

Cape Fear Arch Conservation Collaboration
May 20, 2008 Meeting Minutes
Lake Waccamaw State Park, Lake Waccamaw, NC

Attending: Janice Allen, NC Coastal Land Trust; Jenna Begier, NC Wildlife Resources Commission; Pete Benjamin, USFWS; Mamie Caison, Brunswick SWCD; Lisa Creasman, Conservation Trust for NC; Molly Ellwood, NC Wildlife Resources Commission; Mike Giles, NC Coastal Federation Cape Fear Coastkeeper; Chris Helms, NC State Parks – Lake Waccamaw; Camilla Herlevich, NC Coastal Land Trust, Kristen Howell, NC Coastal Land Trust; Phil Prete, City of Wilmington; Shawn Ralston, New Hanover Planning Dept.; Dan Ryan, The Nature Conservancy; Penny Tysinger, Cape Fear COG; Vic French, NC Wildlife Resources Commission; Marilyn Meares, Cape Fear RC & D; Jennifer Braswell, New Hanover SWCD; Sara Over, The Nature Conservancy; Scott Pohlman, NC Natural Heritage Program; Nancy Preston, NC Coastal Land Trust; Fritz Rhode, NC Division of Marine Fisheries; John Ann Shearer, USFWS; Anthony Snider, NC Division of Coastal Management; John Taggart, UNCW; Kristen Miguez, NC EEP; Carol Price, NC Wildlife Resources Commission.

UPDATES & ANNOUNCEMENT

Chris Helms, Superintendent of Lake Waccamaw State Park, provided the group with an update on the happenings at the park. Prehistoric whale bones were found in the lake and a reconnaissance of the bones was being conducted. Over the years, fossils have been found along the shoreline. The Whiteville News Reporter newspaper was covering the story, and expressed an interest in the Cape Fear Arch Conservation Collaboration. The Park Ranger gave the reporter a brief description of the Cape Fear Arch natural feature and Cape Fear Arch Conservation Collaboration. An article about the whale bone recovery effort can be found on the front page of the Whiteville News Reporter May 22, 2008. www.whiteville.com

Kristen Miguez, NC EEP is working with Michele Drozcz to update the Cape Fear River Basin Restoration Plan. As part of the planning process, local conservation and planning groups are being targeted to provide input into the plan. The plan includes drainage areas in Brunswick County and the Lower Cape Fear. To read the 2001 Cape Fear River Basin Restoration Plan, go to http://www.nceep.net/services/lwps/pull_down/by_county/Brunswick.html. To become involved in updates to the plan, contact Michele Drozcz, NC EEP, (919) 715-6817 or Michele.Drozcz@ncmail.net

JohnAnn Shearer, USFWS mentioned that the Titan Cement project proposed for Castle Hayne on the Cape Fear River will be going through permitting. The project site contains a large Cypress Swamp which will likely be impacted, and cement production may result in air pollution. For more information, visit www.stoptitan.org

Penny Tysinger, Cape Fear Council of Government, announced a meeting on June 2, 2008 starting at 10am at the Brunswick County Community College, Leland campus. The first speaker will be from One NC Naturally and will discuss collaborative mapping.

COMMITTEES

Committees met to discuss the twelve month goals, and to select items that could be completed and presented to the group at the August meeting. Everyone is welcome to participate in any committee at any time. Committees are not limited to the listed participants.

Conservation Planning

Participants: John Ann Shearer, Janice Allen, Kristen Miquez, Molly Ellwood, Anthony Snider, Shawn Ralston, Vic French, John Taggart, Phil Prete, Marilyn Meares, Jennifer Braswell, Scott Pohlman, Carol Price, Lisa Creasman

Status of Twelve Month Goals:

- A draft outline for the Conservation Plan has been developed. It will include the biological significance of the Cape Fear Arch and goals for its protection. There was general approval of the first two sections of the plan: Definition and Significance of the Cape Fear Arch, and Background of the CFA Conservation Collaboration. It was noted that maps of the Cape Fear Arch geologic feature and a map of the focus area are needed. The Coastal Habitat Protection Plan will be included as one of the regional plans under “Importance of Conservation Planning.”
- For the section on Priority Biological Sites, a preliminary list of key properties (“no regret sites”) will be developed that, if protected, would contribute to the conservation of the biodiversity of the Arch region. The list will be further refined by clarifying the criteria by which a site qualifies as a “no regrets site”. Based on the final criteria and sites which qualify, two lists will be developed: one that highlights properties that represent the Arch and that the public will relate to, and another list that will serve as an internal working list that will include projects in progress or under consideration.
- A draft list of animal species that use habitat found in the Arch has been compiled using the Wildlife Action Plan and will be included in the Conservation Plan. The conservation planning committee will develop a list of keystone and indicator species and communities to ensure that the conservation plan is incorporating and addressing all of the region’s species and communities, and their related habitat types. Anthony Snider will be working with the committee to develop a grid cross-referencing species/communities with the role they play in the region (keystone, indicator, flagship species).

