

Agenda
North Carolina Sandhills Conservation Partnership
Steering Committee Meeting
1:00PM – 4:30PM Wednesday, June 20th, 2018
Weymouth Woods - Sandhills Nature Preserve

➤ Welcome and Introductions

Steering Committee Attendance:

Present

Jeff Marcus	TNC
Brady Beck	NCWRC
Jay Carter	SEI
David Heins	Fort Bragg/ED
Jesse Wimberly (Alternate for Nancy Talton)	SALT
John Hammond (Alternate for Pete Benjamin)	USFWS
Jimmy Dodson	NCDPR
Brian Yeich	NCFS

Absent

Monica Stephenson	Fort Bragg/DPW
Susan James	USAEC
Pete Edmonds - Chair	Ft. Bragg/DPTM

Other Attendees

Susan Miller, John Ann Shear, Caroline Krom (USFWS), Debbie Crane (TNC), Stacy Huskins (Ft Bragg ESB), Mike Martin, Kacy Cook, David Mattocks, Tim Mcfayden (NCWRC), Laurel Kays (NC State Extension), Kerry Brust (SEI), Jessie Schillaci (Ft Bragg), Terry Sharpe, David Holly (Consulting Forester) Kimberly Rust (USFS), Alan Schultz (Ft Bragg), Rex Badgett (NCDOT), Don Watson, Sarah Crate (NCFS), Chad Rogers, Elizabeth Smith, Lee Jackson, Ben Larson (Enviva), Michele Wilcox, Stan Theis (Ft Bragg), Ana Castillo (ORISE Fellow)

➤ “Sourcing Biomass in Ways that Support Longleaf Pine Ecosystem Restoration and Maintenance” – Ben Larson, Enviva

- A pellet mill is under construction in Hamlet and will be operating within 75 miles of the plant, expect to be operational in 2019 (late Q1)
- Enviva envisions being able to assist in longleaf restoration on private lands by reducing midstory and overall fuel loads to facilitate burning
- Ben Larson: previously with the National Wildlife Federation working on longleaf and generally southeast forestry, he sees a potential synergy between restoration and biomass, within his role he aims improve relationships with the conservation community

- Enviva: primarily provides pellets to electric utilities in Europe, 3 million tonnes of pellets/year, are working to ensure a transparent supply chain and tracking, including what kind of forest the biomass originates from
- The desired mix of products is 70% pine, 30% hardwood as of this meeting but could change. Oak will be used for pellets, pine used to dry out wood. Enviva will buy chips from microchippers, private loggers in the area who choose to invest in the machinery and perform this service in the area.
- Their policy is not to buy wood from old growth forests or any other high conservation value forests, which will be determined prior to beginning operation.
- Timber marking is ultimately up to the landowner, but typically trees that are too big won't go through the microchipper. Most thinning will be in forests with tree DBH 4-10 in, will not cut trees over 16 in. Will ultimately take dirty chips (with bark), limbs, and tops.
- Enviva will require information from the landowner such as ownership, forest type, regeneration plan. The ultimate goal is to return the land back to forest. Foresters visit every tract and they work to verify the source but there is no legal obligation from the landowner to abide by the management plan.
- Enviva plans to support private landowners in the area and is trying to build contacts/relationships in the Sandhills. They aim to buy as much certified wood as they can and assist landowners with Tree Farm and other certification. It was suggested they could sponsor a Forestry Association to provide landowners and provide incentives for abiding by BMPs or prescribed burning.
- Enviva will work with Jeff Marcus, Jesse Wimberly, and others to identify high priority areas, goals for setting up viable stands, etc.

➤ Break

➤ Working Group Reports and Discussion

- **Resource Management** (Brady Beck)

- No update

- **RCW Recovery** (Kerry Brust)



RCW WG Report_20
June 2018.docx

- **Communications** (Debbie Crane)

- A new Afield publication is available.
- Susan, Debbie, and Jeff gave framed picture from the Millionth Longleaf Planting event to the late Julian Johnson's wife, Margaret.
- The NC Prescribed fire council is updating logo, will get new banners to use for public facing events.

