

North Carolina Sandhills Conservation Partnership

Steering Committee Meeting

April 6, 2010

Reserve Design Working Group Update

The most recent work on the NCSCP Reserve Design, completed in early 2010, focused on updating and refining data for the purposes of a Sandhills Green Growth Toolbox (GGT) Appendix and for internal Partnership use. Results of this effort included prioritizing existing data layers into Tier 1 and Tier 2 resource categories as a general indication of the biological value each represents. Assigning data to these categories also conveyed some general recommendations about how to interpret the data when using them for land use decisions. Some data sets that did not seem defensible as a product for public consumption through GGT, e.g. corridor study areas, were removed from the map with the idea that revisiting this data set could be a future action item. Also, data sets for smoke awareness areas and hunting safety buffers were created for GGT because they indicate areas that are important considerations for land-use decisions. However, these data sets do not necessarily demonstrate the location of known, high value biological resources. As of last week, the newly updated and repackaged data, along with the Sandhills Region Appendix, was provided to Shanelle Bullock from the Division of Community Assistance for use in her work on a land use plan for Vass.

Also, since completing the work on the data, Sara has finished the following analysis, "An Assessment of Unprotected Resources in the Sandhills and within ACUB Priority Areas". The purpose of this analysis was to assess the current status of known, high value biological resources (i.e. what the data demonstrate) to identify where gaps in protection or management exists. The focus was on the Sandhills physiographic region as well as the ACUB priority areas since this information will be useful for a TNC/ACUB programmatic review scheduled for April 2010. Results provide a numerical estimate of the amount and a spatial estimate of the location of biological resources that are currently without any protection or long-term management status in the Sandhills. Both estimates are subject to varying degrees of accuracy and precision because the positional accuracy of input data sets vary and the precision of geoprocessing steps and calculations in Excel are artificially high. There is also uncertainty about the true protection and management status of resources considered 'protected' in this analysis. However, even with these caveats, the results provide the probable location and extent of biological resources that occur on private lands, which is useful for planning and prioritizing acquisition and management strategies.

The next meeting of the RDWG will be on May 4, 2010. Action items that remain from previous meetings, including how best to facilitate implementation of the reserve design, will be the major topics of discussion.