

Joint Cape Fear Arch/Onslow Bight Meeting  
Feb 19, 2014

Kim with Onslow Bight Partnership/Marine Corps and Dan Ryan with the Cape Fear Arch/The Nature Conservancy welcomed the group.

Introductions:

- Kim Fleming, Marine Corps Installations East G-F—referred to Tim McCurry for update on MCB Camp Lejeune encroachment partnering.
- Dan Ryan, TNC—position opening in Southern Pines office, restoration coordination and land acquisition...look for that on list serves please send us good candidates.
- Mary Watzin, first speaker Dean of the College of Natural Resources and delighted to be here.
- Ashley Faircloth Natural Resource Foundation—works at Hoffman Forest.
- Troy Ettl—Director of the Longleaf Pine Whole System for TNC, based in Atlanta.
- Tori Lockhart—Forestry Manager at RMS.
- Tony Doster - Resource Management Services. We have three bald eagles on properties we manage; working on a wetland mitigation project; assessing ice damage on forests.
- John Hammond- US Fish and Wildlife Service. Working within the Arch and Onslow Bight.
- Jan Goodson- Jay Carter and Associates –specializes in RCW restoration and monitoring in the coastal plain and Sandhills.
- John Carpenter—NC Wildlife Resources Commission, Land Bird Biologist.
- Tim Curry, MCB Camp Lejeune Community Plans and Liaison Office –MCB Camp Lejeune Encroachment Partnership; recent closing on the Sharp Tract with TNC; looking at a new 200 acre tract that will meet requirements of the program.
- Barbara Wilson—Marine Corps Installations East G-3; working on Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan.
- Stephen Maharry—Croatan National Forest; helicopter onsite and used to burn around 300 acres last week.
- Ron Sutherland—Wildlands Network; monitoring habitat with the South East Climate Science Center.
- John Taggart UNCW Environmental Studies; performing survey work in Holly Shelter area.
- Sara Babin—TNC Wilmington, Fire Festival will be moving to October at Halyburton.
- Roger Shew—UNCW Environmental Studies & Cape Fear Riverwatch; commented on habitat restoration project by Lock and Dam 2 to facilitate spawning...also planted 100+ acres of longleaf at Ev-Henwood Preserve.
- Mercy McCurdy—community member.
- Will Morgan—TNC legislative lobbyist in Raleigh and DC.
- Kristin Miguez—project manager for EEP; have received funding for project in Arch area
- Maria Conley—NC
- Jessica Blake—Stewardship Manager for CLT
- Jennifer Avesing—CLT Stewardship
- Tatum Justice – CLT Stewardship
- Jaime Sasser: longleaf restoration in several parks in Arch

- Phil Wallace –NCFS focusing on longleaf restoration. New partnership with DOD conserving forests around military installations.
- Scott Pohlman—DENR office, the Natural Heritage Program still exists but much smaller.
- Janice Allen—CLT amazing record of land preservation in December 11,000 acres preserved. Orton Plantation easement is 6400 acres. We’re still going!
- Chesley Ward, NC Wildlife Resource Commission—focus on prescribed burns and management plan on game lands.
- Brian Geller—Marine Corps Air Station New River
- Timothy Richards—land use planner with Onslow County...trying to keep abreast
- Justin Boner—heads up real estate efforts in NC for The Conservation Fund. Working on CWMTF funding this year.
- Bill Holman of Conservation Fund—trying to keep funding for the state agencies
- Kate Dixon—ED Friends of the Mountains to Sea Trail Will speak about efforts of rerouting trail through Arch/OB.
- Poul Lindegaard—BHI Conservancy Director of Operations.
- John Ann Shearer—US Fish and Wildlife in Raleigh; focuses on habitat restoration with private land owners and prescribed burns. USFWS has been busy working on coal ash spill and hunting around red wolves in NE NC.
- Kacy Cook—NCWRC focuses on partnering to permanently preserve high priority land and coordinate green growth toolbox for land use planning. We are looking to advertise a few mini grants to help them fund conservation planning projects at the local level. Up to \$20,000.
- Morgan Pitts with Enviva—manufacture of wood biomass fuels
- Glen Katz—College of Natural Resources, Hoffman forest and state properties
- Susan Miller –US Fish and Wildlife Service based in Southern Pines
- Suzanne Dorsey—BHI Conservancy
- Angie Carl—TNC
- Fred Annand- Director of Land Protection with TNC
- Gary Peterson—National Wild Turkey Federation; looking to fund land acquisitions in NC; trying to become a bigger player in NC. Holding landowner workshops in NC.

