

Coastal Collaboration Conference

Feb 2-3, 2006

Introduction: Dan Bell TNC (see attached PowerPoint)

Environmental issues facing Lower Cape Fear Region:

- Population Growth – 40% population increase in Brunswick and New Hanover counties resulting in large residential developments
- Increased commercial and industrial land use
- Transportation Expansion
 - NC I74
 - SC I73
 - Wilmington Outer Loop
 - Cape Fear Skyway
 - Improvements on NC Highway 87, 211,133 and SC Highway 9 & 521
 - New Roads: Oak Island Bridge & Doshier Cutoff

Approaches that a partnership might take:

- Define geographic boundaries of partnership
- Target areas to protect—and identify corridors
- Push ecotourism
- Work on government representation: county, council of government
- Education: smart, targeted, Press
- Government relations and advocacy
- Learn to speak with a unified voice

Ried Wilson—Blue Ridge Forever Partnership

- 13 non profit organizations
 - 10 land trust
- Goal is to preserve 50,000 acres in 5 years
- Similar problems to lower Cape Fear in terms of development, thus there is the need to protect land and to do it quickly
- The partnership seeks to increase the capacities of member organization
- Chart a unified fundraising campaign to protect mountains
- Focus to date has been on fundraising
- Conservation plans include identifying priority areas and developing plans for each
- Have developed an overly general MOU to map out how collaboration
 - No specifics on how to spend the money, roughly ½ will go to land trusts and ½ to public relations
- Have recently hired a coordinator
 - Groups felt that they couldn't afford to spend time on a collaborative effort unless they received funding from their efforts
- Have organized lots of different committees
- Challenges:

- Some groups participate more, some less—and how should this translate into funding decisions between groups
- Where should the coordinator be located
- How do you make important decisions
- Who is responsible for raising money and what leeway in spending does this afford them
- Lessons
 - It is important early on to know who is responsible for what—especially where it comes to the coordinator
 - Overtime this effort will be successful but the initial organization and set up must be overcome.
- Questions:
 - Is this partnership coordinated in fundraising---RW: yes

Onslow Bight Partnership

Fred Annand, TNC

- Forming partnerships can ratchet up conservation
- In the Onslow Bight, the military is the anchor, even though they were somewhat forced into it. Camp LeJeune's foresight that they needed to deal with encroachment on military bases. They were willing to pay to keep development at bay. The State of NC is also a strong supporter of the military.
- Operates through a steering committee
- Serves as a vehicle for stake holders to coordinate conservation efforts
- Have 3.1 million acres under conservation management
- Have an MOU which is primarily a vehicle to keep everybody at the table
- Some partners have dropped out
- Have a mission statement
- Goals
 - Encourage public/private partnerships
 - Promote conservation
- Power of the partnership is found in fundraising and coordinated restoration and management
- Accomplishments:
 - \$34 million in funding
 - 37,704 acres preserved
 - Fire management
 - Increased visibility within government organization brings resources to the table
- Questions:
 - Who's on your steering committee? Need to get the right people to represent stakeholders, don't want "deadbeats", want partners that bring resources to the table
 - We are developing subcommittees
- Suggest to Lower Cape Fear group that you move into this slowly and identify priorities

- Form a PR committee which became pro-active about how they were publicized. Press has one contact number for all the stakeholders.

Hervey McIver, TNC

- Defined conservation target—long leaf pine and pocosin systems
- Identified threats to conservations targets
 - Limited these to what stakeholders “knew” about which meant mostly a terrestrial approach
- Strategies: land acquisition
 - Priorities:
 - Significant core natural systems
 - Easily restorable land
 - Corridors
 - Highly disturbed land
 - Buffers
- Established “Fire Learning Network” with a vision and set of goals

Janice Allen, NC Coastal Land Trust

- Benefites of the partnership include the stakeholders really have worked together and fundraising
- The wildlife commission was able to bring people with the ability and equipment to manage land
- The group meets regularly and has mutual goals
- Administrative support is a critical component of success
- A chair is also important to take leadership
- Questions: what’s the most effective subcommittee?
 - Protection, management, public relations, and government relations committees

DAY 2

Dan Bell

- Recapped previous day. Reiterated questions “Is this a good idea? Will it benefit our individual missions? Will it help us leverage funds? Will it address large threats? Is there duplication in the effort? Will it accomplish anything?” Discussion followed.
- Many in the group can’t be political advocates.

Scott Pohlman, NC Natural Heritage Program

- We should consider continuing to work on individual missions and collaborate on common mission. Cited strong advocacy elements within Onslow Bight, but OB does not do advocacy. Seconded by Tommy Hughes.

Reid Wilson

- To accomplish anything we need to decide what we want to accomplish. Seconded by Janice Allen who said we need a central theme.

