

Cape Fear Arch Conservation Collaborative
Minutes from the October 9, 2007 Meeting
Lake Waccamaw State Park, Lake Waccamaw, NC



Attending: Andy Wood, Audubon NC; Janice Allen, NC Coastal Land Trust; Jenna Begier, NC Wildlife Resources Commission; Dan Bell, TNC; Pete Benjamin, USFWS; Mamie Caison, Brunswick Soil and Water Conservation District; Tom Cors, TNC; Vic French, NC Wildlife Resources Commission; Chris Helms, NC State Parks-Lake Waccamaw; Camilla Herlevich, NC Coastal Land Trust; Jean Lynch, NC Division of Parks and Recreation; Hervey McIver, TNC; Marilyn Meares, Cape Fear RC& D; Scott Pohlman, NC Natural Heritage Program; Nancy Preston, NC Coastal Land Trust; Phil Prete, City of Wilmington; Shawn Ralston, NHC Planning Department; David Scott, FOGS, Winyah Rivers Foundation; Hope Sutton, TNC; Becky Westbrook, Southeastern Community College; Michael Scisco, NC Coastal Land Trust; Christine Ellis, Waccamaw Riverkeeper; Lisa Creasman, Conservation Trust for NC; Donna Register, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service; Bobby Stanley, Columbus Soil and Water Conservation District; Laura Zahn, Coastal Water Watch.

Partner Updates:

Dan Bell reported that the international port's business plan will be released in November. He also reported on the proposed landfill situated in Columbus County next to Juniper Creek. Legislation has passed which has put in stricter rules including no landfill within two miles of a state park, and one mile of state game lands. The Nature Conservancy and the NC Wildlife Resources Commission worked to include the Green Swamp into public game lands which thereby stopped the landfill from being placed on that site.

Dan also reported that there was a re-zoning of conservation lands in Brunswick County and that a new conservation district was adopted. Land was re-classified from rural residential to conservation without landowner approval. The county plans to move land back to rural residential and then re-evaluate.

Brunswick County is also voting on a deed stamp transfer tax in November for roads and schools. The realtor associations will vote against the tax.

We also welcome the following new signatures to the Arch memorandum of understanding- Columbus County Soil and Water, Cape Fear River Keeper, and the Conservation Trust for North Carolina.

Hervey McIver with The Nature Conservancy, North Carolina Chapter reported that they are working on potential land deals along Cove Swamp.

Camilla Herlevich with Coastal Land Trust reported that they received a grant for three million dollars for work on Lake Waccamaw and is working on land protection at the Cape Fear River Clarendon Plantation with funds received from the North American Wildlife Conservation Act and the Forest Legacy Program. The Coastal Land Trust hopes to close on this tract next year and on two others in the Town Creek basin. Ms. Herlevich also reported that Janice Allen was promoted to Deputy Director of the land trust. She also reported that she took a trip to D.C. and was remarking that legislative aides would like to go on tours of the Arch area.

In terms of Arch funding, Camilla reported that we were rejected for Mott funding.

Transitional Planning- Dan Bell

The discussion of transitional planning began with a review of the Arch's twelve month goals. To date, the MOU has been signed and other groups and agencies continue to join. The map and GIS work has begun and is in process. The NC Department of Transportation had a member appointed (Dan Bell) who served as a spokesperson for the Arch. In regards to a part time coordinator, we are looking at possibly hiring someone next year. One other goal was to identify an Arch steering committee; to date this has not been accomplished. Working committee meetings have taken place and seem to be continuing along nicely. Monitoring the infrastructure of the Skyway and Port will carry on, and adopting a regular meeting schedule has been solidified.

Mr. Bell then asked what the group wants to accomplish next year. Goals included finishing the map and being able to use it as a conversation plan for outreach and education. Other plans include creating a website with both internal communications and something via the web (blog, etc?). Another goal was including MOU signatures for private landowners, Sunny Point, Army Corp of Engineers, South Carolina representatives, Brunswick County, UNCW, other educational institutions (community colleges, etc.). The fourth goal is to start laying the ground work for public speaking engagements and the final goal is to continue monitoring the ports and roads infrastructure.

Other goals mentioned and discussed include creating protocols, a parallel goal of a public outreach plan, to identify short term conservation goals and plans, creating a no regrets list of the Arch, and to create an education plan. In terms of the no regret list, the list would focus on places such as farmland, biodiversity sites, etc. that includes representation of all partners of places that we would like to see protected. The education plan would create a list of speakers available within the group, talking points to educators, the general public, and to use the no regrets list to link land to why the public should be interested in land protection (once it's gone, it's gone).

In terms of research, short term goals included a cost benefit analysis and COS study.