SPEAKERS:

**Mary Watzin, Dean of the College of Natural Resources, NC State University:**

“Conservation in a Changing World”

- Early conservationists thought about conservation differently than we do now. Mettler’s Woods example managed by Rutgers University. They did not actively manage the forest; it was last uncut forest in the Mid Atlantic, no fire since 1711. As a result dogwoods died in the ‘60s, defoliation from gypsy moths occurred and resulted in no oak regenerations, essentially a dying forest. Conclusion: Conservation requires active management, restoration, and enhancement.
- Conservation Practices include:
  - Land acquisition for public parks, refuge, and reserves
  - Tools include easements, land trusts etc
- Are we protecting property in the right places?
- We are not going to buy enough land to protect ecosystems

- Conservation practices need to be evaluated especially those using the endangered species act. It is not always the best tool to inform the public.
- Land use planning has not stopped fragmentation, degradation of water quality and loss of other ecological values.
- Individual stewardship using BMPs works in some areas but water quality does not seem to be helped mostly because BMPs tend to be aimed at fixing current problems not improving...they just make sure things don't get worse.
- Restoration is site by site and yields mixed results.
- This negative light is not to say that we shouldn't be working hard. Can we create a grander vision, a proactive approach to conservation, more holistic, that meets the needs of people and planetary biodiversity? This is the union of conservation and sustainability.
- Sustainability is a way of living that leaves our environment as good or better than we found it for future generations. It is a framework for making choices and requires societal challenges as much as environmental. It requires new tools for quantifying analyzing and visualizing alternative scenarios for the future.
- Tools for sustainability include environmental footprinting, policy, alternative indicators indices, GIS, scenarios assessment.
- Freshwater is the number one natural resource issue in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Policy, economics, and management research is needed:
  - Social scientists and economics are just as important as environmental sciences
  - We need new policy instruments
  - Need a paradigm shift of shared governance
  - We need to make a business case for conservation and sustainability
  - We need to document our success
- Recommended Natures Fortune book by TNC CEO Mark Tercek
- The working landscape is a mosaic of agriculture and forests and many small landowners. We need to create a more diverse income stream including crops, wood, water, carbon sequestration, wildlife and recreation...
- The pathway forward includes:
  - Conservation & Sustainability working together
  - Collaborations: many players
  - A common script with a role for all players
- Themes at NC State Dept. of Natural Resources:
  - Sustainability
  - Land and Water
  - Built and Natural Environments
- Sustainability:
  - How do we get the legislators to be honest brokers of information?
    - We can help with education

#### Questions:

- Are you working with native plants as a source for biomass? We are more focused on woody plants producing ethanol and the pellet industry.
- Hoffman—in the sales agreement it says the buyer intends to work with the military, what are their incentives? There's a value to the military in keeping it as a working forest.

- What is the role of the University? You are bumping responsibility for the values of conservation/sustainability etc. to the military? Hoffman Forest was providing revenue to our program and demonstrating to the world the value of working lands. We don't see somebody else working the land in contrast with our values.
- We are trying to work with utilities to build the case that natural resources are important. We would be delighted to help formulate the case.
- You said that Hoffman is going to stay a working forest. What do you mean by that? Some farms are already in place. Primary business of the forest is a pine plantation. The perspective was not to plan to change land use, in order to do that you would have to get a permit from USACE.
- The Coastal Fed has requested a freedom of information request. We believe we have managed our forest very well. We look forward to engaging in a conversation about how we're managing the land.
- If you say you want to be a model for private landowners but you are selling the property to be more profitable? So was the forest profitable? The income stream had declined in the last couple of years. Income was inconsistent over time. As an educational institution we need a regular and high rate of return. From my perspective this is a resource that you want to see as a working forest, but you have no guarantee. The concern is that you say it's going to stay working but it can't recoup the sales cost if it does stay working.
- What do you think about scientists getting involved in politics? We don't need to get involved; we don't need to impose our values on the community.
- Hoffman Forest: What is the perspective of people at NCSU? Most people support the sale. The protests against the sale have been minor. We have an ambitious strategic plan but we need resources to implement the plan. We will get a more consistent and predictable income from the sale.
- Was the controversy based on that the agreement was to preclude development? We never said we were selling it with an easement. The buyer will keep it as working lands that is what his primary interest is. We did not know about the prospectus done by the buyer and it has been put aside.
- What is the nature of the buyers commitment? In the sales agreement it says they intend to work the land. It is true there is no guarantee but this is the right thing for the College of Natural Resources. We tried our best to get a buyer that was committed to keeping it in working lands.

