



EAGLES ISLAND COALITION
September 14, 2011
Wilmington, North Carolina

Attendance sheet separate.

Welcome and Introductions

Those in attendance introduced themselves and the organization they represent. NPR has run a piece regarding Eagles Island; Chair Phil Prete thanked Dru Harrison of New Hanover SWCD for her work on this item.

Minutes from the previous meeting were circulated to the Coalition; Bill Hart made a motion to accept the minutes as circulated; Kemp Burdette seconded; approval was unanimous.

Panel Discussion on the Future of Eagles Island – Opportunities, Threats and Management Perspectives

Chair Phil Prete explained the purpose of the panel discussion is to begin work on a Management Plan for Eagles Island; the group should not only look at lands under public control, but also privately owned lands on the island. The panel discussion should get the group looking at the big picture on Eagles Island; what is it that we are trying to accomplish.

Update on the Articles of Dedication – Scott Pohlman

On Eagles Island, the requirement for dedication is tied to the funding source for land ownership. The Natural Heritage Trust Fund requires that qualifying lands be put under dedication. The Creech Track, owned by DSWC, was purchased by securing a Natural Heritage Trust Fund grant. The Articles of Dedication for this track have been through the Council of State and have been approved; they are at the State Property Office ready to be signed and recorded.

The track owned by New Hanover SWCD and the Town of Leland is being dedicated on a voluntary basis; this dedication is an additional protection for the land. The Articles of Dedication for this track have been through the Council of State and have been approved; they are getting ready to be signed and recorded.

Dedications go through Council of State approval; this is a pretty high level of protection. The dedication looks a lot like a conservation easement. The primary purpose of the dedication is to keep property in its natural state as habitat; research and education are other uses; the property will have a public benefit. The dedication is for perpetuity.

The Articles of Dedication require a Management Plan.

Panel Discussion – Management Perspective – Recreation – Niel Brooks

Critical to this facet is development of a strategic recreational master plan. Important Elements and Attributes – passive and active recreation

- Paddling access; Motor boats; Recreational boating tours
- Birding; Fishing; Hunting
- Battleship
- Water/paddling trails with signage
- Osprey nests
- Birding huts/wildlife viewing areas
- General elevated walking trails
- Linear park along the eastern shore – near the battleship
- Renewed emphasis on the Battleship
- Shipping industry interpretation project - more than signage... what applications can be available to upload to your own cell phone...



- Naval stores production interpretation project
- Rice culture production interpretation project
- Gullah/Geechee cultural heritage interpretation project
- Historical/cultural/natural heritage/ ecological walking tours/paths
- Environmental education demonstration project or center
- Camping platforms
- Improved/designated access areas

Threats

- issues with multiple ownership of land
- conflict with development interests
- permitting issues
- fragile ecology of the island
- significant natural heritage area designation
- conflicts with current uses
- access issues
- funding
- maintenance and operation issues

Management Goals and Strategies – Long-Term

- protect/conservate natural resources

First Steps that might be easy or essential to take...

- develop recreational strategic master plan
- focus attention on creating water and paddling trails...
- continue land acquisition
- add reasonable amenities
- work with Battleship
- add historical and environmental education signage and kiosks
- publicize and inform

Comments...

- need a way to gauge the numbers of people that are currently using Eagles Island for recreation
- more emphasis on linear park idea... ability to walk among existing artifacts

Panel Discussion – Management Perspective – Archaeological Resources – Richard Lawrence

Important Elements and Attributes – detailed in existing documents including Sanborn maps; shared background information and photographs

- Sami Seeb – Thesis re: shipwrecks
- Rob Minford – Thesis re: upland survey
- 36 shipwrecks included within the footprint of the Wilmington Historic and Archaeological District listed in the National Register of Historic Places

Threats

- Illegal salvage
- Development – just because this area is included on the national registry of historic places, does not mean it will be safe forever

Management Goals and Strategies – Long-Term

- Public ownership of property from the battleship to the memorial bridge (particularly the Winner property)



- Construction of interpretive trails and boardwalks for a "shipwreck tour"
- Construction of a visitor's center
- Limited recovery, conservation, and display of key or threatened artifacts

First Steps that might be easy or essential to take...

- Increase surveillance
- Develop signs and/or Podcast along Riverwalk interpreting Eagles island's history and archaeological remains
- Boat/kayak tours of Eagles Island waterfront

Comments...

- No plans for recovery projects at this time that Richard is aware of. Recovery should be considered only if there is a plan, a good reason, a good home, and money to ensure maintenance.
- Harry Warren, Chair of the Maritime History Council announced the 2011 Annual Conference 9/29-10/1 – Wilmington, NC – www.ncmaritimehistory.org

Panel Discussion – Management Perspective – Habitat and Species of Concern – Scott Pohlman

Important Elements and Attributes – table distributed that includes Specific Objectives and Proposed Management

- First 5 items in table (Tidal Freshwater marsh natural community, Rare skipper – butterfly, Dukes' skipper - butterfly, Carolina bishopweed, White doll's daisy)... high quality habitats & rare species habitats
- Carolina bishopweed – G1 species – critically imperiled - 5 or fewer populations worldwide
- White doll's daisy - endangered

Threats

- Climate change – sea level is rising/increased saltwater intrusion... threats to tidal freshwater marsh – how the ecosystem is likely to respond... plant community is likely to be altered. Freshwater marsh community is resilient, but in long term it will transition
- Phragmites (invasive species) – due to climate change, native marsh plants are going to spread into a new area where they are not currently present, need to make room by removing phragmites in areas most suitable for freshwater marsh establishment or restoration; reduce seed source for Phragmites; herbicide as part of management plan; not as extensive as present as in some areas. Main problem for addressing this problem is lack of resources (\$) for a control program.
- Alteration of flood regime

Management Goals and Strategies – Long-Term

- Monitoring
- Learn more about life histories for butterflies

First Steps that might be easy or essential to take...

