



**EAGLES ISLAND COALITION**  
**August 5, 2015**  
**Wilmington, North Carolina**  
**Onboard the Battleship NORTH CAROLINA**

*Attendance list at end.*

**Welcome and Introductions / Announcements**

Niel Brooks initiated introductions at 2:07 pm. Attendees introduced themselves and the organizations they represent.

**Brief Announcements**

**Improvements to the Battleship North Carolina**

Captain Terry Bragg provided an update on the improvements to the Battleship. The latest site plan was shown and includes a coffer dam, and a SECU Memorial Walkway (pledged \$3 million). Construction will begin in early 2016. Phase 2 of improvements will include cutting/replacement of steel along the hull. Martin Marietta pledged \$150,000 to be used towards the Expedition Trail, of which Phase I (inner loop) will be constructed sooner than later. Piedmont Natural Gas Foundation has pledged \$75,000 to be used towards a kayak launch. The Foundation is returning at the end of August for further discussion of projects. The Governor's Department of Cultural Resource initiative for \$10.8 million visitor center was approved by the Governor, House and Senate. Terry indicated the economic contribution of the Battleship is extensive, which is proven by recent visitation on a Monday and Tuesday which totaled over 3,000 paid visitors to the Battleship.

Capt. Bragg added that Timewarner Cable will be showing a TV special on the Battleship. Ward Room continues its renovations through Chris Vargo's leadership.

**Town of Bellville's Riverwalk Project Update**

Bellville Commissioner Joe Breault gave a presentation and update on the Town's riverwalk project. The Town of Bellville has approximately 2,000 residents and is investing \$2 million into this project. CAMA and stormwater permits have been received. It's a 4-phased plan of which Mr. Breault is providing an updating on Phase 1. Pilings will be driven beginning in October for a river-walk including an observation deck. He provided slides depicting Buchoi Plantation, Roger Moore's plantation, an historical site that is associated with Orton Plantation. Signage has been established along with benches and picnic areas constructed by Eagle and Cub Scouts. A Duke Energy pavilion has been built along the river and includes an outdoor classroom with views of Eagles Island and Redmond Creek. All trails and pavilion are handicapped accessible. The Town will not charge for the use of the facility. All construction will be completed by January 1, 2016. The observation deck has been completed. His longterm timeframe of the full four phases - including a restaurant, growth of the park, and a boardwalk across to the Battleship is 7 to 10 years and would cost \$2 million. They will not ask taxpayers for funds. They are seeking grants from the Lawrence Foundation.

The Ports Authority has been approached (Chairman Adams) to grant property or an easement for constructing the boardwalk across the causeway. Considerations were favorable but contingent upon funding streams. A right of way will be approved or the full acreage. The greatest constraint is the currents of the river which will require 50' pilings.

The Town of Bellville will be hosting the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual North Carolina Rice Festival Saturday, September 19 – 20. The Eagles Island Coalition has been invited to have a booth at the festival.

**Gullah Geechee Heritage Corridor Commission**

Mayor Eullis Willis from the Town of Navassa provided an update on the Gullah Geechee Heritage Corridor of which they are having a meeting this Friday, August 7 at 9 am at Seabreeze. Jim Kapetsky and Niel Brooks will present a background on the Coalition. In 2006, the Gullah Geechee Heritage Corridor was established from Jacksonville, NC



to Jacksonville, FL. Gullah Geechee are descendants of rice farmers/plantations, previously connected to Eagles Island. The culture is being preserved through the Commission. Mayor Eullis wrote a book about the Town of Navassa and history of rice plantations located on the west bank, although the farming was done on Eagles Island. A formal partnership is being pursued by the Commission with the Eagles Island Coalition.

Mayor Willis also discussed the Kerr McGee superfund site, of which 118 acres will be restored to productive use.

Phil Prete indicated that there has been discussion of the Coalition to apply as a partner to the Commission considering Eagles Island is a cultural heritage center. Mayor Willis agreed.

