

**NCSCP Steering Committee Meeting Summary
June 3, 2015
Weymouth Woods - Sandhills Nature Preserve**

Steering Committee Attendance:

Present

Jon Chase	Chair	Fort Bragg/DPTM
Pete Benjamin		USFWS
Jon Blanchard		NCDPR
Phil Doerr		SEI
Jeff Marcus		TNC
Ana Stout		NCFS

Absent

Dave Heins		Fort Bragg/DPW
Brady Beck		NCWRC
Susan James		USAEC
Scott Pohlman		NCDENR/CPCA
Nancy Talton		SALT

Other Attendees

Chris Jordan (NCWRC), Susan Miller (USFWS), Alan Shultz (Ft. Bragg), Gabriella Gibson (NCWRC), Kacy Cook (NCWRC), Kevin Crawford, Bill DeMay, Kerry Brust (SEI), Barry Hull (Ft. Bragg), Rod Flemming (Ft. Bragg), Marsh Smith, Chris Kennedy (City of Southern Pines), Scott Walston (NCDOT), Mary Gilroy (City of Foxfire), Debra Ensminger (Moore County), Pam Graham (City of Aberdeen), Kevin Reed (City of Pinehurst)

Notes

MOU Discussion: (Susan Miller)

- Susan stated that our MOU for the partnership has expired. This will be a top priority for her in the coming months.
- By next meeting, Susan will have a new draft for approval.

Transportation and Land-Use Planning Discussion: (Jeff Marcus)

- Chris Kennedy (city planner for Southern Pines) provided a brief overview of TARPO and the transportation planning process.
- Scott Walston - a Comprehensive Transportation Plan is being developed for Moore County. There is no funding set aside, as it's only conceptual at this point. The goal is to work with all stakeholders in the area to achieve a solution.
 - There are two focus areas in Moore County for transportation improvements: US 1 corridor and the NC 24-27 corridor.
 - By 2040 there is projected to be a significant increase in housing growth in the southern part of Moore County.

- The NC 24/27 corridor will not be able to support the magnitude of traffic expected by 2040.
- The locals favor widening Hoffman and Roseland Roads, as opposed to building a connector.
- Congestion on US 1 through Southern Pines will become severe by 2040. A superstreet concept is being investigated as a solution.
- Mary Gilroy - Foxfire was incorporated in 1977 as a planned community with low density residential and a recreational focus. They are opposed to widening Hoffman Road through the village.
- Jeff Marcus – there are not any large environmental concerns for the NC 24/27 corridor.
 - There are concerns that the western connector will impact sensitive and endangered species, especially Pine Barrens Tree Frogs and Red-cockaded Woodpeckers.
- Debra Ensminger – The Moore County Land-Use Plan was updated and adopted in 2013. It encourages development in areas where necessary infrastructure is available and coordinates transportation planning.
 - Moore County does not have a transportation plan; however the land-use plan states that existing highway corridors should be used to solve transportation issues before new roads are constructed.
- Pam Graham – a 2040 Comprehensive Land Use Plan is in the process of being approved by the Board of Commissioners in Aberdeen.
 - The plan incorporates maintaining natural systems with targeted growth and development.
 - Aberdeen is not interested in the ‘no nothing’ or ‘freeway option’. The first leads to unsustainable traffic. The second will remove access to businesses.
- Kevin Reed – There has previously been a western connector study completed. One of the objectives was to improve safety in Pinehurst by routing traffic around the city.
 - The plan was not ultimately approved by the city council.
- Chris Kennedy – The city of Southern Pines values their natural heritage. They are against the US 1 bypass.
 - The city is encouraging development in core zones, as opposed to sprawling development.
 - TARPO has a website for comments and citizens are encouraged to attend meetings.
- Marsh Smith suggested that instead of building a western connector, the area should consider enacting other strategies that can reduce traffic on roads.

Road Project on Game Lands: (Marsh Smith)

- There has been a significant widening of Nursery Lane in the Sandhills Game Lands. Specifically, the road has been graveled and there is a wide shoulder.
- There is mesh on the sides of the road to prevent erosion; however, the mesh may serve as a trap for threatened snakes and other species.
- Trees have been removed for this project.

- The improvements are part of a process to improve access to Game Lands. There are additional roads in the Game Lands which are slated to undergo improvement.
- Widening of roads has the potential to increase invasive species in the region.
- The Partnership will revisit this topic in September, but will not take any action.

WORKING GROUP UPDATES

Resource Management Working Group – Chris Jordan

- This group will meet soon.

Communications Working Group – Susan Miller

- This group will help to put together an event this fall to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Safe Harbor. Hopefully this event will highlight the work that's been done in the Sandhills region.

RCW Working Group – Kerry Brust

- We moved 7 juveniles from Fort Bragg to the Pinehurst area in December 2014. Only 1 has been observed recently. The area around Pinehurst is having a high rate of nest failures this year.
- There are 5 potential breeding groups near Hoffman Road. There has also been some new activity in the 'GAP'.
- Kerry wanted to acknowledge the USFWS for their help monitoring RCW clusters in the Game Lands.

Land Protection Working Group – Jeff Marcus

- It has been a very busy spring for land protection. The following properties have closed recently: Moses Home, Goodwin, Godwin, Gibson, Poplin, and Womble. All help to buffer the Game Lands, except for Moses, which helps to buffer Fort Bragg.
- The properties near the Game Lands will eventually be transitioned to the state.
- There are around a dozen other properties that are at various stages of being protected.
- SALT has purchased the Harrington Tract.

Reserve Design Working Group – Jeff Marcus

- The GIS layers for the reserve design were recently updated, including both Tier 1 and 2 resources.
- The updated plan has been distributed to the group and any feedback is welcomed until July 3.
- There was a question whether the inactive RCW cluster layer is correct.

PARTNER UPDATES

NCFS - highlights include:

- There is a transition of positions taking place.
- August 10 will be the Forest Service's Sandhills Working Forest Summit.

AEC - highlights include:

- Meeting ended before update.

Natural Heritage - highlights include:

- Meeting ended before update.

USFWS – highlights included:

- There's currently a big push to focus on pollinators, especially restoration work to benefit them. There's also been a lot of interest on restoring monarch habitat.

SALT – highlights included:

- Meeting ended before update.

NC Parks – highlights included:

- A large effort is being undertaken to introduce fire to areas of Weymouth Woods, where it has not occurred for quite some time.
- Carver's Creek has started working on a trail network. The goal is to use the fire breaks as trails, so habitat damage is minimized.

SEI - highlights included:

- Woodpecker monitoring is going well this year.

TNC – highlights included:

- Rick Studenmund will be retiring this year. There will be a party for him.
- TNC has an intern this summer that will be looking at forest timber certification on TNC lands.
- A 3-person burn crew just started for the summer.
- Jesse Wimberley recently received a state conservation award.

Ft. Bragg DPTM - highlights included:

- Colonel Sanborn will be leaving this summer. His replacement will start at the end of July.

Ft. Bragg ESB – highlights included:

- Hopefully most of the hogs have been removed from Ft. MacKall.
- There are several research projects with NC State occurring at Ft. MacKall.

WRC - highlights included:

- Nate Shepard will be radio-tracking Pine Barrens Tree Frogs this summer on the Game Lands.

REGIONAL PARTNER UPDATES

Ft. Bragg Regional Alliance:

- Meeting ended before update.

RLUAC:

- Meeting ended before update.

Sustainable Sandhills:

- Meeting ended before update.

Other News and Points of Discussion

Meeting Adjourned at 4:57 PM