LEO) Project – Ryan Bollinger, Longleaf Alliance
 - This project is being led by the Carolyn Kindell and Amy Knight with the Florida Natural Areas Inventory in partnership with the Longleaf Alliance. The main goal is to use existing GIS data from conservation partners to map longleaf stands in the range. They have successfully inventoried longleaf in Florida and are expanding this effort to the Sandhills LIT.
 - Many partners have already contributed their data to this project and Ana is working to verify sites based on her knowledge but will input from partners will be needed as this project develops.
 - Karen Zilliox with the LLA plans to speak to the partnership at our June meeting regarding the implementation of the field-work associated with this project. There will also be a 25k RFP for a contractor/Partner to fund interns or staff to do the field surveys.

- Management at Hoke Community Forest – Jesse Wimberley, Sandhills Prescribed Burn Association
 - Jesse has been working with the Hoke Community Forest – the only known community forest in the Southeast to help implement restoration. The forest was created in partnership with TNC, SALT, DOD, and Hoke County in response to loss of tax base as land is placed in conservation in the county. The forest was previously owned by International Paper, and Three Rivers Land Trust owns two easements on the property.
 - There has not been a lot of management on the property but Jesse is working with the County to develop a new management plan, in the process of putting in fire lines, and converting loblolly stands to longleaf. The Commissioners are excited and see it as an opportunity to generate income from the forest to the community and use it as a teaching platform. This will provide outreach opportunities to communities who do not traditionally engage with longleaf conservation.

- LIT Boundary Expansion Proposal – Jeff Marcus, The Nature Conservancy
 - There has been ongoing discussion to include the Uwharrie NF as part of the Longleaf Implementation Team boundary as they continue their commitment to longleaf restoration on the forest. The expansion of the boundary would be beneficial because it would expand grant opportunities such as the Joint Chiefs Initiative in Partnership with NRCS.
 - A proposal with a map of the proposed boundary will sent to the Steering Committee to approve before the proposed expansion is sent to America’s Longleaf to become official.

- Break
 - NCSCP 20-Year Anniversary – Debbie Crane and Ana Castillo, The Nature Conservancy
 - To commemorate the occasion, we are planning some outreach opportunities to celebrate the Partnerships collective accomplishments. The Partnership logo has been modified and updated on our website (“Celebrating 20 years of Collaboration”).
 - Ana will send out a questionnaire to the steering committee to gather some information and stories to highlight individual partners through social media outlets and our website.
 - We were hoping to use the Party for the Pine as part of the outreach but since it was cancelled in light of the pandemic, our outreach efforts will focus on social media and local news outlets for the time being.

- Working Group Reports and Discussion

- **Resource Management** (Brady Beck)
 - No Update
- **RCW Recovery** (Kerry Brust)
 - No Update
- **Communications** (Debbie Crane)
 - No Update
- **Land Protection** (Jeff Marcus)
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Land Protection
Work Group update
- **Reserve Design** (Kacy Cook)
 - The Corridor Project Working group met to discuss next steps in engaging with landowners in the Uwharrie- Sandhills Corridor. There is a plan to host a meeting at the end of May to share information about the priority area and the resources available. They hope to help form a network of landowners interested in the ecology of the area and build on land ethic.

➤ Partner Updates

Longleaf Alliance – Ryan Bollinger, Sarah Crate

- The Bi-annual conference will take place in October 2020 in Wilmington and there is an open call for abstracts. Please submit your award nominations to Ryan in various categories acknowledging organizations and people who go above and beyond in longleaf conservation.
- The Longleaf Partnership Council meeting scheduled for April is likely to be cancelled as well as many other events such as the 10-year celebration of America’s Longleaf event in DC.

NCWRC – Brady Beck, Kacy Cook

- A survey for new cavities was recently completed on the Sandhills Gameland and 3 new clusters were discovered, bringing the total to 6 new clusters in 2020.
- WRC is working from home or the field staff is burning and doing management work as long as it is permitted.
- The town of Hope Mills invited Kacy to give a talk on the Green Growth Toolbox and passed a resolution of support of using the GGT. Pinehurst is working on their conservation plan as well as the Town of Aberdeen.

Fort Bragg – Alan Schultz, Pete Edmonds

- A contractor with NC State Parks contacted Fort Bragg to be part of regional trail study. Reach out to Alan if you are interested in being a part of this study or want more information.

- About 7,000 acres have been burned so far this year and they are in the process of rearranging the fireline system including planting trees in areas to discourage travel.

USFWS – Pete Benjamin

- There are no updates on the listing status of the Red-Cockaded woodpecker. Pete is working on an internal proposed change in workflow for handling lot reviews.

TNC – Jeff Marcus

- In light of the pandemic, there is a high likelihood that prescribed burning operations will cease.

NC Parks – Sean Gough

- Sean has a new position with the City of Raleigh and Jimmy Dodson will step in to the Partnership Committee.

Three Rivers

- No Updates

NCFS – Brian Yeich

- Prescribed burning operation have ceased but they are still accepting applications for cost share.

USFS – Kimberley Rust

- A few prescribed burns were completed the previous week but burning has now ceased. There is a timber sale preparation ongoing in a stand slated for longleaf conversion.

DOT – Rex Badgett

- No updates

PBA – Jesse Wimberley

- The PBA is doing a planting event on private land with a small group.

FPWC – Wendy Dunaway

- A prescribed burn was recently conducted in a fire suppressed area of 20 acres and another 20 acres were mechanically cleared at Bonnie Doone. Two new RCW inserts were also installed after an active start was found. Jesse Schillaci identified the bird using the property.
- PWC added funds to the operating budget to continue stewardship, burning, and mechanical clearing.

➤ Next Meeting: TBD