### **City of Wilmington's Railway Plans**

Wilmington Environmental Planner Phil Prete provided an update on the City of Wilmington's future plans for rail improvements. Slides depicting existing rail corridor through the City was shown. The City also presented these plans at the City Council meeting where they were favorably received. The proposal is to reroute the railroad from the Port across the river and onto Eagles Island. The rail corridor includes 32 crossings through the City. A feasibility study will be required and potentially funded by several sources. The corridor will need improvements once the rail is removed, but could possibly include streetcar. At this point this is a conceptual plan. The next quarterly Coalition meeting will host a detailed presentation discussing impacts and benefits.

### **Kerr McGee Settlement Funds**

Mr. Prete provided an update on the Kerr McGee Settlement fund. He discussed the background of the creosote treatment site which includes a bankruptcy settlement agreement in 2011 (\$900,000). In 2011, an Environmental Response Trust was established which includes NOAA, USFWS and NCDENR. A fraudulent suit was settled in 2014 by Department of Justice. A public scoping document was released August 3 and will include restoration efforts. Cleanup efforts onsite in Navassa are separate from the restoration of the damages. Phil reviewed the eligibility and evaluation criteria and projects that will meet the goals and objectives. A series of restoration projects will be reviewed. The Eagles Island Conservation Management Plan provides a resource for priorities the Eagles Island Coalition supports including land acquisition by members.

Capt. Bragg asked if the Coalition is in a position to prepare a grant application that would further the goals of the Coalition. Phil confirmed the Coalition cannot be a grant awardee, however a participant of the Coalition can be. There are two properties that are of interest and include the Winner property (immediately south of the Battleship), however it may or may not be under contract at this point. The other property of interest is the McLaughlin property, the only property north of the causeway not under conservation (approximately 350 acres). Coastal Land Trust, Janice Allen, asked if there is a willing seller. Mr. Prete stated there are several heirs that own it and feels it is more valuable than the fair market price of \$300,000.

Discussions regarding potential projects and partnerships within the Coalition and best fit for the settlement funds ensued. Marilyn threw out the possibility of a marsh restoration to restore from Phragmites. Janice Allen indicated that Phragmites is difficult to remove and spreads easily.

### **Renaissance Wilmington Foundation**

Bill Graham, Chair of the Economic Development Council and Waterfront Task Force, provided an update on the Renaissance Wilmington Foundation. The Foundation is an entity set-up to support the Waterfront Task Force and takes on the agenda of other projects proposed in the downtown Wilmington area. Specific targets of the Foundation include Eagles Island, specifically the Winner property. Additional supporters include Doug Springer, Elise Rocks, a commercial real estate appraiser, and Bob Lorenz. Additional projects Mr. Graham is focused on include an aquatic center in downtown Wilmington as well as a maritime museum.

### **5-Year Review of MOU and Operating Protocols**

Niel presented a 5-year review and proposed update to the original MOU and Operating Protocols. The Coalition originally approved the MOU and Protocols in 2010, to be updated every 5 years. The attached slides provide the details on the proposed changes to the Operating Protocols.

The Mission of the Eagles Island Coalition was reviewed and includes "Leading efforts to conserve and manage the natural and cultural assets of Eagles Island and provide compatible educational and recreational opportunities." Overall Coalition goals were reviewed and include: identifying and mapping highest priority habitats, promote the conservation, restoration, health and sustainable use of the landscape, encourage public/private partnerships and create a popular recognition of the value of the region's resources.

Goals for individual participants include: assess opportunities to work cooperatively, encourage projects that focus on protecting the landscape, serve as an educational resource, and others.

