

**Minutes for the Joint Meeting of the
North Carolina Sandhills Conservation Partnership,
Greater Uwharrie Conservation Partnership, and the NC Longleaf Coalition
10:00 AM – 3:00 PM Wednesday, September 12th, 2018
Moore County Agricultural Center**

- **Welcome and Introductions**

The goals of this meeting were to provide regular partnership updates and start to create a framework for collaborative work between the Greater Uwharrie and Sandhills Conservation Partnerships.

- **Three Rivers Land Trust – Travis Morehead**

- The Land Trust for Central North Carolina has a new name but the mission remains the same. They will be continuing their work in the Yadkin-PeeDee, Uwharrie, and Rocky Rivers.
- In recent projects have 1k acres conserved goal this year, for a total of 26,000 total by the land trust. One of these acquisitions is an inholding in Uwharrie NF and added 40 acres to Morrow Mountain SP.
- Their strategy is based on CARE: **C**onserve, **A**ctively steward fee lands, **R**econnect more people to local conservation, and maintain an **E**conomically sustainable organization
- Their membership is 1,100 up from 450 mostly in Rowan County.
- Their acquisition priorities are the Alcoa Lands along the Yadkin River, expanding state/Fed land, farmland, Uwharrie trails/Blueway, and the Rocky River.
- One major fundraiser goal is for the Alcoa Lands: need 2.2 million to conserve 2.3K acres along the Yadkin River. They have 1 more year to meet the fundraising goal.
- Their outreach goals focus around connecting people with nature including hunters and anglers and youth. For example, they have the Sportsman Access Program that allows people to hunt on lands owned by the trust.

Partnership Group Updates:

- GUCP – Laura Fogo
 - The WRC funded a bat survey conducted by UNCG in the Uwharrie area and found 4 bat species were still consistently found. They also report negative findings for white nose syndrome.
 - Migratory Bird Education Project supported by the NC Museum, NCWRC, USFWS and private landowners. The project has been successful and 31 banding sessions have occurred around grasslands and wetlands.
 - The USFS plans to conduct longleaf restoration on around 5,100 acres.
 - Laura facilitated a water passage project along with many other partners for the benefit of 2 federally petitioned muscles.
 - Focus on restoration near Black Ankle bog

- NCSCP – Ana Castillo
 - The RCW species status assessment process is wrapping up, open for public comment until October 5th. Also note that the American Ornithological Society has given RCW a new name, *Dyrobatas borealis*. If you use this new name on any documentation, note that it is equivalent to *Picooides borealis* since that is the official name under the endangered species act.
 - Venus Fly Trap petitioned for status, some surveys will be conducted by the NHP in the Sandhills. Susan Miller assisting with the SSA for Southern Hog Nose
 - The LLA hosted Longleaf 201: Fire and Longleaf at Weymouth Woods, had about 50% private landowner participation, included a demo burn.
 - TNC has a new Longleaf Program Director Deb Maurer and is hosting the Fire in the Pine Festival in Wilmington, NC October 13th
 - REPI (Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration) land protection priorities were revisited recently, focus is neighboring Fort Bragg and 2 mile buffer of the Gray Eagle UAV flight path in the “gap” between Ft Mckall and Bragg.
 - TNC and WRC have been focusing on solar energy farms popping up across the state. TNC is tracking the location of new solar farms as well as there is permits for them. WRC is developing BMPs that promote wildlife connectivity as well as habitat for pollinators by planting native plants.
 - The WRC has established an artificial gopher frog breeding pond with some initial success. Cattails overtook the pond and have been difficult to control. Poor amphibian breeding due to not being wet enough. They did find 4 gopher frog masses, 270 tiger salamander egg masses, 2 of which were in new restored wetlands.
 - RLUAC is wrapping up joint land use study funded by DOD. The main purpose of the study is to help prevent non-compatible development along Ft Bragg and Camp Mckall, the flight path of the UAV. Will have recommendations regarding regional coordination, compatible growth, and environmental, and actions Fort Bragg can pursue on their own.

- NC Longleaf Coalition – Sarah Crate
 - Sarah reviewed the mission and function of the NC Longleaf Coalition, which focuses on state level planning for longleaf restoration and management. The members meet quarterly, usually in Raleigh.
 - The NCLC is responsible for gathering the data longleaf pine accomplishments for the state to report to America’s Longleaf Restorative Initiative. For 2017, restoration activities took place on 178k acres including 10k acres of planted in longleaf of which 86% were by private landowners. This marks a 30% increase all on private lands across the state.