- Do no harm.
- Programs to control Phragmites – may be opportunities or examples with Division of Coastal Management (NERR); may be funding available through Division of Water Resources – Water Resources Development grants - Scott Pohlman can provide more information.

Panel Discussion - Management Perspective – Birds – Andy Wood

Important Elements and Attributes

- Freshwater marsh habitat... need seedbank to carry habitat as ocean moves inland
- Eagles Island is in the Atlantic flyway – used by ~1Billion birds per year – Cape Fear River is an incredibly important corridor. Eagles Island is probably more significant for migrating birds than historic data shows big gaps in data on birds on island.



- 25-30K shorebirds use impoundments on island especially during migration times – critical habitat for nesting water birds
- Songbirds, warblers, wading birds
- Grackle, red-winged blackbird (250K per night in Fall); phenomenal amount using island to roost in Fall... absence in new solid data of who the birds are and where they are

Threats

- Sea level rise / climate change
- Dredging activity in the Cape Fear River – saltwater “creep” – birds that will use the area will change along with this... Chronic problem as salt accumulates in adjacent soil

Management Goals and Strategies – Long-Term

- Gap in data re: bird use of impoundments
- Management of impoundment areas; rotate when material is put into the impoundments and determine how much and how long water should stand in the impoundments; are impoundments being sprayed for mosquito control? This is food source for shorebirds... pesticide in ecosystem could be a major problem; some chemicals that we know very little about. Are fish being introduced to impoundments to control mosquito population... this is reducing food source for shorebirds
- Leaving current snags in place is good for habitat for osprey – not really necessary to install osprey platforms (recreation component) – ospreys are doing fine... no need for installation of these structures except maybe in strategic locations where paddlers may want to get better look at nesting bird
- Osprey platforms may attract great horned owl to occupy osprey nests once built and predate on many other species.
- COE may already have a management plan and data. Need to check with them.

First Steps that might be easy or essential to take...

- Do no harm when managing the island...
- Inventory of birds that are using the island – enlist help of local Audubon chapter for volunteer monitoring? Tough to collect scientifically acceptable data using volunteers... to gather data for publication, need professionals. Funding for a year’s worth of data collection (last inventory was from ~1997) - \$25K... boat time, staff time, gas, travel
- Talk with the USACOE re: management of the impoundments. Consider toxins in the sediment in the impoundments
- Duck hunting is compatible use... Ducks Unlimited has big pots of money for land acquisition and wetland acquisition. Call on Ducks Unlimited as potential partner

Panel Discussion - Group Discussion

Thoughts re: future management from group

- Andy Wood to follow up with USACOE re: management of impoundments
- Is fish habitat a consideration for Natural Heritage? Yes, but Division of Marine Fisheries should be involved – area near Eagles Island is very important
- Management Plan is going to be collection of plans for various land use types on Eagles Island
- Contact Kristina Fischer (Kristina.fischer@ncagr.gov) or Phil Prete (phil.prete@wilmingtonnc.gov) if you’d like to be involved with committee to work on Management Plan
- Where does the money collected as reparations for vandalism go? Richard Lawrence suspects that funding would be used to replace the artifact. Comment that any civil fine would need to go to school board
- Need to focus on whole island in coalition efforts – impoundment areas are also very important



- Focus on water trails to bring awareness to public... more trails exist than those that are mapped; how do we publicize this. Exploring Eagles Island by Kayak? Platforms for camping?
- Cars that cross Eagles Island everyday – 99,000 vehicles per day coming on to the island... opportunity to reach these commuters
- Road race as a fundraiser? Kayak jamboree for fundraising / PR event.?
- Information on Eagles Island Coalition for Maritime History Council; maps; request to share information for the registration packets
- UNC-W has good data on salinity in the area for last 10 years
- Monitoring is component that is key for several management perspectives... there may be some other monitoring that is already being done (i.e. efforts by UNCW)
- Recreation piece – excited about potential recreation opportunities – build an appreciation of what Eagles Island has to offer and protect these opportunities for future generations

Updates

Inventory – Dru Harrison

Eagles Island Inventory available on NHSWCD website - <http://www.nhswcd.org/>

Inventory includes history, ecology, human influences, and geology. This Inventory is a tool to be used for the Educational Component; also a good starting point for a reference guide/management plan.

MOU – Phil Prete

Copies of the executed MOU were distributed. A total of 17 organizations have executed the MOU and are official members.

Committee Chair Reports

Outreach & Education – Kemp Burdette

Committee intends to distribute a survey to the public re: Eagles Island. Outreach & Education Committee is asking other committee chairs to provide paragraph re: what their committees are doing for press release. Need tabletop display for relevant events. Website being developed – informational page set up... all that is lacking is a hosting service (\$30-\$100/year); would like to get website set up before survey is sent out so that respondents can be directed to page with information – eaglesisland.org is available. Motion by Kemp Burdette to purchase domain name, Jim Kapetsky seconded, approval was unanimous.

Other

Next meeting is tentatively scheduled for December 14; however, need to check with Capt. Bragg for availability of Battleship venue.

Keep an eye out for the October issues of Wilma; Eagles Island will be featured.

Adjourn

Being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:30.