

Cape Fear Arch Coastal Collaborative
Minutes from the
January 23, 2007 meeting
Lake Waccamaw State Park, Lake Waccamaw, NC



Attending: Jenna Begier- NC Wildlife Resources Commission, Dan Bell- TNC-NC Green Swamp Project, Pete Benjamin-USFWS, Mamie Caison- Brunswick SWCD, Maureen Dewire- Bald Head Island Conservancy, Suzanne Dorsey- Bald Head Island Conservancy, Steve Everhart-NC Wildlife Resources Commission, David Farren- Southern Environmental Law Center, Laura Gadd- NCDA Plant Conservation Program, Mike Giles- NC Coastal Federation, Camilla Herlevich-NC Coastal Land Trust, Richard LeBlond- NC Natural Heritage Program, Hervey McIver-TNC-NC, Marilyn Meares- Cape Fear RC&D, Mathew Nespeca-TNC-SC Winyah Bay Project, Scott Pohlman- NC Natural Heritage Program, Nancy Preston-NC Coastal Land Trust, Phil Prete- City of Wilmington, Shawn Ralston- New Hanover Planning Dept., Fritz Rohde- NC Division of Marine Fisheries, John Ann Shearer- USFWS, Tracy Skrabal- NC Coastal Federation, Anthony Snider-NC Division of Coastal Management, Hope Sutton TNC-NC Green Swamp Project, David Scott- Waccamaw Riverkeeper, Reid Wilson- Conservation Trust for NC

Guests: Layton Bedsole- NC Ports Authority, J.D. Solomon- CH2M Hill, Tony Doster- Resource Management Services, LLC,

North Carolina International Port Update and Question and Answer Session

Layton Bedsole with the NC Ports Authority and J.D. Solomon of CH2M Hill gave a special presentation about the proposed new port in Brunswick County. The proposed port would occupy 600 acres in a heavy industrial zoned area along the Cape Fear River. The timeline is to have the environmental impact study completed in 2012 and to have the design finalized in 2013. Projects costs for the port run in excess of \$1 billion, minus the cost of improving the road and rail infrastructure. If approved, the project would increase the depth of the river from three feet to 50, and would allow distribution of two million containers (or approximately 250,000 railcars and 750,000 trucks).

Mr. Bedsole and Mr. Solomon noted that there were some environmental concerns associated with the proposed project including wetlands, dredging, indirect aspects, and mitigation. They also noted that road and rail upgrades would be needed. Both Mr. Bedsole and Mr. Solomon requested participation from members of the Cape Fear Arch in the form of information dissemination about project priority areas and the impacts that the port would have.

Questions were then raised about numerous issues including existing public support for the project, the status of funding already procured and finding new funding for the port, environmental concerns (including a modeling study to show the effect of tidal increases), road upgrades (where and with what funds), and the effect on the existing Brunswick County infrastructure.

International Paper Timberlands Presentation:

Tony Doster, formerly with International Paper and now with Resource Management Services, LLC, presented an overview of what happened to International Paper and its land holdings during its recent divestiture. In 2006, International Paper divested the majority of its company owned timberlands and seven wood mill/saw mills. In addition, seven million acres of land was sold to institutional timber investment management corporations, or TIMO's (i.e. John Hancock, Plum Creek, Rainier, etc.). TIMO's in turn work to receive the maximum value of their investment through the harvesting and selling of timber, leasing hunting lands, selling select lands, etc. Basically, they work as a vehicle for institutions to invest in timberland.

Tony was asked if the TIMO's will manage wildlife resources for conservation. Tony replied that International Paper is still holding some lands for real estate (approximately 800,000 acres). They do not have a wildlife biologist on staff or the equipment necessary for burning the forest, but have contracted with the State Forest Service to burn for habitat protection and hazard reduction. Tony also mentioned that the current natural areas will continue to be managed according to plans to enhance the characteristics of the land. He also noted that the doors have not closed in terms of working with conservation agencies who were interested in lands that are still being held by his company. He noted that the Cape Fear Arch should work to prioritize the most important and most vulnerable lands and then come to him to discuss options.

Brunswick County Transportation Planning- Update and Discussion

Dan Bell reported on his attendance at the last Brunswick County Transportation Planning meeting. The committee is looking at a 25 year horizon and is referencing a map that shows the new road needs in Brunswick County as well as future transportation corridors. At their next meeting (March 15th) the group was going to look at growth models and associated road demands. Dan also noted that the planning group had 1-74 listed on their plans as a new corridor.

Dan asked the group if we had familiarity with any of the following members of the committee: Becky King Noble, Mike Reeves, or Phillip Olsen.

Dan also noted that he will continue serving on this committee and report back to the members of the Arch at our next meeting on April 17th.

Land Acquisition and Partner Updates

The committee then discussed priority sites within Brunswick County. The following areas were recognized:

1. Orton Plantation
2. Town Creek (fill-in areas and headwaters- currently owned by International Paper)
3. Clarendon and Bate Plantations
4. Green Swamp
5. Juniper Creek
6. Riverstone (Upper Waccamaw Swamp)
7. Waccamaw Corridor (Coastal Federation has watershed study in area)
8. Waccamaw River and floodplain
9. Southern barrier islands (Bald Head)

10. Lockwood Folly watershed

The committee then discussed concerns about the proposed road corridors in Brunswick County and the impacts any new roads would have, including estuarine and marsh in south facing beaches, the nature of Brunswick County being wet, and accommodating for wildlife movement.

Dan then asked if group representatives wished to give an update on their upcoming projects. The Nature Conservancy is working on a project called Riverstone with Virginia based partners. They are also working on a 400 acres tract called Cove Swamp, and are continuing their efforts in Boiling Spring Lakes.

The Coastal Land Trust is working on the Waccamaw River and has applied for funding from the Clean Water Management Trust fund for a grant for the Carroll tract. They are also continuing efforts along the Cape Fear River with a tract owned by the Davis family, and are continuing land protection efforts with Clarendon, Orton, and Bate Plantations.

Bald Head Conservancy is building a field research facility and is taking steps to be a regional and national leader in barrier island work.

It was then proposed that a steering committee and subcommittees be formed to enable continued efforts on behalf of the Cape Fear Arch. Proposed committees include Conservation Design, Transportation, Ports, and Fundraising & Communications. Participants were asked to review these subcommittees and give their preference to Dan at the next meeting. Time for initial committee meetings will be built into the April 17th Arch agenda.

Fundraising Update

A grant pre-proposal was submitted to the Wildlife Action Opportunities Fund for a part time coordinator. Unfortunately, this pre-proposal was not selected.

Camilla Herlevich, with the Coastal Land Trust reported that the Blue Ridge Forever Collaborative received \$400,000 from Z. Smith Reynolds and suggested that we invited a representative from Z. Smith Reynolds to the next Arch meeting. The next grant deadline is August of 2007 and it was suggested that a contract worker could be hired to write the grant and have it focus on an economic study of the proposed port. Suzanne Dorsey with Bald Head Conservancy volunteered to do research on finding a firm to conduct the economic study for the port and Brunswick County area.

Recruitment of New Partners

Dan identified potential partners that should be targeted for participation in the Arch.

Names/groups include:

1. UNC-Wilmington
2. a landowner
3. Sunny Point (MOTSU)
4. Corps of Engineers
5. Brunswick County
6. Columbus County

Participants are asked to identify individuals that fall into these categories and could strengthen the work of the Arch.

Please note:

The next meeting for the Cape Fear Arch will be held on Tuesday, April 17th at Lake Waccamaw State park. If you have items that you would like to add to the agenda, please email them to Dan Bell at dbell@tnc.org.