



EAGLES ISLAND COALITION
September 3, 2014
Wilmington, North Carolina
Onboard the Battleship NORTH CAROLINA

Attendance list at end.

Welcome and Introductions / brief announcements

The meeting was called to order at 2:03 pm by Captain Terry Bragg. He indicated the Battleship had over 39,000 visitors to the Battleship in the month of August. Chair Neil Brooks reviewed the agenda and the various minutes attached to the packet distributed earlier. Attendees introduced themselves and the organizations they represent.

Brief Announcements

- Captain Bragg indicated the Battleship has approximately \$12 million in the bank to make improvements to the Battleship (coffer dam, walkway, kayak launch, Expedition Trail).
- Economic Development Council is a new member of the Coalition.

Minutes – July 18, 2013; December 4, 2013; February 26, 2014; May 7, 2014

Motion by Terry Bragg to approve minutes as presented; second by Bill Hart; minutes approved unanimously.

Committee Updates:

- Acquisition and Conservation Planning Committee – Kristina Fisher presented a committee update. She thanked the dedicated committee as they have been meeting monthly for a year. The effort was initiated as the lands are opened publicly and is required by Articles of Dedication. A group of experts has provided expertise (i.e. Scott Pohlman, Jim Kapetsky, Jan Davidson, Andy Wood, etc.) to determine the important targets to measure and protect. Data has been incorporated into spreadsheets although the datasheets don't necessarily provide for the complex structure of the targets/elements. Similar threats and strategies have been clumped and prioritized. A draft plan is not ready for review due to the complex issues being analyzed, such as sea level rise. Part of the plan is identifying lead partners to assist with strategies in order to achieve goals. End of September is goal for Coalition to review a Draft Management Plan including the matrix and executive summary. The review period within each individual agency will be a month or so.
 - Annual monitoring of the land under current protection is being proposed.
 - Niel asked if Kristina needs anything from the Partners. Kristina indicated they are in a good place to develop a draft. If partners can volunteer to lead certain strategies, it is a work in progress and will be visited each year so that appropriate steps are being taken.
 - Captain Bragg noted that the island is large and mapping efforts have been extensive. Certain trends have provided patterns. Has the Division thought about the 242 acres currently owned could be a long-term monitoring program for measuring salinity, tidal amplitude, etc.
 - Bill Hart indicated the University has been contacted (Dr. Long) with a long-term vision.
 - Kristina wants to use the management plan as a tool to assist with acquiring funds for implementing the strategies.
 - Jim Herstein asked how a long-term recreation plan would play a role in the management plan. Kristina noted that could be tied together with a potential for future work. Jim said one of the long-range goals of the Cultural and Recreational Resources Committee would be to develop a plan that includes public access (i.e. camping). There needs to be dialogue between the committees so each plan is not developed in isolation. They agreed to coordinate with each other.
- Outreach and Education Committee – Gordon indicated an informational table was displayed at Brunswick Waterfest, although not heavily attended. A website can be viewed at (www.eaglesisland.org), it is currently up and running.
- Recreation and Cultural Resources Committee – Jim Herstein indicated an upcoming conference on September 21 and 22 (http://www.ncrpa.net/events/event_details.asp?id=437684) will include an offsite field trip along paddle trails through Eagles Island. Niel will lead the trip. Jim Kapetsky is invited as well.
- Funding and Development Committee – No update was provided.

Presentation by Jim Kapetsky: The Status of Rice Cultivation Relicts on Eagles Island and a First Look at Threats to Them
(provided in pdf at the end of these minutes)

Notes:

- Relevant focus is the Eagles Island Coalition (EIC) mission which includes reviewing the preservation of historical sites.
- Reviewed the chronology of historical maps of Eagles Island (1700's).
- Jim used historic nautical charts to review existing historical elements (i.e. Wilmington & Manchester Railroad).
- This historic railroad coincides with existing dredge spoil islands and proposed footprint of Expedition Trail.
- Remains of the rice canal system were analyzed through satellite imagery via GIS manipulation (i.e. digitize existing canals).
- Attributes include perimeter and surface waters of canals.
- Function of canals were main water linkages between rice fields and tributaries and river, as well as transportation for workers and products.
- Canals were typically 2' wide by 2' deep. Approximately 11 miles of main canals, 4 of peripheral canals and 10 miles of ditches. This provides a platform to analyze threats.
- Each rice field was independent from each other with regards to the regulation of water in order to control the growth of weeds. Flooding of fields was important to support rice stalks/heads to make it easier for harvest.
- Spatial arrangement of three types of canals can determine independent rice fields. Approximately 18 rice fields are remaining and boundaries can be defined of which each is on average 12 acres. Total area is 214 acres.
- Threats remaining of the rice culture system include erosion and sedimentation. Former threats have been carried out due to Corps spoil site, horseshoe cut, reserve fleet, and right of way for highways.
- Dendritic erosion is in immediate area of canals. Erosion can be extensive (all 18 fields are affected by erosion of the dendritic type).
- At one point approximately 1,640 acres has been cultivated for rice (51%) whereas 1,576 acres was not developed for rice (49%).
- Next steps of research include: 1) calculate volumes of material removed to create rice canal system, 2) verification on the ground, and 3) determine rates of change of the erosion and sedimentation threats to the remains of the rice culture system. Sedimentation may be more pervasive than erosion.
- Doug Springer asked if rice could be grown as a demonstration project. Jim responded no, unless it was a salt tolerant species. Indicator is death of cypress trees. Doug asked if there was a rice species that could be used. Research project and great for the birds?
- What accounts for greater salinity in the river? Jim indicated it was the dredging in the harbor.
- How will the labor be calculated? Jim indicated measurements of the canals and area are known therefore volumes can be calculated. Total length of each canal can be extrapolated and therefore how much labor would be required to use a known volume of material.
- Janet Davidson from Cape Fear Museum asked if it is known if all 51% of the rice fields were in cultivation at the same time. Jim is hoping folks within the Coalition can help with these questions, such as the Mayor of Navassa.