- The NCLC website, nclongleaf.org is a valuable resource for landowners interested in longleaf pine restoration. It serves as a central hub for technical information, opportunities, and events.
 - The NC Longleaf Honor Roll program which recognizes private landowners who have gone above and beyond in their longleaf management and restoration is up and running. Please continue to nominate landowners you know.
- Presentation of the 2018 Illustris Palustris Award – NC Longleaf Coalition
John Anne Shear with the US Fish and Wildlife Service was the recipient this year due to her outstanding commitment to longleaf restoration and work with private landowners.
- Landscape Level Perspectives for Conservation Planning – Jeff Marcus, TNC and Jesse Wimberley, SALT
 - To effectively strategize conservation planning in the GUCP and Sandhills Conservation Areas it is important to think about conservation opportunities at the landscape scale.
 - One lens for looking at landscape conservation is The Nature Conservancy's landscape resiliency analysis, which identified core areas of resiliency as well as potential corridors. This analysis found longleaf areas and river system to be more resilient.
 - Jeff presented an overview of a study conducted by Pickens et al. 2017 of Bachman's sparrow habitat suitability in the region between the Sandhills and the Uwharrie NF and found that with some restoration activities, the amount of available habitat could potentially serve as suitable habitat. It found that the landscape in the Uwharrie region could be suitable but currently lacks proper management.
 - There will be opportunities for the Uwharrie NF as the USFS has been tasked with the Million-acre restoration challenge, which translates into about 7k acres of longleaf restoration for this forest.
 - Private landowners adjacent to the forest and in the corridor areas will be critical for building core habitat and a corridor to the Sandhills. Many private landowners want to engage but are in need of a process to move from interest to action.
 - The Prescribed Burn Association (PBA) can help this effort through the 3 Ps; Partnerships, process, and peer based learning to help move towards the larger landscape conservation initiative.
- GUCP and NCSCP Conservation Plans – Ana Castillo, NCSP and Brooke Massa, NC Wildlife Resources Commission
 - Brooke and Ana presented an overview of the conservation priorities for both the Uwharrie and Sandhills Conservation Partnerships. These resources

are available to the members of the partnership and to the public to help make planning decision.

- Using the Conservation Blueprint to make your proposals more competitive – Rua Mordecai and Hillary Morris, South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative
 - The Conservation Blueprint is a living plan formed based on the input of many partners and sources and is currently used by more than 50 organizations and has informed more than \$20 million in conservation funding.
 - Agencies such as The Nature Conservancy, Georgia Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the US Forest Service have all contributed towards to the development of this product.
 - The Blueprint can be used to provide landscape context to a conservation project. For example, it can provide parcel statistics on priority, probability of urbanization based on the SLEUTH model, sea level rise, presence of resilient biodiversity hotspot, etc.
 - The Blueprint uses ecosystem specific indicators (ex. Pine Praire) to compute priority scores. For example, it incorporates results from other models such the GAP model for herp indicators.
 - This product is publically available for use and the SALCC is willing and able to provide project specific feedback to improve grant proposals by using the Blueprint show how it fits into greater landscape conservation goals.

- 1:45 pm Breakout Sessions:

- Enhancing habitat on private lands around the USFS open pine forest blocks – Jesse Wimberly, SALT
 - There is a need for developing a map with priority parcels to guide landowner outreach. This map can be used to present to NRCS to indicate need for special priority for this area.
 - Need to develop strategies for addressing the backlog in burning requests in the Uwharrie area, including increasing capacity for Steven’s Amendment for burning.
- Restoring open pine habitat on Uwharrie National Forest – Mike Spisak, USFS
 - Discussed upcoming longleaf restoration projects and herb layer considerations such as planting grass plugs and broadcasting native seed. There will also be some shortleaf work but less than longleaf, in conjunction with oak/hickory forest projects.

- Connecting the Uwharries to the Sandhills – Kacy Cook, NCWRC and Ana Castillo, NCSCP
 - Discussed inputs needed create model to design corridor including species ranges and overlaps, parcels, major roads, etc. Potential to focus on the Bachman’s sparrow for open pine habitat and pitcher plant moths in bog areas.

➤ 3:00 pm Adjourn

Attendees:

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