Richard LeBlonde

- Raised issue of geographic boundaries. Enjoined by Matthew Nespeca who suggested not going below the Conway overlap with the upper Winyah area. Dan suggested looking into whether or not Atlantic Coast Ventures (which oversees WB task force) might have developed boundary for our area. NB: WB task force has always had a private citizen as chair, thus avoiding “black helicopter” allegations. Dan asked if WB task force could operate in larger context. Matt responded it could but had to avoid overlap.

Discussion ensued regarding boundaries of area of interest. Considered areas inland of the coast, protecting most important biological resources remaining in area and connecting them.

Coastal Issues:

- Link Natural Heritage and Conservation areas. This gets to responding to impact

Mission Statement?

- Protect the most significant biological resources in this region
- And connect them too

Should we focus on watershed boundaries?

- Most citizens don’t understand the concept “watershed” thus translating this to media and public is very difficult
- Ried Wilson agreed that 50% of the people in a survey didn’t know what a watershed was.

Who else should be involved?

- Coast keeper could take the lead in this

Tommy Hughes:

- When you put important areas on a map the critical link areas start jumping out at you.
- When you get down to a smaller scale then you can get local people involved

Dan Bell

- I will work with Scott Pohlman to draw up a map with critical areas on it
- Tommy Hughes indicated that he has focus areas with watersheds up the lake, he also suggested that we keep in mind there are overlays and that an NENC initiative has already begun on this.

Suzanne Dorsey

- Don't forget about barrier islands and the relevance of small scale land acquisitions.

Scott Pohlman

- Need to get involved in local politics to make sure commissioners and local politicians know that we are partners with them.

John Ann Shearer

- Onslow Bight is a model and Matt Nespeca spoke to private citizens involvement in SC which would provide a greater link to local government

Anthony Snider

- Other states have recognized that growth was going to happen and have responded by developing a conservation design for the entire state. This document was signed off on by agencies and private land owners.

Tommy Hughes

- Targeting influential landowners helps to get others involved
- Most of the land in the Lower Cape Fear region is corporately owned but that's going to change—this makes us somewhat unique to the SC situation

What about Land trusts?

- I think some landowners would be interested in participation and would be good representative

Shelly Miller

- The Soil and water Conservation representatives live among the people we are trying to connect with this gives us an advantage over those folks who come from Raleigh/Durham
- We have voluntary agricultural programs and these might be the private citizens to target for representation

Dan Bell

- In you have partnerships or maps or plans please bring them to us so we can try to work in harmony with other plans

Richard LeBlond

- Especially important to get marine and estuary components

Funding Forum: Don Riley, John Ann Shearer, Tancred Miller (see handouts)

- The goal of these funding program sis to invest capital into conservation programs
- We come at this a little differently, we go after the big portion of the pie that is privately owned
- EQIP
 - A place where local NGOs etc can get involved
- WRP

- Traditional has not been used in Southern NC
- Riparian Buffers
 - There's funding for easements
- 10 year restoration project money is also available
- We will work with working land to keep them productive. It's easier to work with one large landowner than it is with a parceled, developed lot
- We get to know landowners at the county level
- Dan Bell interjected that by working with Don he has been given the heads up on several individuals who may be interested in looking at easements
- Don Riley would like to be more of a proactive partner, that is to be able to offer a package to landowners, and not work piecemeal

Waccamaw River Corridor Project: Matt Nespeca, TNC-SC (power point)

- Initiated through Horry County Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS)
- Protecting bottomland hardwood is the approach to save blackwater rivers
- By creating special projects in NRCS that gives them higher priority for funding
- We also focus on black bear corridors
- The project was begun in 1990
- Matt discourages the use of a 30 year easement
- Upland buffer areas are much more at risk from development than are wet lowland areas
- We have a \$900/acre payment that is matched providing \$1800/acres for people to put land under easements
- This is a restoration program but not every area needs or gets restoration
 - Protection without restoration
- We were told by the state of SC not to expect anymore state acquisitions—they need to be private
- Priorities
 - Connections between protected land
 - Adjoining lots with protected land
- By working with NRCS they were able to acquire much more land: 1,200 vs. 6,000 acres

Discussion ensued between Don Riley and Matt Nespeca regarding how SC interprets certain rules. Don and Matt to work off-line to educate NC officials about SC practices.

