

North Carolina Sandhills Conservation Partnership

Quarterly Meeting Minutes

“The Past and Present of Native Americans in the Sandhills”

1:00-4:30 PM, Wednesday, September 12, 2024



Morning Field Trip

Partners gathered at the Lumbee Cultural Center in the morning. Kevin Melvin of the Lumbee Tribe gave a great tour of the property, telling about the recent history of the Lumbee Tribe acquiring and renovating the property, what is known about the historical and cultural significance of the area for the Lumbee, and future projects planned, including further prescribed burning, longleaf restoration, and reconstruction of historical buildings to serve as a museum for education and culture.

Attendance

(Apologies for any errors or omissions!)

TNC: Alan Teed, Cason Verhine, Dana Carpenter, Deb Maurer, Erick Rietschier, Jeff Marcus, Lydie Costes, Matt Greene, Sarah Hecoeks

Fort Liberty: Alan Schultz, Brian Ball, Darin Burns, Jackie Britcher, Jessie Schillaci, Mike Lynch, Pete Edmonds, Robert White, Rodney Fleming, Stacy Huskins

The Ember Alliance: Elizabeth Smith, Killian Farrell, Matthew Buice

PWC: Josh Junot, Rhonda Locklear, Wendy Dunaway, Zach Hardwick

SCP: Julie Moore

NC NHP: Michael Schafale, Nathan Shepard, Scott Pohlman

Woodland Restoration Inc: Brian Johnson

NC State Parks: Jason Haywood, Jessie Jordan, Jimmy Dodson, Zach Lunn

NC WRC: Alisa Davis, Aubrey Greene, David Mattocks, Gabriela Garrison, Mike Martin, Tim McFayden

Lumbee Tribe: Harlen Chavis, Kevin Melvin, Larry Edwards, Mikayah Locklear, Nancy Fields

USFWS: Jennifer Archambault, John Ann Shearer, John Hammond, Pete Benjamin

USFS: Susan Miller

SPBA: Jesse Wimberley

SEI: Andy Van Landen, Kerry Brust, Phil Doerr

CBA: Courtney Steed, Mitch Locklear

Three Rivers: Crystal Cockman

Quail Forever: Eric Sytsma, John Laux

NCSU: Lauren Pharr

NCNG: Jason Lautenschleger

VTech: Jeff Walters

Land Acknowledgement

Acknowledging the presence of the indigenous peoples including the current homeland of the Lumbee Tribe and historically other tribes including the Tuscarora and Coharie. These peoples played and continue to play an important role in stewardship of the land and waters of this region for centuries. A key goal of this meeting is to share about current initiatives and collaborations and spur ideas for future collaboration.

Working Group overviews & updates

RCW Recovery (*Kerry Brust, SEI*):

- Decline of RCW groups around golf courses
 - Planning one last effort to bring back birds
 - Negotiated funds through CCNC and Bob Farren for artificial cavities, restricting cavities, and possible translocation
- Plan to work with partners to determine areas of greatest need on Moore County private lands with National Wildlife Federation grant
- Hoffman Road area has had a lot of success and support from private landowners
- Avian Keratin Disorder (AKD)
 - 5% presence in RCWs in the NC Sandhills 2019-2021
 - Seasonal: shows up in spring-summer, beak gets worn down fall-winter
 - Seen in both adults and juveniles
 - Collaborating with Alaska Science Center
 - Waiting on swab sampled results
 - Has been seen in many species. If you notice beak deformity, report to the Alaska Science Center:
https://alaska.usgs.gov/science/biology/landbirds/beak_deformity/observerreport.php

Land Protection (*Crystal Cockman, Three Rivers*):

- Sloan Pond
 - 5.7-acre wetland acquisition made by Three Rivers in July
 - Salamander habitat
 - Made possible by the Herp Society & private donors
- Deans Tract
 - 195-acre habitat along Drowning Creek
 - Land & Water easement along Drowning Creek and working lands easement donated by the Deans family
- McKinnon Tract
 - 760-acre farmland protection and habitat protection (wetland impoundments) in Scotland County donated by the McKinnons

Lumbee Project Updates - *Kevin Melvin & Larry Edwards, Lumbee Tribe*

- Longleaf restoration project at the Cultural Center
- Camp Island Property: In the process of trying to acquire about 1,400 acres on the eastern side of the county along Big Swamp
 - Use for tribal member hunting
 - Could benefit from fire, partnering with CBA
 - Replant longleaf in upland areas
- ~315 acres owned in Maxton

- Dam busted; environmental enhancement grant to clean up facility and assess usage – planning to use for conservation and education
- Want a seat at the table for plans on tribal lands, which has not always been the case in the past.
- Burning and longleaf restoration
- Agricultural & Natural Resources Department serving as extension agents to support tribal members
- Always looking for opportunities to collaborate and expand capacity. Even small grants can have a high impact for the tribe.

