

Agenda
North Carolina Sandhills Conservation Partnership
Steering Committee Meeting
1:00PM – 4:30PM Wednesday, March 13th, 2019
Weymouth Woods - Sandhills Nature Preserve

➤ Welcome and Introductions



Present

Jeff Marcus	TNC
Brady Beck	NCWRC
Jay Carter	SEI
Jesse Wimberley	SALT
Pete Benjamin	USFWS
Pete Edmonds - Chair	Ft. Bragg/DPTM

Absent

Monica Stephenson	Fort Bragg/DPW
Susan James	USAEC
Jimmy Dodson	NC Parks
Sarah Crate	NC Forest Service
David Heins	Fort Bragg/ED

Other Attendees

Susan Miller, Laura Fogo, Caroline Krom, John Hammond (USFWS), Debbie Crane, Deb Maurer (TNC), Stacy Huskins, Jackie Britcher, Jessie Schillaci (Ft Bragg ESB), Mike Martin, Gabriella Garrison (NCWRC), Kerry Brust, Anna Prinz, Andy Van Lanen (SEI), Alan Schultz (Ft Bragg), Rex Badgett (NCDOT), Ana Castillo (ORISE Fellow), Jesse Wimberley (Sandhills PBA), Chris Moorman, James Garabedian (NC State), Travis Morehead, Crystal Cox (Three Rivers Land Trust), Ryan Bollinger (Longleaf Alliance), Alisa (UNC- Greensboro), Wendy (Fayetteville PWC), Vince Zucchini (SALT)

- Uwharrie - Sandhills Joint Landscape Conservation Prioritization Effort – Jesse Wimberley, Sandhills Prescribed Burn Association and Bill Wheaton, Sandhills Geospatial LLC
- The purpose of this analysis is to prioritize landowners for outreach in a defined corridor between the Sandhills Gamelands and the Uwharrie National Forest. This comes after the announcement of the 1 Million Acres Challenge to restore longleaf with the UNF tasked to restore 7k acres of longleaf. The long-term goal is to create a core resilient longleaf habitat with a viable corridor in between the UNF and the Sandhills. There is an ongoing discussion on defining what the target species in this corridor might be, the restoration potential, and an implementation strategy.

- This first phase of the analysis aims to identify high priority parcels in the corridor based on a set of criteria that includes parcel size, existing known natural resources, distance from protected areas, etc. to produce a priority score.
- The next step will be to finalize the analysis and share the results with the Partnership to screen out “no-go” areas (due to degraded land use or other factors), identify existing relationships with landowners, and start develop a strategy to develop new ones with the appropriate partners.
- Some things that were discussed were the need for a clear vision of why the corridor is needed, the need for investment for building the Uwharrie NF core, and the filling the backlog of the people on the list that qualify for burning under the Wyden-Stevens amendment.

➤ Population-density mediated resource partitioning by red-cockaded woodpeckers - Dr. James Garabedian, NC State

- James presented his dissertation research which focused on RCW populations in the South Carolina Sandhills NWR and the Savannah River Site (SRS). One study looked at foraging partition utilization distribution and their home-range behavior. They found that RCWs were generally not using all parts of the 0.5 mile habitat partition equally but tended to be centered on the Cluster Centroids. Within the partitions, RCWs observed behavior was over 90% spent foraging. Overall, partitions protect extensive RCW habitat and are doing their job to protect crucial habitat but they did not find much concordance at the individual group level as some group’s home range extend beyond partitions.
- Another study used LiDAR from the study sites to help define habitat thresholds for RCW conservation including vegetation composition and structure. After conducting home-range follows to define availability/use they modeled threshold responses using LiDAR and concluded on a range of mean ideal condition for the SRS in terms of basal area of hardwood, pines, hardwood canopy cover, and pine DBH ranges but did not include groundcover.
- They found that if there were no trees with DBH greater than 10in RCWs wouldn’t use the area but were generally not affected by small pine trees as long as there were trees greater than 10-14 in DBH. RCWs were found to be sensitive to large levels of hardwood canopy cover with a quick drop off in site occupancy as it increased. See full results here: “Quantitative analysis of woodpecker habitat using high-resolution airborne LiDAR estimates of forest structure and composition”. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rse.2014.01.022>
- When looking at space-use sharing and defense under increasing density conditions, they found that RCW’s didn’t reduce their home ranges as group density increased. This leads to an increase in territorial interactions but found they would only defend high density areas. They also observed a negative relationship between home range overlap/density and fitness, so decreased nestling/fledgling production can be expected in high density areas. There was a slight benefit in increased group size but

it was not statistically significant. Ideally partitions would be closer to 120 acres but many existing designated ones are smaller.