**Morgan Pitts: Enviva Sustainable Biomass Resources**

- Our company is expanding into the SE Coastal Plain.
- What is biomass? It is the amount of living matter. Enviva says biomass = wood specifically the byproducts of harvest for saw timber, some whole tree and some mill residue.
- We have multiple markets, not just one and NOT trees for other manufacturing.
- Why wood pellets? Fuels are low carbon emitting and clean burning. With increasing forest stocks you get net neutrality when you burn pellets. Carbon emissions from the source, transportation to sale determine that on average 74 to 90% carbon savings over coal.

- 20/20 Goals in EU. They have set targets by country for carbon emissions. Increasing demands in Asia for wood pellets.
- Demand for wood pellets:
  - 26% decline for wood over the last decade
  - Current and future demand profile keeps the percentage of U.S. production as a relatively small percentage of wood production
  - U.S. demand is increasing
  - Enviva customers are mostly European Power Companies
  - Northern NC is a key part of a rapidly expanding source area
  - Wood pellet is scalable. We can use existing equipment, that similar to grain handling. We replicate conventional energy with a renewable resource.
- Enviva Background: Evaluating a number of options for expansion in SE NC --- especially with the installation of an export facility at Wilmington Port. Also considering Savannah.
- Delivering on Sustainability
  - Laws, legal regulation are the best practices
  - Continue to build on markets for forest products
    - Keep land in forestry
    - We have long term contracts
    - Consistent revenues for communities
  - We only buy wood from forest that guarantee they will be replanted
  - Feed stocks are those that are most beneficial for sustainable forest operations.
    - We use special equipment to minimize impacts
  - We love forest certifications and will pay more for fiber from certified forestry. We need to see more certification in SE NC.
  - Improve transparency and traceability on the fiber. Need a track and trace system to make sure the forest was replanted for instance.

#### Questions:

- Waste stream? 100% of wood fiber is used to make fibers—bark fuels the dryers. There is no waste water and no bulk refuse.
- In the south we have a dilemma about hardwood vs. softwoods? Does Enviva want more hardwood? Yes But if you want more than does it make sense to be here? We would use more soft wood in SE NC.
- What drives the mix? Economics and resource availability one is not better for pellets than the other. So it's because hardwoods are more available in the areas where you've been working? Yes but that would change here in SE NC.
- Part of the concern is that if the mix remains more hardwood it could lead to overuse of bottomland hardwood areas? We do take off cuts of bottomland hardwood. We only contribute 10 to 30% of the harvest so we are not driving the harvest.
- Working for State Parks we have pine overstory we have too much hardwood. We would love to be able to do something with our hardwoods. In VA the vast majority of our hardwood is from understory.
- Is it really carbon neutral? What about shipboard transport? Yes it is neutral *relative* to coal.
- Older forest contribute more to carbon sequestration than younger forests. How do you address long term soil health if you harvest all the debris? There is still some debris

left. Is it enough? We understand that it is. When you have a good biomass market you can make restoration feasible for private landowners? I've never seen soil concerns.

