



Cape Fear River Partnership

Winter 2024 Session

February 15; 9 am – 12 pm
Microsoft Teams

Agenda

- 9:00 am Introductions and Partner Updates – All
- 9:30 am Source Water Protection Plan Update – Erin Tremblay, Public Environmental Policy Specialist, Cape Fear Public Utility Authority
- 9:45 am Introduction of local geospatial solutions – Patrick Connell, GeoOwl
- 10:00 am [Restore Americas Estuaries \(RAE\)](#) CFRP Session Concept – Dawn York and Howard Schnabolk, NOAA
- 10:30 am Prepare for In-Person Summer 2024 CFRP Meeting – All
- 11:00 am A 25-Year Perspective from DEQ/DWR – Mark Vander Borgh, NCDEQ Monitoring Coalition Coordinator
- 11:30 am Eagles Island Central Park Update – Roger Shew, Department of Environmental Sciences, UNC – Wilmington
- 12:00 pm Adjourn

Meeting summary will be posted to www.capefearriverpartnership.com

Cape Fear River Partnership Meeting Summary

Spring 2024 Session

February 15, 2024; 9AM-12PM

Virtual | Microsoft Teams

Meeting Attendees:

Attendees	Organization	Email
Dawn York	Moffatt & Nichol/Cape Fear River Partnership Coordinator	dyork@moffattnichol.com
Adrienne Cox	NCDOT Division 3	Amcox1@ncdot.gov
Thomas Hutsler	Geo Owl	thomash@geoowl.com
Erin Tremblay	Cape Fear Public Utility Authority	erin.tremblay@cfpuia.org
Chris Wood	NC Wildlife Resources Commission	chris.wood@ncwildlife.org
Mike Wicker	USFWS	mike_wicker@fws.gov
Deanna Hardesty	USGS	dmhardesty@usgs.gov
Fred Tarver	NCDWR Basin Planning	Fred.tarver@deq.nc.gov
Dylan McDonnell	New Hanover County, Long Range Planner	dmcdonnell@nhcgov.com
Fritz Rohde	NOAA Fisheries	fritz.rohde@noaa.gov
Brena Jones	NC Wildlife Resources Commission	brena.jones@ncwildlife.org
Donna Myers	American Rivers	dmyers@americanrivers.org
Patrick Connell	GeoOwl	patrickc@geoowl.com
Lee Duncan	Pender County Resilience Planner	lduncan@pendercountync.gov
Kyle Rachels	NCWRC	kyle.rachels@ncwildlife.org
Todd Mathes	NCDMF	todd.mathes@deq.nc.gov
Rachel Massa	NC DEQ Stewardship Program	rachel.r.massa@gmail.com
Tony Young	USACE, Water Management Chief	Michael.A.Young@usace.army.mil
Gilbert D'Meza	Congressman Rouzer's Wilmington Office	gilbert.dmeza@mail.house.gov
Anne Deaton	NC DMF	anne.deaton@deq.nc.gov
Joe Facendola	NCDMF	joe.facendola@deq.nc.gov
Deanna Hardesty	USGS	dmhardesty@usgs.gov
Luther Aadland	Fish Passage Design Expert	lutherjulieriver@gmail.com
Kim Harding	NC DMF	Kimberlee.Harding@deq.nc.gov
Julie DeMeester	TNC	julie.demeester@TNC.ORG
Brenna Jones	NC Wildlife Resources Commission	Brena.Jones@ncwildlife.org
Lizzy Stokes-Cawley	American Rivers	lstokes-cawley@americanrivers.org
Benjamin Rickers	NCWRC	ben.ricks@ncwildlife.org
Andy Herndon	NOAA	andrew.herndon@noaa.gov
Krista McCracken	NOAA	krista.mccracken@noaa.gov
Chloe Ochocki	Triangle Land	cochocki@triangleland.org
Phil Prete	Retired City of Wilmington Planner	pjayhoo2@yahoo.com
Jeremy McCargo	NCWRC	jeremy.mccargo@ncwildlife.org

Howard Schnabolk	NOAA	howard.schnabolk@noaa.gov
Danielle Darkangelo	CFRCD	danielle.darkangelo@gmail.com
Dana Sargent	Cape Fear River Watch	dana@cfrw.us
Amin Davis	NC DEQ	amin.davis@deq.nc.gov
Jimmy Johnson	NC DEQ	jimmy.johnson@deq.nc.gov
April Pope	NCWRC	april.pope@ncwildlife.org
Melanie Harris	NOAA	melanie.harris@noaa.gov
Cindy Simpson	NC Wildlife	cindy.simpson@ncwildlife.org
Heather Evans	NC Wildlife	heather.evans@ncwildlife.org
Elizabeth Kountis	NC DEQ	elizabeth.kountis@deq.nc.gov
Peter Raabe	American Rivers	praabe@americanrivers.org
Mark Vander Borgh	NC DEQ	mark.vanderborgh@deq.nc.gov
Roger Shew	UNCW	shewr@uncw.edu
Nora Dreamer	NC DEQ	Nora.deamer@deq.nc.gov
Jill Deaney	CFPUA	Jill.Deaney@cfpua.org

