

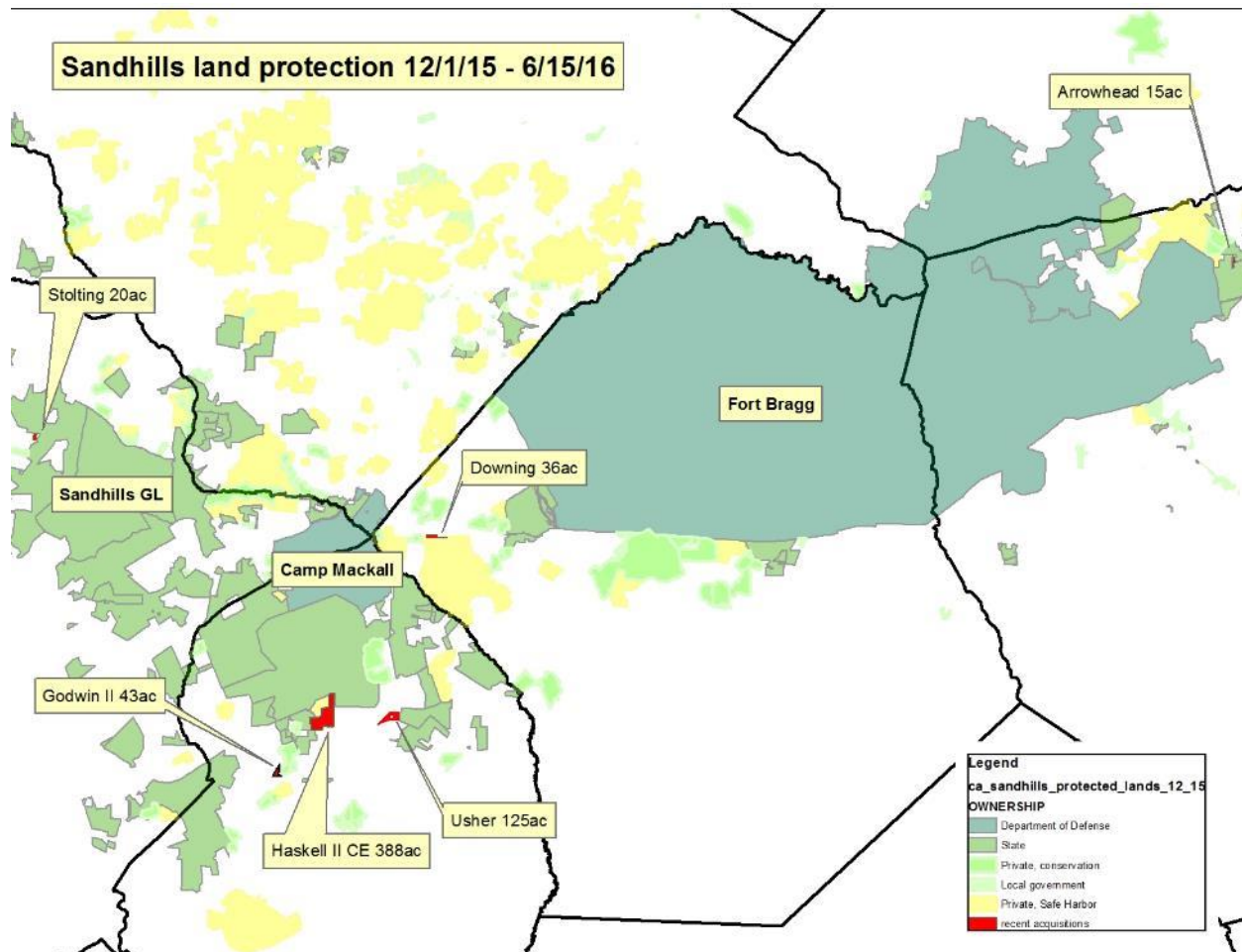
Working Group Updates

June 15, 2016

Land Protection Working Group

From December 1, 2015 through June 15, 2016 partners have closed on the following properties:

- 20 ac Stolting tract in Richmond co, purchase by WRC for Sandhills Game Land
- 36 ac Danny Downing tract in Hoke Co, purchase by TNC for TNC preserve
- 43 ac Godwin II tract in Scotland Co, purchase by TNC, eventually to become Game Land
- 388 ac Haskell II tract in Scotland Co, conservation easement by TNC
- 124.5 ac Usher tract, purchased in 2 transactions by TNC, eventually to become Game Land
- 15 ac land swap- 15 ac western fence line of TNC's Lafayette-Taylor preserve in Cumberland Co for 15 ac "arrowhead" tract inholding in Carver's Creek State Park. Arrowhead tract now owned by NC State Parks, fence line now owned by private neighbor McCormick Farms
- Transfer of Godwin tract from TNC to WRC
- Pending transfer of Gibson and Poplin tracts from TNC to WRC