Transitioning from Dan. Ten to 15 hours per week was requested from CTNC for Lisa Creasman to lead the Arch for six to 12 months until the new conservation plan is in place. In the meantime, each committee was assigned tasks to be completed. These tasks are listed below:

Conservation Planning (Scott and Hervey)

1. No regrets list (representing all interests)
2. The Cape Fear Arch draft, conservation plan/GIS/mapping

Outreach and Education (Nancy and Andy Wood)

1. Website with internal content
2. PowerPoint presentation
3. Collect info regarding values
4. Education plan
5. Speakers

Infrastructure: (Tom and David)

1. Monitor the ports, road, bridge
2. COS Study

Fundraising (Camilla and Suzanne)

1. Grant research and writing

Executive/Steering Committee (Camilla, Hope, Laura)

1. Identify facilitators
2. Find coordinator
3. Monitor committee
4. Protocols regarding policy

Volunteer Monitoring in the Waccamaw Watershed - Christine Ellis (WRF) & Rebecca Westbrooks (Southeastern Community College)

The Waccamaw River program is sponsored by the Winyah Rivers Foundation and licensed by the Waterkeeper Alliance. Funding partners include the US EPA, Horry County, City of Conway, SC; Georgetown County, and International Paper. Project administration is over sought by the Waccamaw Watershed Academy (through Coastal Carolina University) and the Waccamaw Riverkeeper Program.

The objectives of the program are to address pollutant discharge elimination program, assist in illicit discharge detection, and increase geographic area. There are 35 volunteers who monitor conductivity, dissolved oxygen, ph, ammonia, nitrate, nitrite, and turbidity. Sampling occurs twice a month and all data is available online. Christine and Rebecca would like to see the program expanded into the North Carolina region to include the

entire watershed and to be able to monitor Lake Waccamaw and the upper Waccamaw basins in North Carolina.

Brunswick County Comprehensive Transportation Plan, TNC's Z. Smith Reynolds I-74 proposal- Dan Bell

The Brunswick County transportation plan is locally driven with the local government and is part of North Carolina's new long term transportation planning process. The plan adopts the 25 year highway corridor vision led by the CTP team and the steering committee. The group is seeking further input by stakeholder groups and steering committee meetings are already underway.

The North Carolina Interagency Senior Management team's vision is to have local transportation planning processes to include conservation planning when developing roads in order to create more environmentally sound planning and faster permitting. A database of corridors was considered by eliminated due to previous environmental concerns. The results include local roads in cities adopted into plan, and CTP incorporated plans into their map. The survey also showed ever road south of US Highway 17 was over capacity and that those north are not. The Department of Transportation and Brunswick County planning looked at population growth to 2030 and calculated three percent growth, accruing each year. The County's comprehensive land use plan used to south development south of US 17 and everything south of 17 over capacity by 2035.

The Department of Transportation recommends the following:

- Ever road is proposed for improvement
- Proposed I-74 located on north side of 17
- 17 bypasses on corridors
- 211 roadway improvements
- Upgrade of Hwy 87 to US 17
- Upgrade of 133 to Town Creek.

This proposed map will go out to the public for review.

Concerns are as follows:

- Once map is adopted it will be harder to advocate against.
- CTP process did not play out as intended- DOT behind the scenes created a map without input from group (see DOT's website, long range planning, CTP Brunswick County)
- TNC is writing a letter and Southern Environmental Law Center is to write a formal request and send comments about CTP process. The USFWS is also planning on sending a letter.

It was discussed that the Cape Fear Arch can identify conservation priorities without opposing new roadway plans. The public comment period is to be scheduled for late October and into early November.

In terms of 1-73 and 1-74, a local RPO or COG could go to the board of transportation and petition a change. The board of transportation could also petition a change, but the only way to change is through a full vote. Other options would be to work through a local government representative. Governor Easley is a priority but 1-74 support might go away with Easley. Laney Wilson's term expired a year after Easley's.

TNC submitted an application to Z. Smith Reynolds to pay for a series of studies to identify alternatives to going through the Green Swamp. Four studies are proposed comparing the Green Swamp with 440- an environmental study, an economic analysis, land use plans, and transportation flow model.

Planning Committee & GIS Summary, NC Strategic Conservation Plan- Scott Pohlman (NCHP) & Michael Scisco (NCCLT)

Scott Pohlman mentioned that farmland and working forest landowners need to be targeted. Three starting points include wildlife and biodiversity, agriculture, and water quality.

Strategies include breaking down into smaller sub regions with focus areas since the Cape Fear Arch is such a large area. The next subcommittee meeting will be held November 2nd at the Coastal Land Trust office.

Ivory Billed Woodpecker Update- Andy Wood

Audubon put in a grant and is in the process of finalizing the paperwork. Survey work will begin this winter and they plan to hire a coordinator this February or March and will be conducting helicopter and group work.

The next meeting of the Cape Fear Arch will be schedule in January, date to be determined. A fond farewell was conveyed to Dan Bell, our fearless Arch Coordinator, as he leaves us to head to California.