Welcome and Introductions

Dawn York, Cape Fear River Partnership Coordinator, welcomed the group and asked attendees to introduce themselves and provide a brief update. The following represents a summary of the presentation and discussion points. Slides are provided and a link to the recording is provided at the end of the meeting summary.

Source Water Protection Plan Update – Erin Tremblay, Public Environmental Policy Specialist, Cape Fear Public Utility Authority

- Erin Tremblay provided an overview of the CFPUA source water protection plan update.
- Plan can be accessed but need approval by Erin Tremblay (Erin.Tremblay@cfpua.org):
<https://cfpuagov.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/SourceWaterProtectionPlan/ESVAIqu3fsJIoCy9cqtoPEcB9PuwrhtJ1FX-kaqXzccdOw?e=DVK3Ym>
- CFPUA possesses an NCDEQ-approved source water action plan as mandated by House Bill 834.
- The plan includes acute and chronic threat assessment, strategies for protecting Cape Fear River source water, and emergency response plans.
- CFPUA established a protection planning team comprising 20 organizations.
- CFPUA received the NCDEQ protection plan last April and is fostering a collaborative approach with Brunswick County Public Utilities.
- Quarterly newsletters will replace quarterly meetings on teams to facilitate foundational groundwork.
- Attendees are invited to review the source water protection plan and share collaboration ideas or questions.
- Cape Fear River Water and Cape Fear River Assembly have provided letters of support.

Introduction of local geospatial solutions – Patrick Connell and Thomas Hustler, GeoOwl

- Patrick discussed the division's three drones and primary products derived from sensors, including thermal, light detection, and ranging (LiDAR).

- He showcased examples of thermal data usage for site scans and highlighted ongoing projects such as shoreline erosion monitoring using LiDAR.
- Thomas Hustler discussed the LiDAR capabilities, including volume change analysis for environmental monitoring.
- Andy Hearton asked if LiDAR can penetrate the water column.
 - Thomas Hustler (GeoOwl): Responded no it'll just reflect off the surface of the water. There's bathymetric LiDAR, which will somewhat penetrate the water column. B

Eagles Island Central Park Update – Roger Shew, Department of Environmental Sciences, UNC – Wilmington

- Eagles Island spans about 3100 acres and comprises various features, including dredge spoil from the Army Corps on the southern end, covering approximately 1/3 to 1/2 of the island, while the northern half is the focus of discussion.
- Historical efforts, from the Eagles Island coalition to the Eagles Island Task Force, have aimed to explore alternative uses for the area beyond development due to its low-lying nature.
- Eagles Island has diverse ecosystems, including waterways, marshlands, and remnants of rice fields and canals.
- The island serves as primary nursery grounds for various species.
- Environmental impacts, such as compound flooding events, sea level rise, and changes in tidal range due to dredging activities, pose challenges for the area's sustainability.
- Current discussions revolve around potential zoning modifications to accommodate different land use models, including conservation, working waterfront, and mixed-use development.
- While proposals for large-scale urban development are being considered, there is also advocacy for conservation-focused approaches, such as establishing a nature park.
- The idea of a nature park emphasizes minimal environmental footprint, educational and recreational opportunities, and showcasing the area's cultural and historical heritage.
- Partnerships with local entities, such as Brunswick County.
- Roger highlighted the challenges posed by compound flooding, including storm rainfall, sea level rise, high tide flooding, and storm surge.
- He emphasized the potential impact of dredging the Cape Fear River to deepen it to 47 feet, including changes in tidal range, increased salinity, and environmental disruptions.
- Roger proposed considering a nature park as a suitable use for Eagles Island, offering educational and recreational opportunities while mitigating risks associated with development.
- Phil Prete: Have you given thought to dredging spoil areas and dikes.
- USACE is looking to move off Eagle's Island. USACE has other land areas that could be utilized.
- Krista McCracken (NOAA): How is the nature park concept connected to the New Hanover Soil and Water Conservation District's property that is protected as a state nature park?
- The acreage varies by state, soil and water, and private ownership.