- The Fire in the Pines Festival will be held October 13th in Wilmington, will be looking for volunteers.
- The Land for Tomorrow Lobby day took place and several members of the conservation community traveled to the Capitol to talk to legislature about the importance of conservation funding. The most recent budget showed increase in Clean Water Management Trust Fund and Agriculture and Farm Preservation. Some reps even mentioned hearing about the Millionth Longleaf Planting event!

- **Land Protection** (Jeff Marcus)



Land Protection
Work Group update

- SALT has initiated a process to start to define their focus in the area and their role in filling in where other organizations don't work. They are looking to define their mission and identifying properties that fit their goals.

- **Reserve Design** (Ana Castillo)
- Protected lands in Sandhills is in the process of being updated.

➤ Partner Updates

NCDOT–

- No updates

NCFS – Sarah Crate

- Longleaf 201: Fire and Longleaf workshop went great, had about 50% landowner participation.
- Keep nominating landowners for the Longleaf Honor Roll, the committee is meeting in July to decide winners.
- Just released a new booklet, “Bringing Back Longleaf”, an introduction to longleaf restoration with calendar with tips for when to plant/burn, etc.
- No more cost share money left but there is some money for non-commercial thinning

USFS –

- As part of the Longleaf Pine 1 million acre challenge, the USFS has developed a plan for NC including Uwharrie and Croatan NF. The USFS is charged with 2,000 acres/year of restoration activities by 2025.
- As part of the USFS's 1 million acre challenge, they have released a desk guide on how to count acres towards restorations with the goal that all federal landowners report in similar manner.

AEC –

- No Update

USFWS –

- In the process of identifying potential St Francis Satyr sites for translocation in the future.
- A survey for long-eared bats was performed last summer using NC DOT funds and none were found in the Piedmont or Sandhills.

Longleaf Alliance –

- Longleaf Alliance biennial conference in Alexandria, LA October 23 – 26th.
- The America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative has a new 2017 report on Longleaf Land protection and management.
- NC Prescribed Fire Council meeting will be taking place August 2-3 in Asheboro, and there will be a Firescaping workshop August 1st.

SALT –

- No updates

NC Parks –

- On track with burning. Carvers Creek SP finished NFWF funded TSI project hardwood removal, thinning, and LLP planting.
- 2 new positions: Statewide Restoration Specialist and Fire Manager position, goal to have another burn crew.

SEI –

- Jay Carter and Associates found cluster split on Carvers Creek SP.

TNC – Jeff Marcus

- The new Longleaf Program Director, Debbie Maurer, is starting in July and will be based out of Wilmington.
- TNC has a new agreement with the Army Robin Sage training on preserves.

Ft. Bragg DPTM –

- Another training unit will be based out of Ft Bragg and will bring unique equipment's with them.
- They are about 50% through their planned burns and have yet to reach the impact zone.

Ft. Bragg ESB –

- Michelle is leading a survey for brown headed nuthatch as they appear to be declining in FL.
- Stacy reports plant counts are underway and are looking good.

WRC

- It was a tough burn season but 15k acres have been burned, maybe 1-2k acres left to do for the season including some later growing season burns.
- Kacy has been working with the town of Aberdeen on a development plan. Important to note, Hoke County is the fastest growing county in the area and Kacy is hoping to make some connections.
- Mike reports low amphibian activity for isolated wetland breeders as it has been very dry. This might result in a strong response the following season. Upland species are stable. If you are interested in surveys for tree frogs or Southern hog nose, please reach out.
- If you see any herps, document your sightings on Herpmapper and/or iNaturalist. This information is important for long-term monitoring as there has been a consistent decline in amphibians.

RLUAC –

- No Update

Sustainable Sandhills –

- No update

Other updates

- Marsh Smith and Marian McPhaul: Interested in protecting a ~298 acre tract near the Elk's Club, close to the western part of the Ft Bragg/SoPi. Elks Club is also interested and they collectively have raised ~\$1 mill to help buy the tract. They have created non-profit to pay for the conservation easement.
 - The property has ~112 yr old pine trees, some loblolly.
 - Their goal is to fundraise enough to pay for the CE and eventually pay back investors. Are looking for organizational help and networking as well as funds.
- Next Meeting: Joint Meeting with Greater Uwharrie Conservation Partnership and NC Longleaf Coalition, September 12th at the Moore County Agricultural Center in Carthage
- Adjourn