

# Minutes of meeting of the Board of Directors of the Carolina Wetlands Association

January 14, 2019

Location: RTI International; 3040 Cornwallis Road 27709

Board members in attendance:

In person: Rick Savage, Geoff Gisler, George Matthis, Kim Matthews, Chad Guthrie, Kristie Gianopulos, George Howard

On phone: Tara Allden, Dan Hitchcock, Kristine Cherry

Non-board members in attendance:

In person: Sue Ellen Johnson, Norton Webster, Jim Merchant, Gerald Pottern, Eric Smitz

On phone: Virginia Baker Daniel, Robert Truesdale

6:35 pm Meeting called to order

Agenda approved with addition of a RAMSAR update by the Science Committee – Chad Guthrie moved, Kim Matthews seconded, all in favor

Previous board meeting minutes approved with George Matthis' name corrected and Derb Carter's name corrected – Geoff Gisler motioned, Kim Matthews seconded, all in favor

6:40 pm WOTUS status – Geoff Gisler

## Summary of Geoff's description of WOTUS proposed rule by Trump's EPA.

Request for public comment will be forthcoming. "The rule is very bad." Geoff said.

Wetland protection is dependent on stream protection. Stream protection would be drastically reduced, covering only perennial streams and some intermittent streams. Intermittent streams are those with flows for part of the year, in a typical year, which is a year showing between 30 and 70 percentile rainfall of the 30 year average. Determining whether a stream is intermittent with these criteria is confusing; Geoff said it was clear that the EPA itself didn't understand how they would apply or decide this. Rainfall and snowfall dominated streams are considered ephemeral and therefore not protected.

In order for a wetland to be federally protected, it must directly abutt a jurisdictional stream or be an "adjacent wetland" with continuous surface flow to a jurisdictional stream part of the year. This means all bays, depressional wetlands, isolated wetlands, floodplain wetlands will lose protection. North Carolina and South Carolina have extensive acreage of these types of wetlands.

The EPA is asking for comment on particular topics, which give an indication of changes they are planning/considering to make to the proposed rule. All but one of these questions asked would result in more loss of protection. They are asking questions like:

- Should we protect only perennial streams (not intermittent)?
- Should we change the definitions and naming of streams to seasonal? (intermittent flow would have to be at particular times of the year to count)
- Should we protect only streams with a minimum flow?

- Should the definition of a wetland be changed?
- Should we set a maximum distance of protection from a jurisdictional stream? (eliminate wetlands further out but with flow to a covered stream)

Geoff said the proposed rule is devastating to wetlands, but the final rule will be worse, as indicated by the tone of the EPA's questions for comment. He said they are hiding behind the idea of giving jurisdiction to the states if they want to protect these streams and wetlands. They even go so far as to say there may be no real loss of streams and wetlands because states can make up for the lack in protection from the EPA.

The overall messaging around this rule change is that it will be simple enough for any lay landowner to be able to tell if something is jurisdictional. Geoff believes because of that, it will end up with very little protection in the end, because even with the proposed rule, this is not possible. Oversimplification will result in almost no protection.

Geoff emphasized that this group, the Carolina Wetlands Association, has a level of expertise that is not easily found anywhere, and we need to speak up against this rule. Speaking up is an important role of CarWA, especially at this time. We can talk about why these wetlands matter. North and South Carolina have so much at stake; so many of our wetlands will lose protection. The state of the wetlands report will be very important to explain the ecosystem services. North and South Carolina have a story to tell with extreme floods, etc. We need to tell the story of why our wetland matter. State legislators and leaders need to be told that in order to keep things the way they are, they will need to allocate millions of dollars to make up for the feds reduction in protection.

- What does CARWA need to do?
  - Continue on white papers on the value of wetlands
  - Create talking points for press
  - Publish an analysis of impact of WOTUS in NC and SC
  - Find example local wetlands that would be deregulated
- Who the message needs to go to?
  - EPA's docket; they are required to respond to comments, or else lack of response can be basis of legal challenge
  - Governor's offices
  - DEQ/DHEC

SELC is putting together resources/info; Geoff will send out to the board.

George Howard mentioned that he has talked to several in NC Republican leadership about WOTUS; they seem to begin to understand that all these state agencies (WRC, DWR, DCM) won't be able to continue to have control over their land if this rule goes through. George told them there would be a lot of press but is not seeing it yet.

Kim Matthews mentioned talking to the Dogwood Alliance or Wetland Forest Initiative to ask them about press messages. Others also mentioned Nature Conservancy and Coastal Federation (Chad has found them to be very quiet so far about this.)

6:50 pm WRRRI Conference Update – Rick – conference is March 21-22; CarWA is sponsoring 2 wetlands sessions with 4 papers submitted so far. We will also have an exhibit table, which includes one attendee.

6:55 pm Science Committee –

State of the Wetland report - aiming for publication of something on World Wetland Day, February 2<sup>nd</sup>; 1<sup>st</sup> draft is in process. Web based release, with press release; plan to tie it in well with WOTUS. Web page will be set up to accommodate subsequent white papers

RAMSAR update – conference call scheduled with Curt Richardson Jan 22, 2019 to get files from him as to what's already done for Pocosin Lakes and see what remains to be done. Rep. Jones is waiting on our application.

7:00 pm Program Committee -- Wetland Treasures – 5 have been selected and individuals have been assigned to collect information for fact sheets and schedule tours in May. Carrie Caviness is helping.

