

**NCSCP Steering Committee Meeting Summary
March 4, 2015
Weymouth Woods – Sandhills Nature Preserve**

Steering Committee Attendance:

Present

Jon Chase	Chair	Fort Bragg/DPTM
Jay Carter	(Alternate for Phil Doerr)	SEI
Jeff Marcus		TNC
John Hammond	(Alternate for Pete Benjamin)	USFWS
Nancy Talton		SALT
Scott Pohlman		NCDENR/OPCA
Jimmy Dodson	(Alternate for Jon Blanchard)	NCDPR
Chris Jordan	(Alternate for Brady Beck)	NCWRC
Anna Stout		NCFS

Absent

Dave Heins	Fort Bragg/DPW
Susan James	USAEC

Other Attendees

Katie Sauerbrey (TNC), Ryan Bollinger (LLA), Gabriela Garrison (NCWRC), Jesse Schillaci (Ft. Bragg ESB), Steve Anchor (SEI), Jackie Britcher (Ft. Bragg), Bill DeMay (NCFS), Susan Miller (USFWS), Rod Fleming (Ft. Bragg), Jim Dougherty (RLUAC), Jesse Wimberley (SALT), Alan Schultz (Ft. Bragg).

Notes

Outreach Meeting Summary: (Jeff Marcus)

- At the end of January there was a meeting about the outreach of longleaf pine management for landowners.
- Items of common interest at the outreach meeting included: proactive and targeted outreach to landowners; peer relationship building including landowner-to-landowner mentoring; increase capacity for access to and implementation of burning (identified as a bottle neck); helping landowners implement existing plans; putting on more workshops and field days for landowners; facilitating better access to information for landowners; and better coordination among partners.
- SALT is hoping to use NFWF to assist landowners on private lands with their management, doing outreach, and ramping up capacity for increased management on private lands.
- TNC will use money to contract with the National Wild Turkey Federation to do GIS analysis to identify key landowners to reach out to, review the list of priority landowners with partners, reach out to landowners to offer assistance, and provide assistance with writing plans, applying for funding, and/or implementing plans.
- Susan Miller mentioned that there is a NC Burner Class coming up in April.

- Steve inquired about brochures for landowners. The costs of these brochures are built into the SALT NFWF grant as an outcome.
- Longleaf Coalition has a spreadsheet, as well as a website that they try to keep updated.
- Jesse Wimberley pointed out that a website with a matrix would be helpful to landowners especially for keeping current data.

Reserve Design Revised Final Draft: (Scott Pohlman)

- Scott provided an overview of the previous work that the group has been doing.
- The plan will be out for review following an upcoming meeting.
- The goal is to synthesize biological information and to create a vision to guide long-term conservation of native Sandhills ecosystems. The specific objectives were to identify the most important conservation areas, buffers, connectors, and then share that data.
- The group defined the focus area by using soils and topography data and then identified target groups within that area. The target groups were: longleaf pine forest, streamhead pocosins/seeps, blackwater streams, and upland depressional wetlands.
- Known ecological areas were put into either Tier 1 or 2 categories. Tier 1 are rare and the most at-risk. Tier 2 are not as rare or at-risk as Tier 1, but help to buffer or provide connectivity between Tier 1 elements.
- They have been constantly reevaluating and incorporating new information into the process.
- Additional ground-truthing needs to be done.
- Overall, the Sandhills contains many ecologically significant ecosystems. There are still questions to answer and many places to inventory.
- Susan stated that the next step is to have the final product approved by the steering committee.
- Jeff stated that this data will be made available to partners for planning and grant development.
- We are in the process of hiring a new ORISE position to continue to pull data together and keep the effort organized.

WORKING GROUP UPDATES

Resource Management Working Group - Jeff Marcus/Katie Sauerbrey

- NC TREX brought in 45 trainees from various agencies and regions of the country (WRC, USFS, TNC, Fort Bragg, Camp Lejeune).
- It focused on National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Standards and task books.
- It was a positive experience largely due to sharing of experiences, despite difficult weather.
- 550 acres were burned.

Communications Working Group - Susan Miller

- The group is trying to find funding for printing.

- The Safe Harbor 20-year anniversary event planning will soon be underway. We are thinking about getting testimonials from landowners and writing articles in wildlife magazines to promote the program.