Preserve History Project – *Nancy Fields, Museum of the Southeastern American Indian*

- Nancy told the story of her ancestor who was indentured, sued for his freedom, and traveled down from Virginia to NC. Found evidence that he has connections to what is now Donahoe Bay, a Carolina Bay owned by The Nature Conservancy. This connection helped spur collaboration between TNC and the Lumbee.
- Working on kiosks to tell the history of special historic places – Donahoe Bay, Green Swamp, Coharie River, Calloway Forest
- Bringing kids out onto the land to collect longleaf pine needles for basketry
- Given the history of restriction of access for native peoples, it is very important to create safe spaces and a sense of belonging

Calloway Forest Preserve: Significant Finds & Ancient Features – *Harlen Chavis, Lumbee Tribe*

- Harlen presented on the archaeological artifacts he found at Calloway Forest, including petroglyphs, handprints in rock, pottery shards, a white quartz projectile point, a paint bowl, a broken stone blade, and a spearhead. Some of these artifacts may be thousands of years old, and it is thought that the first inhabitants were in the area about 10,000 years ago.

The Flame That Binds: The Lumbee and The Longleaf Pine – *Courtney Steed & Mitchell Locklear, Cultural Burn Association*

- Fire was an essential part of Native American culture, important for food, medicine, warming, warfare, and protection.
- Fire as sovereignty: land was the most important asset, taken away by colonialism. Fire is key for indigenous land stewardship and returning the productivity of the land.
- The Cultural Burn Association is working to bridge the gap between the past (cultural/ecological knowledge) and present (scientific approach). They use traditional fire practices, empower people to do so safely, and restore native landscapes.
- The CBA connects landowners with essential resources, training, and knowledge exchange pathways that support traditional indigenous practices for ecological and cultural restoration

- The CBA also perpetuates ancestral fire practices in a safe and effective way by providing the means for more positive outcomes for indigenous landowners working toward common goals of climate resiliency and cultural sovereignty
- Writing wildfire protection plan for community and encourage landowners to sign up for NC Certified Burner Course
- Important to create space for indigenous practices even when they don't align with other partners' practices
- CBA has over 200 burns planned for next year

Recognition of Jackie Britcher

In honor of her retirement, partners acknowledged the many contributions of Jackie Britcher over her career, including translocation of RCWs, promoting growing season fire on a 3-year rotation, RCW monitoring program establishment, first installation to reach RCW recovery goals, and involvement in the NCSCP. Jackie was presented with the Champion of the Sandhills Award and the Iron Mike Award.

Partner Updates

- Streamflow meeting Sept 17; reach out to Lydie if not on the contact list but interested.
- NHP is hiring a new biologist in the northeast (candidate selected), and two new temporary biologists for peatland habitat (positions open)
- Venus flytrap genetics work: let Julie know if you know private landowners with VFP or great habitat for it inland from coast
- TNC hiring ~12 seasonal fire crew positions, including six in the Sandhills.
- Fayetteville Public Works continuing longleaf restoration work and will be burning this winter. Have added three small tracts and will continue to add property in that area.
- SPBA getting ready for burn season and just reapplied for Joint Chiefs 2.0. Still moving forward with current project. Event for landowners October 22nd.
- Fort Liberty ES Botany program found a new location of Michaux Sumac this year. Tri-Colored Bat is expected to be listed soon, so they will be doing an assessment soon. St Francis Satyr numbers have crashed the last three years: last year found none; this year found two. Spent extra time this year looking; think the dry/unusual weather during springs may be a factor.
- New Environmental Division Chief at Fort Liberty who is very busy but will be involved in the future.
- Fort Liberty Forestry Program has some vacancies.
- NC National Guard got some funding for conservation work at Fort Butner – integrated fire management, invasive species, pollinator surveys. Inherited the ACUB program. Working with USFWS for Tri-Colored Bat management plan.
- NCWRC hosted a landowner workshop on prescribed fire, insects, herps, and native plants that had a great response (long waiting list). Doing it again on October 4th. Funding with America the Beautiful grant includes outreach; will do more workshops next year.
- NC State Parks filled Deputy Director position and moving from four areas to five (Sandhills will be in the Central region).
- USFWS Raleigh office moved locations this summer. Tri-Colored Bat final rule seems imminent. Proposal to re-classify Northern Long-eared Bat as well. Package being put together to help

landowners and federal agencies understand the impacts. Bats are listed because of White-Nose Syndrome, which does not exist in eastern NC; doing research with funding from NCDOT to understand this discrepancy and wintertime behavior in this area. Possible listing coming through for Monarch butterflies. Petitioned to list Wayne's Warbler.

- USFWS desperately understaffed, hoping to do some hiring.
- Upcoming workshop for Monarchs at Weymouth Woods
- Croatan project for reducing fire risk funded at \$5 million
- USFS a bit short-staffed (recent retirements).
- Temporary Forestry Technician slot (11-months) open with WRC; reach out to Tim or David
- Haven't had a sighting of Frosted Elfin on Gamelands for almost 20 years; found three locations this year! They have a very short flight period and over-winter in the higher leaf litter so burning could be detrimental. This finding is spurring conversations about burn timing and collaborate across state lines to bolster populations.
- New Restoration Ecology program at Virginia Tech that includes involvement of indigenous knowledge; Jeff will be reaching out to today's presenters to discuss opportunities for collaboration.
- Next meeting: Dec. 4, theme will be Fort Liberty.