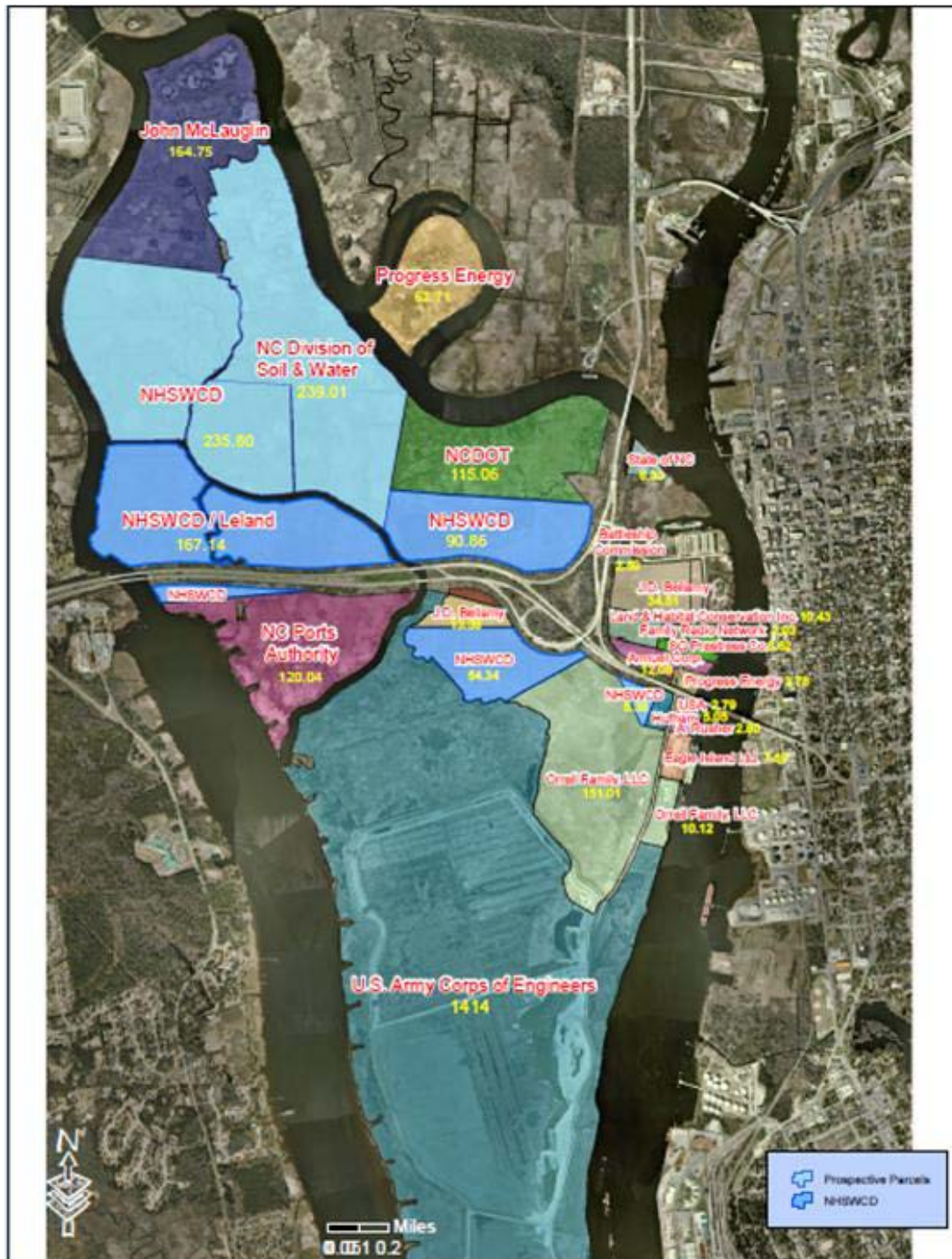


Figure provided via chat by Phil Prete which illustrates ownership on Eagles Island (blue parcels are under conservation).

A 25-Year Perspective from DEQ/DWR - Mark Vander Borgh, NCDEQ Monitoring Coalition Coordinator

- o Mark Vander Borgh reflected on his 25 years of service with the divisional water resources.
- o He highlighted the importance of monitoring coalitions in data collection for the Cape Fear Basin.

- Mark Vander Borgh highlighted his proudest achievement, the Elbow Assessment Program, initiated in 1999, outlining its objectives and collaborative efforts with the Division of Health and Human Services.
- The presentation delved into the response strategy developed for algal blooms, stressing the collaborative roles of state agencies, municipalities, and other stakeholders.

