



*Land Use and Access Committee Meeting Summary
May 16, 2013 at 11:30 am
NC Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores*

Meeting Attendees

• **Committee Members:**

Jim Cogdell, Chair
Dell Murphy, Vice Chair
Durwood Laughinghouse
Garry Spence

Ray Clifton
Joe Barker
Tom Berry

• **Commissioners:**

David Hoyle, Jr.
Ray White

Mark Craig

• **Staff:**

Mallory Martin
Bob Curry
Kyle Briggs
Christian Waters
Mark Hamlett
Isaac Harrold
Kate Pipkin
Gordon Myers

George Norris
Betsy Haywood
Norman Young
Tommy Clark
Erica Garner
Jodie Owen
David Cobb
Erik Christofferson

• **Guests:**

Fred Harris, NC Wildlife Federation
John Barbour, State Property Office

Chairman Jim Cogdell called the meeting to order at 11:30 am in Soundside Hall at the North Carolina Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores. He noted the budget uncertainties and questions about stewardship funding of land acquisitions. However, today's meeting involves only Phase I projects, which does not involve funding discussions.

ACQUISITIONS DISCUSSION

Isaac Harrold, Public Lands Section Manager, presented an overview of six properties presented in Exhibits I-1, I-2, I-3, I-4, I-5, and I-6 for consideration as Phase I projects; that is, to consider giving staff approval to start the process to work with the State Property Office and funding partners to develop acquisition plans.

I-1: Birkhead Tract, Randolph County – The tract was purchased by Land Trust for Central NC (LTCNC) previously. This will be an addition to the Uwharrie Game Land. There are no concerns about taxes and the donor supports the plan to sell it to the WRC. There is high interest in this property (30/30) because it would provide only public access to eastern side of the Birkhead Wilderness Area part of the Game Land; also hunting and habitat management that the LTCNC has said they cannot provide.

I-2: Humpback Mountain Tract, Avery/McDowell counties – The 524-acre parcel is owned by the Conservation Trust for NC. CTNC is willing to sell tract to WRC for \$200,000 if the closing can be by October 31, 2013. There is high interest in the property (29/30) as a watershed for protection of native and wild trout populations in French Broad and Catawba basins.

I-3: James Sisters Tracts, Richmond County – Five tracts of 618 acres in Richmond County that are non-contiguous tracts share a common boundary with Sandhills Game Lands. Three of the tracts provide habitat for the federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. Block C is most valuable with a score of 29/30; however, committee found potential problems with parcel 2, which is leased to Unimin Sand Mine until 2014. The committee recommended approval to proceed with the Phase I investigation only.

I-4: Nealey Fishing Creek Tract, Nash County – There is high interest in this property (30/30) as an addition to the Shocco Creek Game Lands, and would protect 1,300 feet of the Nationally Significant Fishing Creek Aquatic Habitat and numerous Federal and State species of mussels that are threatened, endangered and concern species.

I-5: North Toe River Tract, Yancey County – Staff recommends acquisition of this half-acre parcel on the North Toe River to provide much needed angler access. The tract would serve as access for wade and float fishermen and for wood duck and teal hunting. The landowners wish to see the parcel owned and operated by the NCWRC to ensure recreational usage and property care.

I-6: Turnagain Bay Wooten Tract, Carteret County – This 1000-acre parcel abuts the Piney Island Bombing Range and is a military high priority as a buffer. The WRC is one of only a handful of state agencies that can apply for a National Coastal Wetlands Grant that could be pursued along with funding from the North Carolina Coastal Land Trust/Clean Water Management Trust Fund and DOD Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative funds. The tract has a 30/30 priority score and supports numerous game species and a diversity of wetlands and upland pine forest.

The committee will recommend that the WRC approve the six Phase I projects for investigation as acquisitions.

REALLOCATION – BRUNSWICK COUNTY

Isaac Harrold briefed the committee on a property reallocation for consideration in Brunswick County. The reallocation is found in Exhibit J in the agenda package to be considered on May 17. The Council of State has approved a transfer of property adjacent to the Sunset Beach Fishing and Boating Access Area by donation from the NC Department of Transportation. The 0.568-acre parcel is ideally located for providing additional parking to service the existing access area.

RIGHT OF WAY AND EASEMENT REQUEST – WILKES COUNTY

NCDOT has requested 0.137 acres for a right of way and 0.140 acres for a public utility easement across a portion of Mulberry Mill Bog Wildlife Conservation Area in Wilkes County. There are no significant impacts to granting the ROW and easement request.

ARCHERY-ONLY ZONE – NEW HANOVER COUNTY

Harrold updated the committee about the staff recommendation to pursue an archery-only designation on a portion of the Sutton Lake Game Land in New Hanover County. The use of large caliber firearms on a portion of the game land near the Sutton Steam Plant prompted concerns for the safety of employees and led to the agreement to pursue the archery-only designation for part of the game land. Pursuant to rulemaking requirements a public meeting to solicit comments was held on March 27, 2013. There were no attendees or comments.

SHOOTING RANGE AGREEMENTS AT NATIONAL FORESTS

Isaac Harrold gave an overview of Exhibit M, a staff recommendation to allow the WRC to enter into agreements with the USDA Forest Service to manage and/or fund improvements to shooting range facilities on the Nantahala and Uwharrie National Forests. Under the first agreement the WRC would provide twenty thousand dollars to the US Forest Service to make improvements to the Moss Knob Shooting Range on Nantahala Game Land and to ensure that the shooting range is ADA-accessible. A similar agreement would provide \$15,000 for improvements to the Dirty John Shooting Range on Nantahala Game Land in Macon County. Improvements to the Flintlock Shooting Range on Uwharrie Game Land in Montgomery County will be more expensive. Improvements to that shooting range will include mitigating safety concerns as the result of projectiles escaping the range, reconfiguring the site and making other improvements at an estimated cost of \$248,000. Also, the NCWRC will provide an 11-month temporary position to staff the Flintlock Range and the US Forest Service will reimburse that expense.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mallory Martin, Chief Deputy Director updated the committee on the Riverstone Tract in Columbus County that was approved as a Phase I project. The tract consists of 3,200 acres, and secured funding is available. A grant has been submitted subject to WRC approval. The appraisal obtained on the tract does not include timber. Martin said that the owner may donate the timber value and may pursue a phased-in process.

Chairman Jim Cogdell adjourned the meeting at 1:10 pm.