Reserve Design Working Group

The Reserve Design Working Group met on February 8, 2016 to discuss the best way to move conservation forward in the Sandhills. After discussing several ideas, the group decided to conduct a conservation research needs assessment by interviewing land managers, scientists, and other stakeholders in the Sandhills. Specifically, the group was interested in information gaps that exist and what resources would be available to individuals, who might address one of the gaps. The long-term goal of this assessment is to enhance research and create partnerships between academic and implementation teams in the Sandhills.

Over the last couple of months, Paul Rogow, a volunteer with The Nature Conservancy has been interviewing and sending out questionnaires to 48 individual stakeholders in the Sandhills. The last date for feedback was June 10. Paul is currently summarizing the results and will present them at a Reserve Design Working Group Meeting on July 13, 2016. After the group's feedback, the results will be presented at a future North Carolina Sandhills Conservation Partnership Steering Committee meeting.

Red-cockaded Woodpecker Working Group

Objectives:

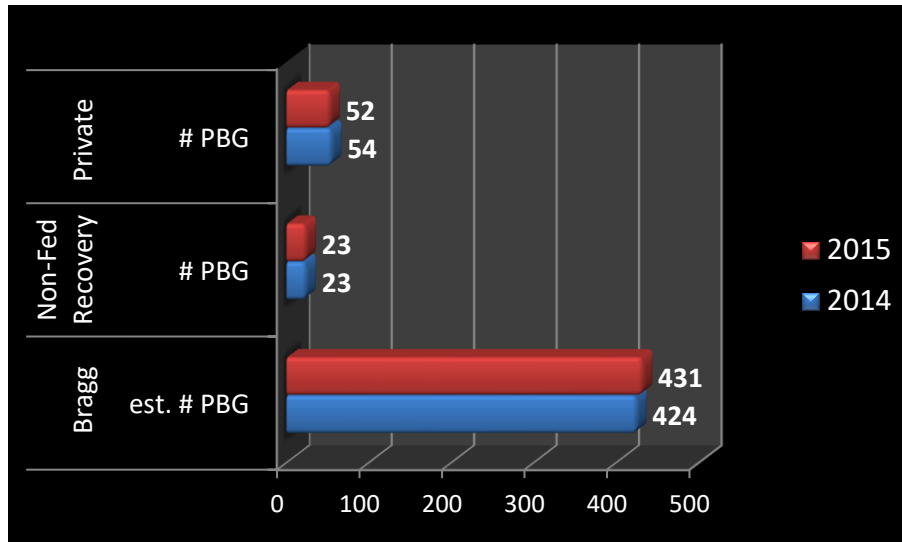
- 1) Develop a series of strategies to address the overall recovery of the RCW population in the North Carolina Sandhills, including connectivity between subpopulations within SANDHILLS EAST and WEST.
- 2) Work with other working groups and partners for implementation of RCW recovery strategies.

Sandhills EAST and Sandhills WEST

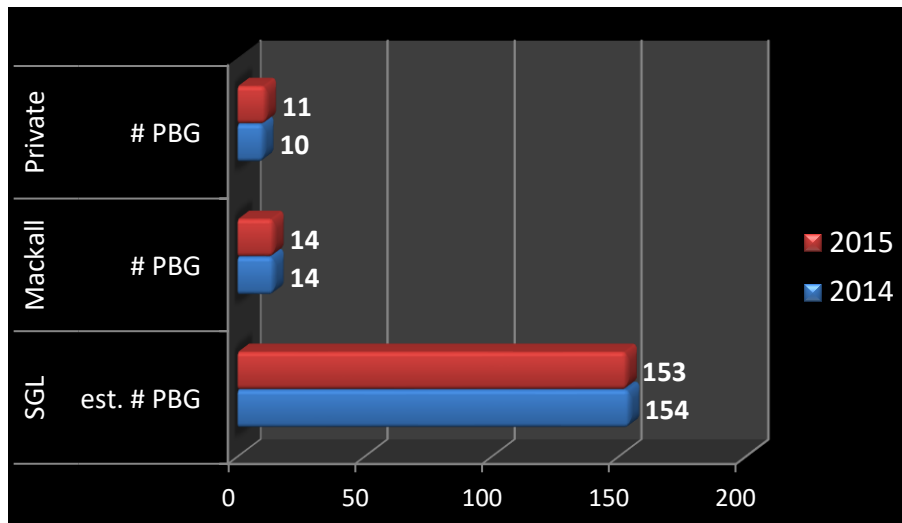
- **2015 Potential Breeding Groups (PBG) #s finalized:**