- Merchant Mill Pond State Park – North Carolina
- Croatan National Forest – North Carolina
- Bluff Mountain Fen – North Carolina
- Santee Coastal Reserve – South Carolina
- Woods Bay – South Carolina

7:05 pm Policy Committee - George Matthis – no new issues

7:10 pm Financial Report –Chad - As of 1-9-19, we have \$6,915.22 cash on hand, \$3,716.00 of which was donated after 11/24/18 when we had the Wetlands Matter event. Expenses since 11/24/18 were \$1,166.49, which included the Wetlands Matter event space rental and food, as well as NC Conservation Network dues and SC Conservation Coalition dues. The event itself was a little better than a wash, netting \$213.51. This is consistent with what we heard in the board training about events.

7:15 pm Biannual Report – Kristie – Kristie has generated an outline and Rick, Kristie, and Kim are working on text for the report which will cover things we've been involved in, accomplishments, and vision for future for 2017 and 2018.

NCwetlands.org – Kristie (DEQ wetland website) – Kristie gave a short talk describing an effort she has worked on for the last 2 years at the NC Division of Water Resources, building a new NC wetlands focused website. This website houses an interactive map of publicly accessible wetlands across North Carolina, as well as teacher and student resources, photo albums, videos, and curriculum connection. It has a laws page for landowner information and a how you can help page. The website was built in Wordpress by Kristie Gianopulos and Amanda Mueller, at NC DWR. They hired a part time temporary graphic artist and an environmental educator to help develop materials.

7:25 pm

Development Committee - Kim

- Fundraising Update – Fundraising plan in draft form, focused on large individual donations and grants
- Wetland Matters Event re-cap – 108 people registered, 86 attended; it was a great success, almost standing room only at the facility. Many people energized, interested, and made positive remarks about the organization and event. Kim created a survey to get feedback on how to improve. The goal is to do more networking events in other locations, spend less money per event, maybe smaller events. The next one should be in SC, but we have received invitations to do events in Boone, Asheville, Columbia, and Charleston.

7:30 pm

Executive Committee - Rick

**Goals for 2019:**

- Build relationships with our wetland treasures sites. Create a community of wetland treasures, look into events, more tours, how we can help them, contribute articles to the newsletter, etc.
- Apply for 2 grants.
- Raise \$40K in funds (donations/sponsors)
- Do an annual State of the Wetlands report
- Create opportunity for volunteers to get “boots on the ground”.
- Continuation of wetland treasures programs with tours to all sites
- Hold another Wetlands Matters event in Triangle Area and smaller events in other locations.
- Board Retreat – (April) what emphasis? – Rick asking for input on this; he will send out a doodle poll. Rick mentioned a stipend/reimbursement for those traveling to the Triangle Area for the retreat

Rick asked for other goals – send them to Rick and Kim.

7:55 pm Other Business

Next Meeting March 18 (later meetings: 5/21, 7/15, 9/16, 11/18)

Curt Richardson will talk about his project with Carbon Farming at the March meeting

8:00 pm Adjourn – Kim motioned to adjourn and Geoff seconded, all in favor

The following was sent out with the agenda and is included here:

## **Supplemental Material**

### Work items from the Executive Committee:

- 1.) Quarterly Events (Lead - Kim)
  - a. Networking events: They could be smaller versions of wetlands matter in different locations (Asheville, Boone, Wilmington, Charleston, Columbia)
  - b. Tours: different kind of wetland tour (restoration or created wetlands) or other activities.
  - c. Work with the Program Committee to get this going
  - d. Consider corporate sponsors for supplementing funding of events
- 2.) Grants/Funding (Lead - Rick/Heather).
  - a. Revisit some of the professors that had mentioned that they would use Carolina Wetlands to help with education and outreach in some of their grants. Marcelo Ardon, Ryan Emmanuel, Mike Burchell, etc. (Rick)
  - b. Identify potential grants (Heather)
  - c. NC Clean Water Trust Fund and meet with Walter Clark (Rick /Chad)
- 3.) Follow-up with Norton Webster. (Lead - Rick and Chad). Meet with Norton Webster and see how he can help Carolina Wetlands and what he may want to work on. He represents the restoration community - what gaps can Carolina Wetlands provide to landowners, to practitioners.
  - a. What do landowners want to know and how we can provide that information.
  - b. We will also start looking into a certification program with Norton and George Howard.
- 4.) Partnership with Wetland Treasures (Lead – Rick/Kim) Work with Jim Merchant and the Program Committee to determine POCs for all Treasure sites and determine possible ways to foster partnership
- 5.) Corporate Donors (Lead - Chad). Will work on how to raise \$40,000. We should look into corporate sponsors also.
- 6.) Rick reopen with the Town of Cary about CarWA adopting the Wetland at the end/beginning of the White Oak Greenway. (Program Committee and/or Youth Committee)
- 7.) Cultural/environmental justice of wetlands and flooding, extreme storms, etc. (Lead - Chad). He has talked to Caitlin Burke of CTNC and will consider Gavin Smith. He has talked to Amin Davis.
- 8.) WOTUS -We will need to be really to jump into action when the new WOTUS rules will be open for public comment.
  - We will have 60 days and we will need talking points, white papers, etc.

- Rick will work with Heather, Geoff and the Science Committee on this.

9.) StoryMap - Rick will talk to Cam McNutt about the GIS and the story board work.

10.) Education: (Chad will work with the Program Committee and Kristie on exploring the below)

- a. Design graphics/info graphics to help learn/teach about wetlands.
- b. Creating and/or enhancing a small wetland (like a home or school project).
- c. Do some project with small kids

11.) Kristie and Rick will work on the Bi-Annual Report.

12.) Chad, Rick, and Kristie will close out the Wells Fargo account and transfer everything to First Citizens Bank.