

Minutes
North Carolina Sandhills Conservation Partnership
Steering Committee Meeting
1:00PM – 4:00PM Wednesday, December 6, 2017
Weymouth Woods - Sandhills Nature Preserve

➤ **Welcome and Introductions**

Steering Committee Attendance:

Present

Jeff Marcus	TNC
Brady Beck	NCWRC
Pete Edmonds - Chair	Ft. Bragg/DPTM
Sarah Crate	NCFS
Kerry Brust (alternate for Jay Carter)	SEI

Absent:

Nancy Talton	SALT
David Heins	Fort Bragg/DPW
Pete Benjamin	USFWS
Jimmy Dodson	NCDPR
Susan James	USAEC
Nancy Talton	SALT

Other Attendees

TNC: Debbie Crane, Genevieve Joseph, Aisander Duda, Nelda Siemion, Lynn Richardson (volunteer), Jess Wimberly (SALT), Laura Fogo (USFWS), Mike Martin (NCWRC), Susan Miller (USFWS), Ryan Bollinger (Longleaf Alliance), Kelsey Abad (Sustainable Sandhills), Andy Van Lanen (SEI), Jackie Britcher (Ft. Bragg), Gabriella Garrison (NCWRC), Stacy Huskins (Ft. Bragg), Jessie Schillaci (Ft. Bragg), Jackie Britcher (Ft. Bragg), Rex Badgett (NCDOT), Michele Wilcox (Ft. Bragg), Chad Rodger (NWF), Larisa Fitzgerald (ORISE Fellow/Ft Bragg)

➤ **Proposed NFWF Funding Grant – Jeff Marcus**

- A planning meeting for the 2018 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant proposal was held 11/15 at Weymouth Woods. Jeff is leading the effort on this grant, where TNC applies for funding on behalf of the Partnership.
- Timeline: draft grant written by Jeff by mid to late Dec, partner review & letters of support by mid Jan, TNC grants & legal review in late Jan, submit in early Feb. Award period is Oct 2017-Sep 2019.
- The centerpiece of the grant will be focused on building capacity and support for prescribed fire which is addressed in part by the shared burn crew for burning on

Partner lands. Current plan is for a 6 person crew for 24 weeks (5.5 months) with half of salary cost coming from REPI.

- There is also a need for both NWCG classes and hands-on training/certification burns for landowners going through NC Certified Burner course. This grant might address the former and SALT's next grant might address the later.
- USFWS identified need for funds to support restoration on Bonnie Doone- a Partners/Safe Harbor project owned by Fayetteville Public Works. Discussion of high cost of restoration (est \$38k to mulch and burn 40 ac). Argument for this work is old growth longleaf, adjacent to Bragg and a commitment shown by landowner.

➤ **Management Data for Species of Concern in the Sandhills – Lynn Richardson**

- Lynn Richardson is a former librarian who volunteered her time to collaborate on a project with Matthew Moswkik (former ORISE Fellow). Partnership members voiced a need for more information on management needs of species of concern.
- Lynn conducted a search to compile information on 194 species of concern and organized her findings on a spreadsheet available to all Partnership members. The spreadsheet includes general species information such as federal/state listing, as well as any information on the effects and/or needs for management activities such as fire, silviculture practices, herbicide applications, etc.
- [Natureserve Explorer](#) was the most useful repository of information, but Lynn also used the USDA NRCS Plants database as well as other federal publications.
- Despite Lynn's extensive search, she was only able to find management data on 80 species. Many gaps in information remain, and hopefully her findings will be used to identify where further research should be focused.
- Additionally, some of the information found on NatureServe was not in line with the most recent findings. If you have updated information on management activities for the species of concern in the spreadsheet, contact Lynn at lynnrichardson99@gmail.com.

➤ **Break**

➤ **Working Group Reports and Discussion**

Resource Management (Brady Beck)

No update

RCW Recovery (Kerry Brust)

- Kerry Brust presented the end of the year report on the progress of RCWs in the Sandhills.
- The RCW species assessment found that new potential breeding groups (PBGs) had populated the gap in areas 3C and 3E. Biologically this means that the

Sandhills RCWs were classified as a single population, as opposed to East and West. This change has no implications on policy or management.

- The assessment also found that in the Sandhills East, the Ft Bragg PBGs had increased to 445, up 11 from last year. In non-federal recovery areas (Partnership properties), there was an increase in PBGs from 24 to 26. In private lands, PBGs increased from 50 to 54. The recovery estimate is 471 PBGs (excluding those in private lands because they do not have permanent protection), which exceeds the RCW recovery target of 350 PBGs.
- In the Sandhills West, PBGs on the Sandhills Gamelands increased from 157 to 165, and from 14 to 15 on Camp Mackall for a total of 180 PBGs which exceed the RCW recovery target of 100. PBGs in private lands remained at 11.
- In total, there is an estimated 715 RCW PBGs in North Carolina with 651 counting towards Recovery.
- There has also been translocation efforts with 34 juveniles brought to 16 Safe Harbor clusters (8 properties), with 7 of them to Southern Pines and 9 to Moore County. RCW recruitment has been observed to 11 of 16 clusters.
- Next year they will continue population monitoring to provide expertise to guide land protection and management to facilitate RCW expansion.