John Ann Shearer, USFWS (Powerpoint)

- Partners for Fish and Wildlife programs
 - Designed to provide technical and financial assistance to landowners who want to do restoration projects
- Want to support and promote partnerships
- Has an education component
- Open to a variety of partners
- Has helped with damn removal
- Private Stewardship Grant is geared towards endangered species

CELP Tancred Miller and Kelly Price (CELP draft document)

- Want to create a discussion
- Federal program administered with NOAA for coastal land conservation
- Set up and encourage partnerships
- Non-profits are not eligible, local governments need to be the applicant
- Funding is available in 2007
- We need a federally approved land conservation plan for the state
 - We are looking to finalize the plan this Spring and submit it to Congress
- 2 different Components (see document table of contents and page 13)
- You get extra points for ecological
- John Taggart gave higher scores to complexes that had more of a watershed component
- Suzanne Dorsey, this might be an opportunity for the coastal component of our partnership
- Should we include more coastal fringe areas?
 - John Taggart responded Yes, include
 - But the location should be adjacent to estuarine system
 - Coastal fringe is probably the most vulnerable areas
 - As long as there's a connection to a river or coast it should be ok
 - Scott Pohlman: let the reviewers select the criteria
 - We would be more competitive if we knew the bias of the reviewer
 - We would be more competitive if we knew the senator!
 - Janice Allen: but you need a plan and need to identify areas?
 - John Taggart and Richard LaBlond use "Sheare & Wiley?" as a reference and use G1 types
 - The more priorities you combine the better off you are.
 - Dan Bell as you think about partnerships and identifying project areas keep in mind that individual project areas need to be put into a broader plan so that we don't overlap. The larger the geographical area the more difficult it is to select project areas.
 - Are partnerships valued as a rank?
 - John Taggart: I look for a good stable organization with a good funding match and that were a few steps towards the process.
 - Need to develop criteria.

It was noted that other state plans differ amongst themselves. Suggested to boost programs that address multiple habitats. Also need to include criteria for access to resource. Suggested to rank according to 1) coastal rare habitats, and 2) functional aspects. Noted that this was done in CHPP process; vulnerability important, as in headwaters. Kelly noted that she would like comments by the end of the month and a final draft by the end of April.

- There was a meeting that tried to identify priorities for NOAA, people from NOAA don't encourage coastal projects. There is an inherent bias at the top toward estuarine projects. It was suggested we call NOAA and inquire as to their bias.
- NOAA wants to have more discrete state plans
 - Prioritizing individual habitats may not be politic

- Instead, having a number of rare habitats may be even more of a priority
- Public access should be considered
- NC DCM has resources for downland estuaries, less for upland
- Scott Pohlman: I can come up with themes like coastal habitats (they are all rare) and functional aspects (fish spawning areas), headwater systems are really important because it's what's being developed now. It's better to have general criteria and to be less specific like vulnerability and rarity.
- Tancred: what about evaluation criteria
 - Add: access and partnerships

Afternoon Session

Dan Bell

- How big do you want this group to be?
 - Dan Bell: As broad as we can make it and still be effective
 - Shelly Miller: larger is good
 - Tommy Hughes: each member should bring something with them. If they are going to have a big say then they need to play a big role
 - Matt Nespeca: we need a subcommittee breakout. The whole group may not meet very often. Target areas could meet regularly
 - Dan Bell: Yes smaller groups would do the primary work
 - Laura Fogo: smaller groups would allow stakeholder participation
 - Nancy Cave: Should we set goals?
 - Dan Bell: In the next couple of months we need to identify the geography and what we think we can do.
 - Tommy Huhges: Where, What, How
 - Chris Helms: Back to the mission statement—should we have a desired outcome like: in order to protect the biological diversity of our region.
 - Hervey McIver: Geography, the including the Bladen lakes may make area too broad
 - Tommy Hughes: It doesn't hurt to have it in there
 - Suzanne Dorsey: would including it stop anybody else from working on it?
 - Anthony Snider: If something deleterious happened we would already be in place to deal with it
 - Laura Fogo: keep it broad and don't forget bear corridors

Dan Bell Identifies Geography Group: Scott Pohlman, Janice Allen, Tommy Hughes, Hervey McIver, Richard LeBlond, Suzanne Dorsey, Matt Nespeca, Dan Bell

Mission Statement and Objective Group: Anthony Snider, Dan Bell

Richard Leblond: we need to start working on targets, we know what they are through the heritage data

Tommy Hughes: marking up maps provides a good first approach to identify corridors and linkages and thus priorities

Scott Pohlman to Anne Deaton: What's the timeframe for identifying key estuaries?

- This will be done regionally with a committee to identify strategic habitat areas
- Key estuaries will occur around areas that have coastal fish species

Dan Bell: are there any notable absences from this group?

- DFR
- SC NERR (Anthony Snider will make the contact) –

Dr. Anna Toline (toline@belle.baruch.sc.edu) website: <http://www.northinlet.sc.edu/>

- Are there any public groups with a conservation committee like League of women voters?
 - BEAT: Brunswick environmental action team. Colin Smith and Jan Harris are contact points

Next Meeting: Tuesday, April 18