- I clear cut thousands of acres and a well-managed stand has very little debris. If it is a degraded forest then the biomass becomes important. More wood markets are better than less wood markets.
- What is the average distance to the mill? What is the percentage use of hardwoods in SE NC? 75 miles, we do not say out loud how much but probably less than 15%. 75 miles give you the ability to maintain that area indefinitely? Yes that's our goal. What about using wood fiber from storm events? We would consider that depends on the carbon costs of using it.
- Will Enviva help make certification cheaper for landowners? Yes we are putting our money where our mouth is to support increased certification.
- Do you have a local regional plan for SE NC? We are looking to put a port facility moving 3 million tons a year. We need two domes for our product. We have identified a trucking site in Sampson County. There is a Richmond County site for rail transport a northern or western rail site. The time frame is within a year.
- Do you take clean or dirty chips? Enviva can take some but not all dirty chips. We do segregate.
- Importing chips to Europe is good but what about the U.S.? U.S. energy market is highly fragmented with no cohesive policy. We need to have a policy framework to make this feasible in the U.S. EPA regulating carbon could do the trick.
- What about Moorhead City for a wood pellet facility? International wood pellet is a competitor and is not related to Enviva.
- Renewable energy with renewable mandates at the state level? There is a biomass provision but it's not wood pellets. Different states have different incentives.
- Is there concern about standards in Europe going away? They have subsidies and taxes that are long term and progressive. With a carbon tax coal will become uncompetitive.

**Adrienne Cox: Project Manager, FOCUS**

- FOCUS is a three year grant that will sunset this time next year. This is a grant awarded through regionalism from the Obama administration. Hopefully you'll see that politics don't come into this as much as some folks think.
- Planning: what it means and how it impacts you as citizens: your home, your career, and in collaborations.
- From Arch Conservation Plan: window of opportunity to plan properly for population's growth. Growth itself is not a problem but how it grows is of the essence.
- Grant is from HUD DOT and EPA: MSA awarded to Wilmington Cape Fear Council of Governments with a focus on the SE NC
- Grant Criteria:
  - Provide more transportation choices
  - Promote equitable affordable housing
  - Enhance Economic Competitiveness
  - Support existing communities
  - Coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment
  - Value communities and neighborhoods

- Working with 3 counties and 33 local government and municipalities and 28 economic development organizations with 50 registered non-profits (not including churches)
- 14 Consortium Members: City of Wilmington, New Hanover County, WMPO, Wave Transit, Various Towns and Non-profits
- Issues:
  - Traditional vs. Creative class
  - Supplier vs. consumer
  - Political differences
  - Cape Fear River improved crossing to support communities
- Our area has gained 25% of its population in the last 10 years. In planning we look at loss of youth from an area. When you compare to South Carolina you see that they have much more population loss than NC. Myrtle Beach MSA was determined to include Brunswick County by federal agencies. This is unfortunate. If we planned better and worked with each elected officials we could have changed this. We should try to address that in the next election cycle: FOCUS city of Wilmington and New Hanover is all working on this.
- When you compare to Nebraska you see 80% of the counties losing population.
- Planning is the result of population growth. Total population is estimated to be 281 million in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (80% urban). In the 22<sup>nd</sup> century we estimate US pop at 570 million (90% urban).
- What we are learning at FOCUS:
  - Decision making tools
  - Cooperative relationships
  - Population Growth
  - Public Input
  - Regional data
  - Decisions matter
  - Future opportunities are highly competitive in a smaller world
  - Policy recommendations to accomplish desired outcomes
- FOCUS is really trying to build us as a region and we need to realize our role in a mega region and how they impact us.
- FOCUS is at the Mid-Point
- Data Collection includes
  - Demographic trends and analysis
  - Population projections for planning horizon 2040
  - Regional Health and Wellness Assessment
  - Regional Housing Assessment
  - Economic indicators
- Citizen Engagement – multiple public meeting to gauge public values and opinion on the FOCUS six livability principles (Economy, Environment, Health Housing, Opportunities, and Transportation)
- Catalyst Demonstration Projects: Castle Hayne, South Fifth Avenue, Coastal Pender Public Private Partnership and Leland Gateway District
- Scenario Planning, alternative futures: there will be a soft launch for public official. A visual representation of three different scenarios for the future. Elected officials can take it to the next level and embrace a planning process.