Restore Americas Estuaries (RAE) CFRP Session Concept – Dawn York and Howard Schnabolk, NOAA

- Discussed developing a panel for the Restore American Estuaries conference scheduled for October 2024, in Washington D.C.
- The panel focus will be part of the large-scale management theme and identify partners to demonstrate the success of working collaboratively within a watershed. Howard indicated a historical overview of the Cape Fear Partnership could be developed by NOAA and/or Dawn.
- Proposed a lightning round-style session lasting 90 minutes to highlight the progress and achievements in the Cape Fear region.
- Reach out to Howard and/or Dawn for information on presenting at RAE in a panel.
- Information on the summit can be found here: <https://estuaries.org/2024-rae-summit/>.
- Melanie Harris indicated that OHC leadership and possibly NMFS leadership will likely be at RAE and if not, certainly close enough by to have a side meeting. Dawn indicated this may be a great opportunity to leverage the work done by partners and discuss future funding needs/opportunities.

Prepare for In-Person Summer 2024 CFRP Meeting -All

- The next meeting will be an in-person meeting, aiming for the June timeframe.
- The in-person meeting should prioritize active participation in working groups rather than traditional presentations.
- There is interest in co-hosting the in-person meeting with partners and stakeholders of the Source Water Protection Plan.
- Dawn is seeking venues to host the meeting, if anyone has any ideas, please let her know.

USACE Update (via email Dana Matics)

- From USACE: LD1 – Operational, we are doing maintenance lockage's 2-3 times per week. We do have ongoing replacement of mechanical parts, but at least 1 gate on each end remains operational even during that time.
- LD2 – All mechanical and electrical fixes are complete. The gates are functional – meaning they will move, but not much yet. We have some serious sediment build up that we're trying to work through. The hope is to be able to move enough over the next few weeks to be able to perform lockage's, but I'd be foolish to make any promises.
- LD3 – Fully operational!! We do maintenance lockage's 2-3 times per week.
- We are getting ready to solicit a contract that will help with sediment and debris build up behind the gates. It's to be a 5 year long contract that will allow us to issue task orders for sediment removal; hopefully keeping gates and giving the ability to clear debris right after a high-water event. With environmental windows, permits, proper sediment disposal, etc. to manage there

are a lot of hurdles. So, as usual, no promises, but I'm cautiously optimistic that this will help us stay functional. If all works out, that would be in place in May/June, just after spawning season.

TNC Update (via Teams chat)

- TNC updates: (1) TNC submitted a proposal with 10+ partners to do wetland restoration throughout the entire CF basin. The proposal also included fisheries research (Clemson, UNCW) and further design work for the locks and dams.
- (2) TNC is working with WRC on Angola Bay to restore 11,000+ acres of peatland pocosin. We've been submitting funding for Holly Shelter (17,000+ acre pocosin restoration). We have a Carolina bay restoration and an old ag field restoration started in Bladen County.
- (3) TNC's Cape Fear basin wide advanced water model was published, scenarios were run. We're in the final month of creating an online tool and would like this group to test the Beta version.
- (4) the Sustainable Rivers Program with the Corps will start pulses out of Jordan during the spring spawn. Researchers are funded and we're prepping for all of it.

Additional Information (via Chat function)

- <https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/marine-fisheries/habitat-information/coastal-habitat-protection-plan>
- NCDOT: <https://www.ncdot.gov/initiatives-policies/Transportation/transportation-resilience/Documents/2023-climate-strategy-report.pdf>
- March 19, NC Aquatic Connectivity Team meeting – reach out Chris Wood and/or lstokes-cawley@americanrivers.org.
- https://nc.fisheries.org/winter-2023-newsletter/#A_Leg-Up_On_The_Future_Autumn_Stockings_Of_Rare_Species_In_The_Piedmont
- DWR Water Resources Development Grant Program: <https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/water-resources/water-resources-grants/water-resources-development-grant-program>
- Link to DMF oyster scoping questionnaire, contact Joe.Facendola@deq.nc.gov if you are interested in participating as an advisor to the Fishery Management Plan: <https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=3IF2etC5mkSFw-zCbNftGXuNDJ64d5ZGrbkVdu0to-RUNDVKSE1ITjQwNU9CREU5SIMzRk1UMU1ZSSQIQCN0PWcu>
- Amin David recommended contacting Cam McNutt with DWR (cam.mcnett@deq.nc.gov / 919-707-9132) about creating a Watershed Action Plan Storymap that can be a central clearinghouse for data and partnership info. For more info see: <https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/water-resources/water-resources-public-information/water-education-programs/watershed-action-plans>
- Kerr McGee case page lists the 10 projects that were selected for Phase 1. The page also provides a link to the Final Restoration Plan where the projects are described. <https://darrp.noaa.gov/hazardous-waste/kerr-mcgee-chemical-corp-tronox>

End of Meeting Summary



Photograph of a new sign constructed by NOAA at the Lock and Dam 1