

FY 2015 Communications Working Group Annual Report

Date: December 2, 2015
Working Group Chair: Debbie Crane
Date of Last Meeting:

Goals:

The goals of the CWG are to establish an external communications program for the Partnership that raises awareness and educates the target audiences about the work of the Partnership and maintain strong internal communications within the Partnership.

Objectives:

- 1) Brand the Sandhills Conservation Partnership.
- 2) Build Support and Awareness for the Sandhills Conservation Partnership through the use of earned or free media.
- 3) Build Support and Awareness for the Partnership in the community through partner and other groups.
- 4) Build Support and Awareness for the Partnership through nontraditional media
- 5) Create stronger ties with elected officials, particularly at the state and federal level
- 6) Ensure partners are informed of potential news

Strategies:

- Develop boilerplate information for Partnership and partners to use in news releases, publications, and op-eds.
- Strategy: Develop op-eds from partners for placement in Sandhills newspapers and other media.
- Publish and publicize annual "State of the Sandhills" report.
- Plan at least one Sandhills media event a year.
- Keep Partnership website (ncscp.org) up-to-date with information useful to the general public.
- Distribute news releases regarding Sandhills Conservation to partners prior to release to the media, and provide notification about ongoing media requests.
- News stories dealing with Sandhills conservation should be compiled by the communications committee and emailed to membership list.

Performance Measures: The success of the CWG can be measured by the following:

- Events held by the Partnership
- Events Partnership is represented (Partnership information displayed)
- State of Sandhills Report

FY 2015 Accomplishments:

- Despite horrible weather, we had a fairly decent SHA celebration at Walthour-Moss
- Upcoming: SALT is considering a fire festival modeled on the Wilmington fire festival, this communication group will help with the publicity regarding that event
- Upcoming: End-of-the-year op-ed and/or news release about successes in the Sandhills

RCW Working Group Annual Report FY 2015 (*Fall 2014 – Fall 2015*)

Goals: Develop a working plan which provides guidance and expertise to facilitate recovery of the North Carolina Sandhills Primary Core RCW population (SANDHILLS EAST) and the Essential Support Population (SANDHILLS WEST); goals of 350* and 100* potential breeding groups (PBG), respectively.

* Note: Population goals within both SANDHILLS EAST and SANDHILLS WEST were met by 2005. However, SANDHILLS EAST and WEST, will not be officially recovered until all habitat variables have been met and the populations are not reliant on artificial cavities.

Objectives:

- 1) Develop a series of strategies to address the overall recovery of the RCW population in the North Carolina Sandhills, including connectivity between subpopulations within SANDHILLS EAST and WEST.
- 2) Work with other working groups and partners for implementation of RCW recovery strategies.

Strategies:

- Convene RCW Working group as needed to discuss RCW population monitoring and other recovery-related activities.
- Prioritize focus areas for acquisition by Land Protection WG which will benefit RCW recovery and longleaf pine conservation/restoration.
- Develop and update RCW monitoring plan(s) suitable to assess population dynamics and maintain recovery status as required by the USFWS Recovery Plan (Second Revision 2003).
- Coordinate and execute as needed intra-population translocation efforts to select focal areas identified by group.

Performance Measures:

- Sandhills East and West Population Status: estimated Potential Breeding Groups (PBGs)
- Translocation Results
- Regional Coordination Efforts

Priorities:

- 1) **Priority:** Funding to maintain NC Sandhills long-term demographic study.
Action: Lobby for continuing the current level of population monitoring where funding potential exists and pursue grants where appropriate.
Status: Monitoring current and future years contingent on funding.