- Marilyn Meares shared her write-up on working lands, which provides information on the importance of incorporating working lands data into the implementation strategy. This write-up was well received and will be discussed at the next meeting in more detail.
- The next meeting of the conservation planning committee will be held 6/23 in the Wilmington office of the Coastal Land Trust at noon (lunch included).

August Deadline:

A draft outline for the Conservation Plan will be presented at the August meeting.

Outreach/Education

Participants: Sara Over, TNC; Camilla Herlevich, NC Coastal Land Trust; Kristen Howell, NC Coastal Land Trust; Nancy Preston, NC Coastal Land Trust

Status of Twelve Month Goals:

- The Committee brainstormed ideas for a Cape Fear Arch Conservation Collaboration website. The website could include the following content: a natural history of the Cape Fear Arch including special plants and animals that use the Arch habitat; links to resources like the Wildlife Action Plan, Land for Tomorrow, partner websites, and media resources; maps showing natural resources, conserved lands, land uses, biodiversity; statistics on threats to the Arch; and a series of Fact Sheets (plants, animals, geology, places to visit, historical sites, bibliography). The website could also include a link to a password protected internal working page to be used by Collaboration members. The page would include administrative details (MOU, Protocols, etc) and a place to share large files and working documents (draft Conservation Plan, etc).
- Multiple powerpoint presentations have been developed for the Cape Fear Arch. The powerpoint presentations will be edited/combined into a single show that can be used by partners. A list of possible audiences that might be interested in seeing the slideshow will be developed.
- The development of an outreach/education plan will be discussed with Andy Wood at the next meeting.

August Deadline:

A draft powerpoint presentation will be presented to the Collaboration at the August meeting and comments will be solicited. A list of potential speaking venues will also be presented for edits. A basic webpage will be up and running by the August meeting. A draft outline of website content will be presented to the Collaboration for comment.

Infrastructure

Participants: Jenna Begier, NC Wildlife Resources Commission; Pete Benjamin, USFWS; Mike Giles, NC Coastal Federation Cape Fear Coastkeeper; Fritz Rhode, NC Division of Marine Fisheries; Penny Tysinger, Cape Fear COG; Dan Ryan, TNC.

Status of Twelve Month Goals:

- It was decided within the group that due to the inherent political nature of most infrastructure projects, the Cape Fear Arch Conservation Collaboration cannot take a position on specific undertakings. The Committee noted that political involvement in these development projects can be pursued by individual partners if they are interested. The Cape Fear Arch Conservation Collaboration will remain neutral in political matters, but is interested in updates on projects that may affect natural resources of the Arch.
- *Port:* The NC State Ports Authority has completed a pro forma business plan that summarizes their business plan, engineering assumptions and capital cost estimates. It is anticipated that a 15% return will be necessary for the international terminal to become economically viable. The project will require federal, state and private investment. It is anticipated that four Environmental Impact Statements will be needed: one for the dredging of the Cape Fear, the port's footprint, roads and rails. The Ports Authority continues to seek appropriations for the dredging project. A lengthier update can be found on the Port's website:

<http://spa.ncports.com/web/ncports.nsf/4a87ff3bf2c03cc38525646f0072ffa9/6d28af86ed9d134585257419005017ca?OpenDocument&Highlight=0,ncit%20>

- *I-74 Expansion:* TNC has received a \$300,000 grant to study the ecological and economic impacts as well as the transportation implications of the proposed I-74 alignment versus the existing US 74 into Wilmington. TNC will hire a consultant to complete the analysis by the end of the summer.
- The Committee has focused on Brunswick County projects lately, but will expand its view to include all areas of the Arch. Dan has joined the Brunswick County CTP Steering Committee. The Infrastructure Committee will pursue avenues to incorporate goals of the Conservation Plan into local planning processes. This proactive approach will help county governments and others plan projects in a way that protects natural resources of the Arch.
- Funding for a cost-of-services study will be pursued by the Committee. Once funding is secured, it may help bring an economist to the Collaboration, which has been an unfilled niche.

August Deadline:

The Committee will report on the status of the TNC I-74 analysis, State Port project and cost-of-services funding at the August meeting.

Fundraising

Participants: Camilla Herlevich

Status of Twelve Month Goals:

- Grants from the Dorris Duke Charitable Foundation and Attorney General Environmental Enhancement have been received and will be used to support the Cape Fear Arch Conservation Collaboration.

August Deadline:

The Committee will discuss grants being pursued for next year's funding. Cape Fear Arch Conservation Collaboration members will present updates on any grants pursued on behalf of the Arch.

Executive/Steering Committee

Participants: Camilla Herlevich

Status of Twelve Month Goals:

- All of the goals of the Committee have been met. Lisa Creasman, CTNC has been serving as facilitator. Kristen Howell of NC CLT will serve as Cape Fear Arch Coordinator and will facilitate future meetings. The second draft of the Operating Protocols for Projects, Funding and Communications were approved unanimously by the Collaboration at this meeting.

August Deadline:

The Committee will solicit ideas for new members and present a draft list to the Collaboration at the August meeting. It was noted that no one will be refused membership if they would like to join the Cape Fear Arch Conservation Collaboration and subscribe to its mission and goals.

