

# North Carolina Sandhills Conservation Partnership Working Group Updates

## Resource Managers WG Update

There has been no activity.

## Communications WG Update

The communications working group is involved with helping plan an event on November 7, 2015 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the safe harbor program. Safe Harbor, a voluntary program encouraging land owners to provide habitat for endangered plants and animals, was born here in the Sandhills 20 years ago to give landowners incentive to conserve red-cockaded woodpeckers. We will visit the Moss Foundation on the afternoon of November 7th. The trip includes a visit to a mature longleaf pine forest to learn about red-cockaded woodpeckers and the role fire plays in maintaining their preferred habitat.

## RCW Recovery WG Update

Partners that were involved in regional RCW monitoring are compiling estimated potential breeding group (PBG) numbers for Fort Bragg and Sandhills Game Land. Preliminary data (i.e. PBG) within state and private lands RCW groups monitored by Sandhills Ecological Institute (SEI) were relayed to the SCP in June 2015. Comprehensive regional data will be finalized by end of year.

Post-nesting season results of Fort Bragg (FB) to Southern Pines-Pinehurst (SOPI) intra-population translocation conducted in December 2014:

4 of 7 juveniles moved have been observed in SOPI to date

2 of 5 females became breeders in SOPI

1 of 2 ♂/♀ pairs remained in SOPI

Recap of 2012-2014 translocation effort:

17 juveniles total moved to MOOR (10) and SOPI (7)

3 of 6 juveniles observed within MOOR in 2013

1 of 4 juveniles observed within MOOR in 2014

8 of 17 were retained to age year 1

6 of 17 produced fledglings in age year 1, 2 or 3

Recruitment SOPI Cluster 108 within Country Club of NC and Moore County (MOOR) Cluster E05 within Pinewild Golf Club are now occupied. SOPI 108 has attracted 2 first-year RCWs that were translocated from FB and MOOR E05 has been activated by a first-year RCW from SOPI.

## Land Protection WG Update

Since June 3, TNC closed on the 107 Buck Rub property in Richmond County adjacent Sandhills Game Land. This property improves management of the adjacent part of Block B of the game land, and enhances connectivity between blocks B & T which is particularly important in light of recent isolated wetland restoration work on Block T. Also, NCWRC received funding from the US Fish and Wildlife Service Endangered Species Section 6 program for the acquisition of the Poplin (Richmond Co) and Gibson (Scotland Co) tracts from TNC. They are waiting to hear about Clean Water Management Trust Fund funding to complete this purchase. The NC Plant Conservation Program received funding from Section 6 for acquisition of the Austin property at Tunstall bay in SE Scotland Co and are also waiting on CWMTF to complete the purchase. Other pending projects likely or possible to be completed in the next few months include:

- Transfer of the ~1325ac Sassafras property (Scotland Co adjacent Sandhills GL) from TNC to NCWRC
- Acquisition of the Hutchison (Richmond Co adjacent Sandhills GL) and Downing (Hoke Co adjacent Blue Farm) properties by TNC
- Acquisition of the Stolting property (Richmond Co adjacent Sandhills GL) by NCWRC
- Acquisition of the Seaboard property (along Deep River adjacent SEER training area) by SALT
- Acquisition of conservation easements on the Haskell (Scotland Co adjacent Sandhills GL), McDonald (Richmond Co adjacent Sandhills GL & Camp Mackall), and Hawkes (Hoke Co adjacent Fort Bragg) properties by TNC

#### **Reserve Design WG Update**

Scott Pohlman, Mike Schafale, and Matthew Moskwik met on August 27 to discuss possible next steps in implementing the conservation plan for the Sandhills. A conservation prioritization model was presented as a potential way to begin this process. In the coming months the working group will discuss the usefulness of implementing this model, as well as discuss other specific steps that can be taken to move conservation forward in the Sandhills. The group is interested in feedback from members of the steering committee during this discussion.