The MOU will automatically be renewed unless there are changes that would have to be approved by the full Coalition. The Operating Protocols, which have proposed changes, include a framework for EIC operations. Proposed changes in the Operating Protocols include the following as described by Niel Brooks:

1. Add Associate Membership which is defined as: An individual who does not represent a Member organization, but through their dedication and service to the Eagles Island Coalition warrants special recognition by the Participants. Associates shall not be allowed to vote on official business matters, but may serve as committee members and chairs.
2. An additional clarification was the definition of Projects as it relates to protocols for individual or joint projects. Participants are free to undertake projects on Eagles Island commensurate with their existing authorities and jurisdictions either on their own or in partnership with other participants, provided however, that such projects are not described as projects of the Eagles Island Coalition, *nor shall they represent that they have support of or endorsement by the Eagles Island Coalition without explicit written support or endorsement signed by the chair after having been put to a vote by the members.*
3. Communications: *Eagles Island Coalition is not an advocacy organization and will not take a position on politically divided or controversial issues, nor issues that Members express that taking such a position might jeopardize their membership.*
4. Funding and Grant Administration: Any proposal written for the purpose of general support of the Eagles Island Coalition, together with the proposed budget and work plan, shall be reviewed and approved at a meeting of the Eagles Island Coalition, *or if no meeting is scheduled to meet the needs of a time-critical proposal, the Chair may call a special meeting of the Executive Committee to decide on behalf of the Coalition.*
5. Proposed change to Committee: *Change Conservation Planning and Land Acquisition Committee to Conservation Committee.*

Bill Hart of the New Hannover Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors stated he was opposed to the change in #5 above as it seems there are still ongoing acquisition issues/needs. Mr. Prete indicated the Coalition is not an entity that can acquire lands whereas it would be a member-directed focus. The Conservation Committee would focus on implementing the Conservation Plan. The change clarifies that the Coalition is not in the business of acquiring land, but yet can make connections to partners that can acquire land for conservation. Mr. Hart asked that the Coalition not lose focus on the original intent of the Coalition which was to encourage members to acquire the Winner property. Phil indicated the next step is to focus on the Conservation Plan and begin implementing action items. Purchasing property is part of the Conservation Plan.



Phil Prete presented a motion to adopt and approve the proposed changes as shown in the Operating Protocols distributed to the Eagles Island Coalition and seconded by Captain Terry Bragg. Jim Herstine stated that use of the word participant is still confusing in the document. The word participant needs to be removed from the document based on the proposed changes. A decision of participant vs member needs to be decided – one or the other, can't have both in the definition. Mr. Prete indicated the Operating Protocols could be cleaned up and adopted. Bill Hart questioned whether a quorum was present. By count, half of the signatories (25 members) were present and therefore a vote can be made. Kristina confirmed the word "Participant" is used in numerous locations throughout the document. Bill Graham suggested the Executive Committee review the changes and develop a consistent document. Mr. Prete made a motion to approve all changes, Marilyn Meares seconded this motion. The motion carried, however the vote was not unanimous due to the strike out of Land Acquisition from the Conservation Committee, thus the motion did not pass.

Dru Harrison made a motion to keep "Land Acquisition" in Conservation Committee name, and Marilyn Meares seconded. Capt. Bragg opposed as the Eagles Island Coalition is not a legal entity to acquire land as stated by the Committee's name. The Operating Protocols define "Consensus" as unanimous approval, as indicated by vote of those Voting Participants present at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Eagles Island Coalition. Therefore no action was taken on the MOU and Operating Protocols. The Executive Committee will take up this discussion at a future time.

#### **Recommended Nominations Slate:**

##### **Officers**

Chair: Rob Moul  
Vice Chair: Kristina Fischer  
Secretary/Treasurer: Dru Harrison  
Immediate Past Chair: Niel Brooks

A motion by Ken VaFier was made to accept the slate of officers as recommended and seconded by Phil Prete. Vote was unanimous.

Jim Kapetsky offered to present his rice canal final results at the next meeting due to the timing remaining of the meeting. Niel asked for a motion to adjourn at 4:12 pm.

##### **Attendees**

Dawn York  
Kristina Fischer  
Jim Kapetsky  
Phil Prete  
Captain Terry Bragg  
Bill Graham  
Gordon Johnson  
Janice Allen  
Chris Vargo  
Marilyn Meares  
Joe Breault  
Dru Harrison  
Niel Brooks  
Ken VaFier  
Eulis Willis  
Russell Grose  
Jim Herstine