➤ Break

➤ Working Group Reports and Discussion

- **Resource Management** (Brady Beck)
 - No Update
- **RCW Recovery** (Kerry Brust)
 - The group meet in January to discuss potential for RCW expansion in the corridor between the Sandhills and the Uwharrie NF.
- **Communications** (Debbie Crane)
 - TNC is working with the Environmental Defense Fund on an American Security Project addressing climate change as a national security issue and doing outreach. For example, they are teaming with veterans who are sharing their stories linking drought to the rise of ISIS, climate change effects on Camp Lejeune, etc.
 - Debbie is also working on creating a photo bank for Partners to draw from when they need a picture. She will be sending out a request for photos from the Partnership as needed.
 - Margaret Fields has been collecting awesome imagery with her new drone including controlled burns in the Sandhills and on Carolina Bays.

- **Land Protection** (Jeff Marcus)



Land Protection
Work Group update

- **Reserve Design** (Ana Castillo)
 - The South Atlantic LCC released the newest version of the Southeast Conservation Blueprint v3.

➤ Partner Updates

NCDOT–
No update

NCFS–
No update

AEC –
No Update

USFWS – Laura Fogo, Caroline Krom

- Laura submitted project proposal for Partners for Fish and Wildlife which covers part of the proposed corridor area between the Uwharrie and the Sandhills.
- Caroline reported from the NC Rare Flora meeting a need for conducting burns on sites with known rare plants and potential collaboration with the Sandhills PBA.
- Caroline is working with Wendy Dunaway from Fayetteville Public Works Commission on restoration work on Bonnie Doone site with recorded old growth longleaf and many rare plants. The restoration work has included some TSI and herbiciding and they are hoping to reintroduce fire into areas with large duff build up.

Longleaf Alliance – Ryan Bollinger

- Longleaf Leader is publishing a story on fire and private lands.
- America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative is releasing accomplishment report in April.

SALT/Three Rivers Land Trust –

- The merger between Three Rivers Land Trust and SALT is underway and hope to be final by June 2019. They will continue to do land protection in the Sandhills and Uwharrie landscape of piedmont longleaf.

NC Parks –

- No update

SEI – Kerry Brust, Anna Prinz

- Kerry has been performing outreach to golf courses with interest in establishing pollinator sites through the Monarch's in the Rough program with plans to plant at least an acre of milkweed. She is working on writing a proposal to get funding for bee forage habitat with Caroline Krom and Gabriella Garrison.
- RCW 2019 monitoring will be going forward with WRC and ESB for the 40th year.
- Anna Prinz reported on a recent increase of elongated bills in some RCWs which they suspect might be Avian Keratin disorder, a poecivirus. This can cause birds to struggle with foraging, pruning, and thermoregulation and possibly be fatal. The USGS is doing research on the virus and they will send samples to test RCWs from the Sandhills.

TNC –

- No update

Ft. Bragg DPTM-

- No update

Ft. Bragg ESB –

- No update

NCWRC – Brady Beck, Mike Martin

- Mike Martin reported a good year for amphibians monitoring with 2 new wetlands recorded with tiger salamander and gopher frog masses. He plans to conduct Pine Barrens Tree Frog surveys on Fort Bragg.
- Brady reported on a bill introduced by a State Senator to tax the Gamelands \$2/acres/yr to be given to Scotland/Richmond schools

RLUAC –

- Jim Daugherty retired as president and position to be filled soon.
- The Joint Land Use Study completed and can be downloaded [here](#).

Sustainable Sandhills –

- No update

Prescribed Burn Association – Jesse Wimberley

- The PBA is moving on to Phase 3 with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Ft Bragg –

- Training activity has increased on base with Marines training as well.
- They plan to meet with Hoke County to reinforce the idea of a connector.
- ACUB plan is to be formalized with the hopes of streamlining work flow.

Upcoming Events –

- The NC - The Wildlife Society meeting will be held in April in Black Mountain.
- The NC- Prescribed Fire Council meeting will be in Swansboro in August.
- Advanced Certified Prescribed Burner Training will be held May 29 at Camp Millstone in Ellerbe.
- Party for the Pine to be held April 13th.
- Longleaf 201: Herbicides workshop to be held June 11-13 at Jones Lake SP

➤ Next Meeting: June 19th

➤ Adjourn