Increase of PBGs within NC Sandhills: 679 (2014) → 684 (2015)

SANDHILLS EAST est PBG --- TOTAL 2014 501 TOTAL 2015 506



SANDHILLS WEST est PBG --- TOTAL 2014 **178** TOTAL 2015 **178**



ONGOING PROJECTS

- **RCW Translocation Results – Sandhills EAST**

A regional intra-population translocation effort, paired with cavity suitability management, was conducted during late fall from 2012 to 2015, with the goal of stabilizing RCW family groups within private lands enrolled in Safe Harbor that provide demographic support to Fort Bragg Primary Core Recovery Population. Clusters located within Southern Pines Pinehurst (SOPI) and western Moore County (MOOR) were targeted for translocation to enhance connectivity amongst spatially isolated territories. Twenty four (24) total juvenile RCW were translocated to unoccupied recruitment clusters and solitary male groups. Approximately 90 artificial cavities were provisioned on these same private lands prior to, and in concert, with the translocation moves to enhance retention of RCWs in these territories.

2016 RCW population monitoring may still turn up more translocated individuals, but preliminary data suggest that 4 of the 7 juveniles moved during December 2015 from Fort Bragg donor groups to recipient clusters within Pinewild Golf Course and SOPI were retained and attempted to breed within SOPI and MOOR. Newly established RCW groups found on Pinewild Golf Club, a significant 2,000 acre Safe Harbor Property situated between Pinehurst and West End, provide a vital connection linking SOPI and MOOR groups.

Examining overall results of the 4 separate translocation events during 2013 through 2016, 12 of the 24 RCWs moved from Bragg were retained within Sandhills East private land RCW groups in subsequent years; Nine (9) of these same 24 produced young at age year 1, 2, 3 or 4.

We have been successful in expanding the western MOOR subpopulation – (i.e. the Hoffman Road Corridor) over the last decade; there are presently 11 active clusters and 10 potential breeding groups identified during 2016 as compared to 3 PBGs in the same area during 2006.

Foraging and nesting habitat throughout central SOPI has become increasingly developed and fragmented. Efforts to stabilize groups within the core of the SOPI Significant Support Population have entailed the use of translocation, artificial cavity installation and cavity restricting. Recent declines of RCW groups producing few to no young within the Country Club of North Carolina (CCNC) prompted biologists to bolster cavity suitability by restricting entrance dimensions through the use of a steel plate affixed on potential nest cavities. The plate safeguards cavity contents (i.e. eggs and chicks) from depredation by more aggressive woodpecker species such as red-bellied and red-headed woodpeckers. Number of young fledged within 9 CCNC groups increased from 3 in 2015 to 11 documented fledglings to date in 2016. Nesting success of RCW groups near Pinehurst Village and found throughout Pinehurst Golf Courses No. 1 to No. 9 did not have a comparable boost from 2015 to 2016. Only 2 of these 9 Pinehurst groups attempted to nest in 2016.

○ **2016 Demographic Monitoring – Sandhills EAST**

- **Fort Bragg, SOPI, MOOR, McCain Tract, Calloway Forest and Cumberland County** clusters intensively monitored in 2016 as in 2015.
- **Special note: TNC Calloway Forest** - The number of RCW groups on Calloway increased from 7 to 8 PBGs from 2015 to 2016. Cluster HOKE 17 split into an additional group designated as HOKE 18. An uncommon, second brood attempt was detected for the HOKE 9 group during the second week of June. Double brooding occurs some years within select groups that have experienced adult breeders, typically nest early and fledge young from the first nest attempt.

○ **2016 Demographic Monitoring – Sandhills WEST**

- **Sandhills Game Land A-Block, Camp Mackall and Blue Tract** clusters intensively monitored in 2016 as in 2015.

Future Priorities / Actions:

- (1) Continue to monitor both Sandhills East and Sandhills West RCW populations at comparable effort to recent years.
- (2) Continue to translocate juveniles to SOPI and MOOR Safe Harbor properties to expand and stabilize groups within Sandhills East private lands.
- (3) Develop a 5 year plan to guide SOPI and MOOR management activities. Expand education and outreach on Safe Harbor Properties regarding RCW ecology, with attention to species persistence within a developed and fire suppressed landscape.
- (4) Identify ACUB, Conservation or Safe Harbor Properties for additional population expansion opportunities.

Resource Management WG

No update.

Communications WG

No update provided. Working group chair is away.

Red-cockaded Woodpecker WG