Communications

(Debbie Crane, Sarah Crate)

- Party for the Pine Festival, April 22nd hosted by State Parks at Weymouth Woods.
- Longleaf pine seedling planting at TNC's Calloway Forest, March 24th. Will include a demonstration of prescribed fire. Partners are welcome to participate!
- Longleaf Honor Roll, North Carolina Longleaf Coalition, a new program to recognize outstanding private landowners. This program was initially rolled out in the Bladen Lakes area but is coming to the Sandhills. **Partners, please nominate landowners who deserved to be recognized for their great work!**

Land Protection

(Jeff Marcus)

- See attached report for details.



Land Protection
Work Group update 6

Reserve Design

(tbd)

No updates

➤ **Partner Updates**

USFWS:

No updates

WRC: Brady Beck, Gabriella Garrison

- Hired a new Forester and Assistant Forester, David Maddox.
- Received \$15k in funding from the Arbor Day Foundation for longleaf seedlings to be used in a loblolly conversion project. The application was easy and Brady encourages others to pursue this funding as well.
- An artificial gopher frog breeding pond was set up and with some initial success. Cattails overtook the pond and have been difficult to control. Brady encourages others to address them early on and would welcome the help in removal.
- Requests for solar permits have been down but overall expect to see a spike in solar farms. WRC is working with local governments to develop BMPs and have developed a fact sheet.

TNC: Jeff Marcus

- The seasonal burn crew of 11 has begun with 4 of the members dedicated to burning on the gamelands.
- Bruce Sorrie and Janet Gray will lead a Sandhills Seeps and Drains Field Trip on December 21st. Contact Jeff if you are interested in joining.
- There will be a meeting in Bladen County on January 11th at 6pm to discuss forming a Prescribed Burn Association.
- In February there will be a volunteer field tree planting event as well as a S-131 Squad Boss Training lead by Mike Norris.
- Longleaf Alliance will be putting on a Fire Academy on June 12th.
- The TNC Philanthropy team would appreciate suggestions or leads from Partners of members of the community who may have the capacity to contribute to TNC.

Ft Bragg: Pete Edmonds, Alan Shultz

- There has been a change in leadership with a new lead commander. The previous deputy has been brought up to speed in terms of the burn plan. The new team will need to be integrated into the training area, something to be aware of as it might possibly involve new equipment.
- Hunting season going strong with over 2,000 hunters, 70% in the military and 500 disabled hunters. Ft. Bragg is the only public land open to hunting on Sunday in the state.

DOT:

No updates

Longleaf Alliance: Ryan Bollinger

- America's Longleaf has requested Local Implementation Teams to set and provide specific goals for restoration. In particular, they are interested in identifying some of the barriers and opportunities for restoration in the landscape.

- The US Forest Service has announced a commitment to restore longleaf where appropriate. An estimated 7,000 acres of longleaf are to be restored in Uwharrie National Forest.
- There are upcoming Longleaf Coalition meeting in Lake Harris and Uwharrie NF, great opportunities for collaboration.

NCFS: Sarah Crate

- In the process of collecting annual longleaf accomplishment restoration numbers, which so far appear to be increasing!
- Colby Lambert with NC Extension is planning a series of workshops across NC addressing longleaf “game changers” such as slow conversions (loblolly understory), or natural shift LLP. They are in search of potential examples. The workshops will likely occur the first week of April.

SALT: Jess Wimberly

- There is potential to acquire a 200 acre parcel near Drowning Creek.
- Jess attended the Association of Fire Ecology Conference in Orlando, Florida. Florida and Alabama are looking to start a Prescribed Burn Association. They are looking to North Carolina as a model.

NWTF: Chad Rodger

- NWTF is partnering with Duke Energy on some projects.
- They currently have a biologist working in Florida doing turkey establishment, who will also be coming to North Carolina.
- There is a trend of declining hunters, which is a concern because hunting licenses provide funding for turkey and habitat conservation. They are trying to reach out to get more people interested in hunting.

Sustainable Sandhills: Kelsey Abad

- Recently completed a large report on carbon banking initiatives.
- They are also working on a Green Schools initiative and with private landowners, including a lot of education on burning. They also had an event where they planted over 4,000 longleaf pine seedlings.
- They are also hosting the 4th Sandhills Clean Energy Summit on March 9– 10th. All are invited to this meeting, which will include panel discussions, workshops, etc. Please let Kelsey know if you would like to be a speaker or vendor.

Sandhills Ecological Institute: Kerry Brust

- Nick Haddad has accepted a position at Michigan State, but will still be involved with projects in the Sandhills. SEI might be looking to invite Clyde Sorenson, an entomologist from NC State.

➤ Next Meeting – March 7, 2018?

June 20

Sep 12

Dec 5

➤ Meeting Adjourned at 3:33 PM