- We are Asking:
  - Support the catalyst projects
  - Spread the word about FOCUS—we need more people to participate in meetings, online forum
  - Save a date for Scenario Planning “alternative futures”
  - Plan to participate on Focus Regional Advisory Committee to assure regional cohesion for the plan
  - The additional 300,000 people estimated to arrive by 2040 can be an opportunity to our regional economy or a huge set of problems
  - We are all invested in this region
  - Ask how we will provide for regional suitability after the FOCUS staff are gone.
- By December 2014 the Regional Advisory Committee will develop policy recommendations for consideration. Our ultimate deliverable is a regional plan for sustainable development.
- We have a FOCUS Forum on the web page where you put in questions and get answered
- The last thing I want to leave you with is that planning is driven by vision and value it really isn't code and rules. This planning document is a guide to share what YOU want with decision makers. Lots of good information that might be available. There are no “shall” and “must” in policy we are not trying to push anything on anybody just trying to let you know what will happen. This policy is a tool to help local government make good decisions and solid capital investments. Saying no to any one thing means that you are saying yes to something else.

#### Questions:

- What difference does it make if Brunswick is in Myrtle Beach or Wilmington MSA? It provides data that can change funding opportunities. It is a disconnect for outsiders considering our area for economic development.
- You've seen the Cape Fear Arch conservation plan, can you incorporate it into your plan? Yes there's a great opportunity there. We are working on creating a clearinghouse for GIS for any user. The only question is where will the data go and who will house it.
- When you come to the end of your three years and you have a regional plan: Is it going to have been signed off on by the three counties? Is it important to have it recognized? Yes it is. Our members will take that back to county leadership.
- To what extent do you want smaller communities to be involved? We haven't had as much success as we want, but we do want to include them.
- What kinds of things have you heard from people that they want to have happen in the future. One stat is that in the next 20 years we are going to have many more single households. 50/50 in twenty years and after that singles will make up the majority. Housing stock has to increase as a result. Do we change the dynamics of housing? Brunswick Forest has a great price range for moving in from another area but you don't have many young folks so the community isn't diverse and neighborhood community may not be a place to “live in place” as you get older. Transportation, crossing the bridge and the bus—people are riding the bus and they need them.
- How do you make the visioning and energy of developing a long term plan (that is really fun to do). How do you take the planning and visioning effort and take that one step further, taking it and implementing. It is very incremental. You don't all have to be

experts but if you love your community you expect improvements. Improved roads and transportation options have happened in our region. Focus on the priorities. In the end it takes the public to push a strong leader to make things happen.

- Is the scenario planning resulting in maps of growth patterns? Those patterns are very powerful because they can show the economic benefit of certain growth patterns. Do you see that as a result? Yes you will visually see how decisions and growth

#### **Kate Dixon, Executive Director Friends of the Mountain to Sea Trail**

- Mountains to Sea Trail was originally proposed in 1977; it is a NC state trail to see the diversity of NC wilderness, historic sites, farms, people, and towns.
- Much of the MST is a footpath, built and maintained by volunteers
- It is 947 miles and added to the State Parks system in 2000. No superintendent and no funding for the trail. 550 miles of the trail now built. Thousands of people use the trail every day. It is substantially complete in the mountains...because we could use the Blue Ridge Parkway as the backbone. Most people who use the trail are day hikers. Day and weekend hikers often need lodging and food. The MST is a way to bring in recreational and educational income.
- How the trail is managed: State Parks help communities plan the route, designate trail as MST when it is complete, MST has priority in State Park Grant programs.
- The land manager is the ultimate decision-maker: location of trail, what type of users, time of use and adjacent land uses.
- How Friends of MST Helps:
  - Develops back road route to allow hikers to complete trail across state
  - Organizes volunteers for trail building and other projects
  - Provides hiking information
  - Builds support for the trail
  - Raises money from private sources
- MST in the Coastal Plain:
  - Originally envisioned along the Neuse River—State Parks is still committed to this route. However, there is no trail between Smithfield and the Croatan National forest in 30 years. Current route is on the back roads for 175 miles.
  - Friends said lets step back and look at the coastal plain—how do we make it much more interesting for hikers. Two new ideas, paddle the Neuse and a new route in this area. And a new trail in this area mostly in the Onslow Bight area some areas in Northern parts of the Arch.
  - Next steps? First hikers on trail now. Route will officially shift in summer 2014. Still welcoming input on route, camping publicizing and any other ideas.
  - I would be astounded if this Neuse River trail happens quickly...Friends is really excited about this route and helping people explore this area of NC. The politics of that is that people in this area need to talk about it. State Parks is going to hire somebody to do a master plan for the trail which will among other things assess public interest in the trail.
  - What can you do? Share your ideas about the route, attend state parks master planning public meeting.
  - State Parks is having a centennial in 2015/16 so this is a real opportunity to highlight state and local parks connectivity. Hopefully build public support and get the legislature engaged in funding parks.