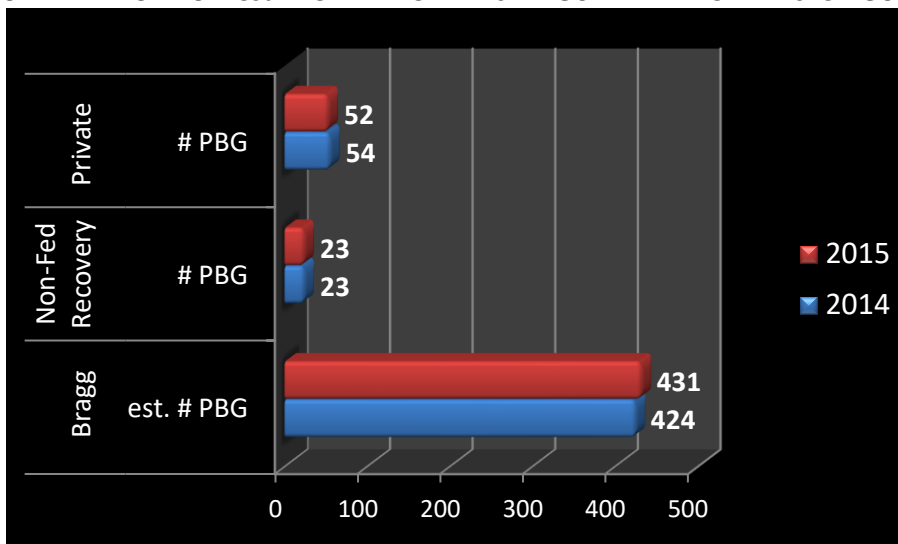
- 2) **Priority:** Support funding for land acquisition of critical habitat parcels and corridors.
Action: Provide corridor analysis to guide prudent and timely acquisitions.
Status: Work in progress by TNC, SALT and WRC.

- 3) **Priority:** Support maintenance and expansion of growing season fire regimes on public and private lands (where feasible).
Action: Advocate prescribed fire.
Status: Budget/staff cuts throughout State are restricting prescribed fire efforts significantly reducing acres burned.

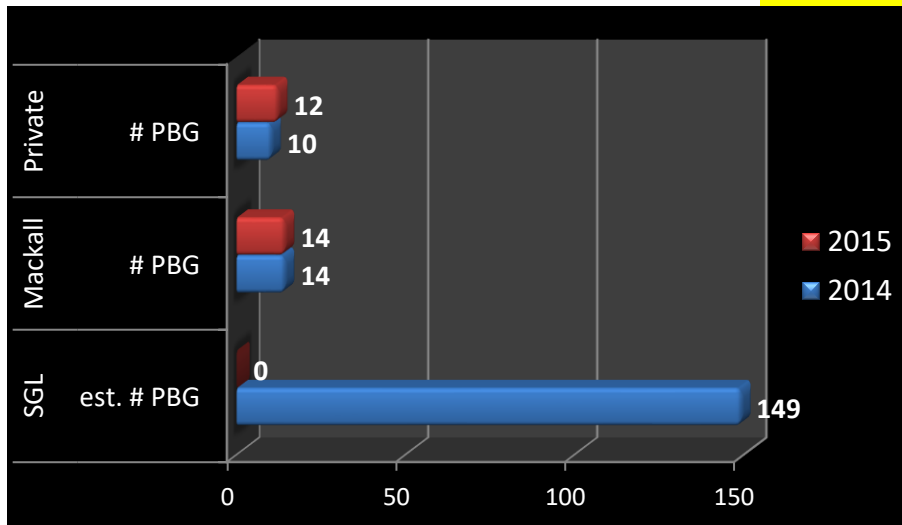
- 4) **Priority:** Artificial cavity provisioning, cavity restricting and translocation on private lands
Action: Prioritize and implement RCW translocations to SOPI and MOOR.
Status: Continued efforts to stabilize and increase clusters on private lands

FY 2015 Accomplishments:

- **SANHDILLS EAST** est PBG --- TOTAL 2014 **501** TOTAL 2015 **506**



- **SANDHILLS WEST** est PBG --- TOTAL 2014 **173** TOTAL 2015 ?



- Increase of PBGs within NC Sandhills: **674 (2014)** → Not yet calculated entire region 2015
- **SANDHILLS EAST INTRA-POPULATION TRANSLOCATION RESULTS**

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 during 2015
- 2 of 5 females moved 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.