Town of Belville Update on Brunswick Riverwalk at Belville

- Commissioner Joe Breault, representing the Town of Belville, NC, briefed the group on the Brunswick Riverwalk at Belville project. In his presentation he discussed the 2000' total project along the west bank of the Brunswick River that will include a fishing pier, restaurant, shopping and a pavilion; the Riverwalk will help connect to the history of Eagles Island including rice farming, navel stores and shipbuilding.
- Groundbreaking on December 4th.
- Phase 1 Expansion of the Riverwalk is well underway and permits will be received. Town of Belville has more water frontage that is publicly accessible in Brunswick County than any other municipality.
- Numerous elements include a woodland trail/walking site, boardwalk over marsh.
- Blue trail is adjacent to the Riverwalk.

- Funding is in-hand.
- Long-term vision includes intermodal connection of Battleship Park and the Brunswick Riverwalk.
- All state and federal agencies support the endeavor and partnered with the town to utilize education/outreach efforts.
- Plan will become a reality in 3 to 4 years at a cost of approximately \$900K.
- A meeting will take place in October to discuss entitlements to the land.
- Melissa Juhan asked if NCDOT rising of 74/76 would be included in route. Has NCDOT incorporated an intermodal path within the reconstruction of 74/76.
- NC Ports Authority has released their property to Town of Belville for conservation in perpetuity.
- Town of Belville will be requesting ROW easements from property owners along the southern boundary of 74/76.
- Funding would be easier to acquire if the Coalition partnered on this project.
- The walkway would be approximately 10' wide, similar to the downtown Wilmington walkway and complies with NCDOT standards.
- The Town of Belville is asking the Eagles Island Coalition for a letter of support and commitment (not financial).

Presentation by Dr. Chris Fonneville, UNCW : Rice, Slavery, and Lower Cape Fear Plantation Society

- Rice was an early economic engine and introduction of African Americans in the region.
- First known European we have documentation for exploration of the Cape Fear River is William Hilton (Puritan from MA Bay Colony). Exploration occurred as early as 1662.
- Earliest map of the region is from 1663 and includes points of interest. The Cape Fear River was referred as the Charles River.
- It is potential the transition from rice cultivation to sugar cane resulted in Hilton returning to the Cape Fear (Cape Fayre) to settle. A group of Bajan settlers (Barbados) came in May 1664.
- Eight generals owned portions of the Carolinas (Latin for Charles). It's the Lords Proprietor that encourages settlement of the area by slaves (i.e., 10 acres for male slaves).
- Old Town Creek (site of Charlestown) is first settlement of Cape Fear (Hugh Macrae property). Only lasted 3 years from 1664-1667.
- It is believed African Americans stayed in the area after Charlestown failed and became first permanent settlers although there is no hard evidence.
- Maurice and Roger Moore were first recipients of land grants in Cape Fear region, in 1725 which is after Native Americans were removed.
- Richard Eagles is also an early recipient of land grants. Attracted to bountiful marshes on west coast of Cape Fear which is ideal for planting rice.
- Land was distributed to ten wealthy individuals/families, known as "the Family". Orton Plantation is the only surviving plantation today. Roger Moore owned eventually 25K acres.
- The Port of Brunswick was developed in Brunswick Town for the shipping of commodities.
- Land on the west side of the Cape Fear were settled first due to fertile soils.
- 70+ plantations existed by the 1760's, a majority of which were located on the west side of the Cape Fear River.
- The Plantation Society is a model and culture born in Barbados and was brought to the Carolinas. This Society was built on slave labor and rice was a staple commodity.
- Earliest introduction of seed rice was in 1694 from a trading vessel from Madagascar. Experimentation for export was encouraged.
- Upland cultivation seemed to be more successful than tidal cultivation. However, by the end of the 18th century, tidal cultivation dominated due to land grabs.
- The Lower Cape Fear was primarily cultivated for domestic consumption.
- In the Lower Cape Fear there was a black majority (1755 – 62% of population). These were slaves held by planters plus 55% of homeowners were also slave owners (New Hanover County).
- Transition from marshes to rice fields includes high mortality rate.
- Smaller Cape Fear farmers expanded and diversified commodities by turning to the forests for greater economic receipts. Forests include long leaf pine and hardwoods.



- Naval stores industry grew in 19th century and was largest supplier to British Empire prior to the American Revolution.
- Doug asked who was the original engineer/architect of the design of rice canals. Jim nor Chris are aware. Possible Dutch who had already mastered canal design.
- Terry Bragg noted in 1822 significant dredging of the river precipitated the salinity increases within the rice fields. Chris indicated a shoal feature at the mouth of Town Creek caused the original dredging of the river. Steam dredges were developed in the 1840's to allow larger ships to come up to Wilmington.

Adjourn

Being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:11.

Attendees

Dawn York
John Price
Athina Williams
Devon Eulie
Cheryl Moody
Bill Hart
Niel Brooks
Capt Terry Bragg
Dr. Jim Herstine
Gordon Johnson
Doug Springer
Dr. Jim Kapetsky
Nancy Keith
Marilyn Meares
Rosemary Toumey
Bill Graham
Joseph Breault
Monika Lazo
Elissa Riley
Chris Vargo
James "Trey" Burke
Jan Davidson
Brittany Myers
Doug Springer
Don Harty
Melissa Juhan
Al Beatty
Kristina Fischer
Theresa Mortley