#### Questions:

- How much did you overlay the east coast greenway on this? There are certain places where we come together. East coast greenway's vision is to be a paved greenway but we are trying to be a natural area.
- Is there thought that the master planning process could take wildlife into consideration?
- Is it the ultimate goal to have all the MST trail on public lands? There are sections on private lands and in the next 20 years there will be more on private lands, hopefully on lands with easements.
- One of the things that we come across often is that private landowners don't want to put an easement because they are worried about liability. Do you know of a way to alleviate this concern? I just talk about the recreational use policy.
- Has there been any discussion about the Game Lands and hunting with the trails? When we talk to Wildlife Resource Commission that always comes up. Long distance hikers are used to being on Game Lands anyway. So my sense is that it is a bigger issue for the non-hiker. We always post on the trail that this is hunting land. For the Mountains to Sea trail we are going to deal with areas that are hunted with dogs and that could be more problematic.

#### **Conversations regarding Interaction between Two Collaborations:**

##### *Scott Pohlman to discuss updating both conservation plans:*

- First I want to reflect back on what the speakers touched on: connectivity and planning acknowledging that our regions are going to grow. Avoiding development in some areas will benefit the natural resources of our region. We are revisiting plans that we already have in hand in both places. We should celebrate the successes that were outline in the first iteration of both plans: conservation easement on Orton Plantation in the Cape Fear Arch is an example and acquisition of the Bates Tract and Sharpe Track in the Onslow Bight is another example. The NFWF grant supporting longleaf restoration and maintenance is an example of a grant that came through thanks to the partnership. That's the exciting part of the plans.
- In the Onslow Bight there were things that we didn't capture very well in the plan...especially freshwater and aquatic systems. So we are updating that. In the Cape Fear Arch the emphasis is on the priority areas and making it user friendly and the partners can use the information to guide conservation.
- Shared issues include sea level rise and keeping working lands. Another thing is that the time line is that we had hoped to be done with the plans as of this meeting and we are a little behind. We will keep moving forward. Other similarities are that we've borrowed time from experts in the regions. That's been really helpful to us.
- The Cape Fear River Partnership Plan is also being updated and will be incorporated into the Cape Fear Arch Conservation Plan.
- Scott is also involved in the Sandhills Conservation Partnership planning. "Behind every good planning effort is Scott Pohlman". Everyone is very appreciative for Scott and the data he provided and your ability to be very strategic.

##### *Janice Allen to discuss partnering on land acquisition efforts:*

- As a part of both partnerships we've had a sub group that is very interested in conserving land. We get together to figure out how we can collaborate to conserve land. This has been very helpful to us to understand what is going on but also in grant

writing. NFWF is very partnership oriented. So we have been working together specifically to come up with those grant applications. We will have another effort for the July submission of NAWCA funding. To date we've had several that have been successful in getting grants in these regions. Looking to link up lands around Juniper Creek and the Wacamaw River too. CLT will submit a proposal around the NE Cape Fear River working with a private land owner to expand 4,000 acres on the Cape Fear near the Angola Bay Game Lands. It is a great effort to be strategic in dealing with limited dollars. We welcome any other people interested in working with that group. Doesn't need to be just land trust or state agency folks.

- We talked about ways to collaborate—always looking for different ways to do that...would like to do this combined meeting again next year.
- Gary Peters just want to bring up again about the license plates, Turkey Federation selling license plates to fund land acquisition fees.
- Tony Recognizes Dan for putting it together and Tony for supplying lunch and all our speakers. Next meeting of the Arch is May 28<sup>th</sup>