RCW Recovery Working Group - Jay Carter

- During the winter SEI is doing maintenance and compiling data.
- We translocated juveniles (7) from Ft. Bragg to private properties. At least four of these individuals are still in place.
- We are getting ready to start the 2015 monitoring season (western Fort Bragg, Camp Mackall, block a of the game lands)
- We gained access to Pine Wall property after a 3 year negotiation and have two recruitment clusters there.

Land Protection Working Group - Jeff Marcus

- Jeff showed a map of projects that should close in the next six months. They are being done in conjunction with ACUB, and will buffer the military bases and provide connectivity for the GAP and game lands. Six will be game lands, 1 a state park, 2 will be held by TNC, and 1 will be a private easement.
- We are also waiting to hear about 3 or 4 additional properties, which have grants or easements put in by TNC and WRC.
- Jon Chase stated that TNC was one of three national applicants DOD-wide to get an “Outstanding” rating on their last 5-year proposal.
- Susan Miller stated that all of this is supporting habitat for RCW and contributing to the demographic stability of the species.

Reserve Design Working Group - Scott Pohlman

- Scott will get the written report out to everybody to receive feedback.

PARTNER UPDATES

Ft. Bragg – highlights include:

- They are working on some feral hog issues and are willing to discuss this with others. Hogs were found at Camp Mackall.

NC Parks – highlights include:

- The state parks are moving to the Department of Cultural Resources. They want to move all public attractions under one roof. The state is still working on budgetary appropriations.

SALT – highlights include:

- There are 12 tracts of land in play.
- The annual meeting is April 18th at Hoke Community Forest.

NHP – highlights include:

- They have a new data viewer and have received good feedback. It is helpful for clean water applications.

WRC - highlights include:

- WRC just finished a woodpecker survey on eastern half of Block B. They hope to get back to burning soon. The next round of Partners for Green Growth was announced, a mini-grant program to local governments to encourage nature-friendly land use planning.

TNC - highlights include:

- TNC is hiring interns to investigate the Forest Stewardship Council certification and longleaf conditions class assessments.
- A meeting to strategize for RCW's in Bladen Lakes will be at Jones Lake State Park on Friday the 13th at 10:00.

NCFS - highlights include:

- NCFS is 100 years old this year.
- The legislature has mandated that they charge for management plans. Overall, the public response has been positive.
- NCFS has entered into a partnership with EQIP, allowing NRCS to pay for those plans for landowners.
- Jon Chase stated that he may be able to find funding for scholarships for landowners to get management plans.
- A NC Burner Course in April will probably be limited in size due to instructional availability.

SEI - highlights include:

- They are gearing up for RCW monitoring.

Longleaf Alliance - highlights include:

- Ryan Bollinger is working to coordinate partnerships across the range. LLA is gearing up to do more academies in the future. Fire in Longleaf is coming up this summer as well.

REGIONAL PARTNER UPDATES

RLUAC: Jim Dougherty

- Jon Chase has not heard much except a request for information about population growth or decline at Fort Bragg.
- Jim Dougherty stated that they recently spoke about water issues in the state of NC including the over-use of groundwater and the concern of upstream fracking. Additionally, they discussed the transfer of water from the Cape Fear into the Neuse river basin. They also reviewed all proposed sub-divisions this year. At their next meeting they are going to discuss the relationship between staffing and new housing development.

- Jon Chase stated that solar panel farms are a growing industry. He doesn't see much of a concern for solar impacting training on Fort Bragg.
- Windmills may be more of a concern to the Fort due to their height and potential to change winds.

Sustainable Sandhills: Hanah Ehrenreich (not present)

- Jon Chase stated that Hannah asked for a letter of support for a proposal she is working on. He drafted one, but she wanted a letter of commitment from the partnership, and he would not do that without consulting the group. He did give her a letter of support, just not commitment. In the future individuals will need to go to each of the partners to ask for commitments.
- Climate Change Solutions Webinars detail environmental change in our community and how we are going to address it.
- The Youth Plan Project has completed a set of classes for eight kids in a middle school about land use-planning and GIS. It also allowed for the reporting to county commissioners about conservation development.

Other News and Points of Discussion

- Jon Chase stated that there will be senior commander changes on the 3rd of April. The Garrison Commander is retiring in June, so there will be some changes in leadership at Fort Bragg. We will need to communicate goals with the new leadership and gain their backing. We should focus on the garrison commander and orient him to ACUB and private lands. It is possible to send letters of congrats to him, as well to welcome him to the position and introduce the partnership.
- Ryan Bollinger asked to add the Longleaf Alliance as an entity that can come and give updates at partnership meetings.

Meeting Adjourned at 3:45 PM