- **2015 SANDHILLS EAST INTRA-POPULATION TRANSLOCATION SCHEDULED**

Seven (8) juvenile RCW will be moved from Fort Bragg donor groups to Pinewild Golf Course and Southern Pines / Pinehurst (SOPI) support population during December 2015. Recipient clusters targeted

will be recruitment clusters MOOR E04 within Pinewild Country Club (CCNC) and SOPI 54 (Pinehurst No. 1), each to receive a juvenile pair. Solitary male groups at SOPI E05 (Paint Hill Farm – Ives), and SOPI 61 CCNC will have juvenile females translocated to their respective territories. Both SOPI E05 and SOPI 61 were solitary male groups in 2014 that received juvenile females, however, neither retained females into 2015.

Future Priorities / Actions:

- (1) Continue to monitor both Sandhills East and Sandhills West RCW populations at comparable effort to recent years during 2016.
- (2) Continue to supplement juveniles within SOPI and MOOR Safe Harbor properties to expand and stabilize groups within Sandhills East private lands.
- (3) Develop a 5 year plan to guide SOPI and MOOR management activities. Expand education and outreach on Safe Harbor Properties regarding RCW ecology, with attention to species persistence within a developed and fire suppressed landscape.
- (4) Identify ACUB, Conservation or Safe Harbor Properties for additional population expansion opportunities.

FY 2015 Reserve Design Working Group Annual Report

Date: December 2, 2015
Working Group Chair: Scott Pohlman
Date of Last Meeting:

Goals:

The goal of the RMWG is to synthesize biological information and create a vision to guide long-term conservation of native Sandhills ecosystems.

Objectives:

- 7) Identify the most important areas to conserve from a biological perspective.
- 8) Identify buffers to adequately conserve the resources and ecological processes of protected areas.
- 9) Identify connections between important areas that promote gene flow and wildlife movement.
- 10) Provide this information to other working groups and partners for implementation of land protection, resource management, and/or private land strategies.

Strategies:

- Identify biological targets for conservation, including species, natural communities, and animal habitats unique to the Sandhills
- Map areas of known and potential ecological significance
- Identify functions of individual connectors and buffers; fill information gaps; map functional connectors and buffers
- Periodically review new information and update reserve design
- Interpret and share this information for the purposes of implementing the conservation plan, including for other working groups, the Green Growth Toolbox, and communication with local land use planners and governments.

Performance Measures:

The success of the RDWG can be measured by the following:

- Acres conserved within Reserve Design priority areas (joint metric with LPWG)
- New information shared with working groups, GGT, and local land use planners and governments
- Annual joint meetings held to share new information for implementing conservation plan

FY 2015 Accomplishments:

- Final draft of the Reserve Design working group's conservation plan presented to the Steering Committee (May, 2015)

Priorities:

- Ground-truth potential areas, and continue to provide up-to-date information on quality habitats and conservation priorities
- Work with Steering Committee to determine what would be most useful from the Reserve Design working group to move conservation forward

FY 2015 Resource Managers Working Group Annual Report

Date: December 02, 2015

Working Group Chair: Chris Jordan

Date of Last Meeting: 10/5/2015

Goals:

1. Promote cooperative management of natural resources in the NC Sandhills.
2. Evaluate cooperative strategies for natural resource management at the landscape level.

Objectives:

- 1) Increase cooperation and knowledge sharing between land managers and landowners to improve land management of private and public lands.
- 2) Increase knowledge and skill of prescribed burning community and increase the number of qualified private burners.
- 3) Work with other working groups and partners to ensure implementation of restoration and management activities on key conservation lands identified in the reserve design.

Strategies:

- 1) Establish an MOU for TNC, WRC, State Parks, and Ft. Bragg to work cooperatively on habitat management projects, invasive species eradication, RCW provisioning, training courses, and monitoring work.
- 2) Support Partner prioritization of prescribed fire as a management tool for all partners
- 3) Work to reduce barriers for private landowners to implement prescribed fire through education and workshops, training landowners and private contractors in fire management and expanding the use of cost share programs.
- 4) Support expansion of EDRR efforts in Sandhills to reduce impacts of invasive species
- 5) Work to procure adequate funding to implement strategies and meet objectives.

