

9/12/12 Eagles Island Coalition Meeting

Battleship NC, Wilmington, NC 2pm (2:06pm)

Welcome and Introductions

Presentation: Dr. John Haley - Professor Emeritus, UNCW



Gullah Geechee History, Heritage and Connection to Eagles Island and our Region

Highlights from the presentation include:

- Gullah Geechee culture emerged from slaves growing rice from southern NC to FL.
- Little is written regarding their history, but the culture emerges from SC & GA.
- First settlement in Charleston, trying to growing sugar, citrus fruits, but money that was first made was from cattle (within first 20 years of settlement).
- 1710 SC has black majority in slave population that farmed rice.
- Large amount of slaves was the cause of the Gullah culture to be created.
- NC Gullah's were not completely isolated like areas in SC and GA, limited on learning Gullah language.
- Gullah in Cape Fear Region was not solely into rice production. Also into forest products, indigo, had to use water for transportation, and most watermen were Gullah.
- Gullah's in Wilmington were much more urbanized than other Gullah communities.
- Had to re-engineer physical environment to control water (when and where) by building canals, water ways, dams, etc. Can see physical environment was re-engineered in Lower Cape Fear to produce rice crop. Also a lot of physical labor dealing with heat, insects and other hazards of the environment.
- Rice could have been grown on EI until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- NC Gullah's do not have resources like SC, no access or tangible area. Lost land through development, though military installations, lands that has multiple claims (no one is sure of who owns it). Land is basis of culture. Little to no access to land that is part of their culture. Most Gullah do not have a historic home.

Questions and Answers: reinforcement from EIC that wanting to conserve and protect area. Why/what is difference b/t Gullah and Geechee. :Geographic area of origin as well as geography of where they lived. What would you like to see in Wilmington area : show how land was engineered, explain the amount work needed to cultivate rice, now created an ecosystem that is self-sustaining but it was because of former farming. Have identified a group in Wilmington that identify themselves as Gullah.

Mention of Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor: EI mentioned once in index. Phil submitted comments to commission regarding resources available to commission. EI may want to consider applying as a partner or as a site within the corridor.

Updates from All:

- 3<sup>rd</sup> sat in November is CFRW paddle around EI.
- Anonymous individuals met with Phil and Marilyn to talk about vision of visitor's center on island. They potentially have a client that could help development of that idea. It might be a mitigation project.

Minutes from last meeting: Bill Hart submitted changes. Neil Brooks moved the acceptance of minutes, Kemp Burdette seconded – motion passed without dissent.

Committee Updates

Recreation and Cultural Resources: Neil Brooks ~ Rob Moul LMG working on CAMA permits for paddle trail signs. The signs are exempt from permit from all groups b/c of lower impact. Once have written proof will be putting signs/post in ground. Anticipated installation is spring of 2013.

Conservation Planning: Phil ~ Data for different targets on the island. What are we interested in protecting or managing on the island. The plan will have different categories/elements, expert for each target. Next step would be "what are the issues we need to focus on". Take element and send questionnaire/data sheet to collect data for the targets/elements. Scott took data sheet for a test run regarding freshwater marsh. Including goals, strategies, now figure out how to improve it then send to experts to get information. Try to focus on low hanging fruit.

Terry ~ The Battleship super busy right now with multiple events, overnight camping, remodeling boat. Need more repairs for boat, and need more financial support for completion of the project. Education budget set aside on boat and could include information about other than battleship. These funds could tie into EI vision of education.

Phil ~ restoration plans from Kerr-Mcgee plant pollution. State is working on what projects would help off-set injuries from damages. Trying to find projects that will replace what was lost with that situation. What can they do in the area as far as restoration, new marsh, preservation opportunities, anadromus fish habitat improvement. EI opportunity ~ can we come up with projects for funds: 71 acres of impact is estimated area. \$900,000 estimated amount that could grow into larger amount. McLaughlin Owners have been contact about potentially buying property and maybe habitat creation in area.

Dru Harrison made an announcement about DOT property and District. DOT would like to work with the District in the future to give the title of the current mitigation property for the District to hold and manage.

Outreach and Education: No major updates. Gordon is keeping up with website.

Grants: Dawn was working on EEG grant for McLaughlin property, but owners not willing to sell right now. Need more feedback in order to write grants. Not applying at this time. Try to work on it for next year.

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General Discussion: What should we do for future meetings? Trying to work the Army Corps about southern part of island and take a look at site and opportunities to collaborate. Next year ~ once a year have a historical focus, environmental focus. Meeting topics could include: geology on Eagles Island, working meeting, coalition paddle, and reconnect with ECU underwater archeology, Dillon Epps rice plantation and history. A summary of the meeting with Tony M. was given by Phil. Tony has been in contact with Senator Clyburn ads to try to find federal money to fund education center.

Bill Hart announce supervisors' vacancies.

Wrap up and Adjourn (4:51)

Next Meeting December 12<sup>th</sup> [cancelled – moved to January 16<sup>th</sup>]