Working Group's Performance Measures:

- 1) Holding 2 meetings per year. This will include a mix of field trips and indoor meetings w/ mix of agency, non-profit, private land managers, and interested parties.
- 2) Signed MOUs among all partners with multiple annual cooperative burning projects and resource sharing.
- 3) Partners achieving fire management goals.

FY 2015 Accomplishments:

Priorities: - get group back to meeting at least twice a year

-update and increase member participation

-will be holding a native grass harvesting and establishment tour on sandhills game land on the 15th of December.

FY 2015

Land Protection Working Group Annual Report

Date: December 2, 2015

Working Group Chair: Jeff Marcus

Date of Last Meeting:

Goals:

The goal of the LPWG is to coordinate the protection of a viable, ecosystem-scale network of conserved lands and waters across the NC Sandhills.

Objectives:

- 11) Protect the most important areas to conserve from a biological perspective.
- 12) Protect buffers to adequately conserve the resources and ecological processes of protected areas.
- 13) Protect connections between important areas that promote gene flow and wildlife movement.
- 14) Work with other working groups and partners for implementation of reserve design, resource management, and/or private land strategies.

Strategies:

- Utilize existing funding sources and look for new sources to protect land through fee simple purchases and easements
- Work with Partners to share information about land protection opportunities
- Conduct joint meetings with working groups as appropriate to share most up to date biological information for focusing land protection efforts
- Work with federal and state agencies that oversee cost share programs to steer financial resources to private lands in priority areas. Use safe harbor as one means to engage landowners.

Performance Measures:

The success of the LPWG can be measured by the following:

- Properties/acres protected that were identified in the reserve design/JLUS.
 - Longleaf habitat connectivity established in RD corridors
- Length of military buffers created in ACUB priority areas.
- Length/acreage of riparian corridor protected in conservation focus areas.
- Number/acres of farms and family lands placed under conservation easement.
- Funding secured for land protection

FY 2015 Accomplishments:

In FY 2015 partners closed on 7 projects totaling 2,119.7 acres. Funding sources included Army Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration(REPI) program, Clean Water Management Trust Fund, US Fish and Wildlife Service Section 6, TNC funds and NCWRC funds. The majority of these sites are destined to become part of Sandhills Game Land.

Parcel Name	Area (Acres)	Fee / Easement	Lead entity	Closing Date	Total Cost	Comment
Sassafras	1239	Fee	TNC	9/30/2014	\$2,581,081	Currently part of Sandhills GL
Gibson	379.17	Fee	TNC	3/18/2015	\$863,158	Will become part of Sandhills GL
Moses Home	127.6	Fee	TNC	4/8/2015	\$1,090,775	TNC Preserve
Claudia Goodwin	47	Fee	WRC	4/13/2015	\$72,000	Part of Sandhills GL
Ronnie Poplin	142.99	Fee	TNC	4/15/2015	\$363,927	Will become part of Sandhills GL
Womble	136.55	Fee	TNC	4/22/2015	\$157,372	Will become part of Sandhills GL
Tom Godwin	47.36	Fee	TNC	5/22/2015	\$94,497	Will become part of Sandhills GL
Total	2119.67				\$5,222,809	

Priorities:

Sandhills Area Land Trust's primary land protection priority for the coming year is the Deep River corridor in northern Moore County around the Survive, Evade, Escape, Resist (SEER) military training area. A secondary priority is the Drowning Creek corridor between Sandhills Game Land and Montgomery County. NC State Parks land protection priorities include inholdings within Carver's Creek State Park and areas that buffer and extent Carver's Creek and Weymouth Woods. The US Army and The Nature Conservancy's priority areas for REPI include the region between NE Fort Bragg and Overhills, southeastern Bragg Boundary, the "Gap" between Bragg and Camp Mackall/Sandhills Game Land, and the region between blocks B, C, and T of Sandhills Game Land. The Nature Conservancy is additionally focused on buffering and connecting other conservation lands not included in the above priority areas.