

Minutes of the Board of the Carolina Wetlands Association meeting

January 27, 2020, 6:30 pm at RTI, International

Attendees:

In person: Kim Matthews, Chad Guthrie, George Matthis, Rick Savage, Norton Webster, Kristie Gianopulos, Robert Truesdale, Geoff Gisler, Curt Richardson, Ginny Baker

On phone: Heather Clarkson, Amanda Johnson, George Howard, Kristine Cherry

6:30 Meeting Called to Order

Adoption of the Agenda – Geoff Gisler suggested adding a mention about WOTUS prepublication of the final rule, Kim M. motioned to adopt with this change, Chad G. seconded, all in favor

Adoption of the Minutes November 2019 – motion from Chad G, Kim M. seconded, all in favor

6:40 Nominations Committee – Rick Savage stated that we've been told by more than one source that we need to diversify our board. Z Smith Reynolds encouraged us to do so if we apply for funding. Rick has spoken to Shaefny Grays, works for NC State University (has been their diversity coordinator); she is interested in being on the board. Robert Truesdale was asked to bring this to the nomination committee and take action to bring her on.

WOTUS final rule – pre-released by the EPA

Geoff – “it’s terrifying, when it comes to wetlands” The EPA quoted a section that says landowners can make their own determination of wetland. Primary determination of whether something is a wetland, is whether it’s regularly flooded by a jurisdictional water. They threw out significant nexus. The rule is contradictory throughout, so is confusing. They apparently did not take out intermittent streams. Stream definitions are confusing in the rule. Intermittent stream – flows continuously during certain times of the year, in a typical year, not in response to a precipitation event. For wetlands, their guiding light seems to be that jurisdictional wetlands are those regularly flooded by a jurisdictional stream or river. They are allowing for a depositional berm to allow the wetland, but only one and not an artificially enhanced one. Wetlands fed strictly by rainfall are not covered.

Have announced it, signed the prepublication version (published in the Fed Register and then 60 days after that, goes into effect). Going to have to ask the judge to keep the rule from going into effect. SELC will be looking at how to show potential irreparable harm (in order to ask for an injunction). The agencies are saying that the impacts and harm to the wetlands won’t happen. Looking for places where wetlands will be vulnerable, to take it out of the abstract.

Kim is especially interested in the messaging coming from the EPA – making it look like it’s a good thing. “Protecting navigable waters while rebalancing relationship between

Next milestone is when they publish it in the Federal Register – saying end of February, Geoff says they will know a day ahead of time.

They’ve made it look like on the surface they are giving some protection, but at the same time, allowing people to go out and make their own decision.

Chad is concerned with making sure whatever we say is defensible. Curt says it's ironic that the Corps is still permitting the 15,000 acres of pocosin like nothing has changed. The Corps has to enforce the rule; some tough and some lax.

Geoff wants info from the Corps if any of us have contacts with the Corps. He and John Dorney will be examining this and talking.

Geoff would like to know some info like - What wetland types are not regularly flooded by a stream or river? Bogs, pocosins, peatlands, basin wetlands, flatwoods – some of our wetland treasures

Ginny B suggested that Carolina Wetlands prepares a statement on the proposed 401 certification changes that we post on our sites.

6:45 Committee Reports

- Program Committee - Jessica/Jim
 - Working on dates for Wetland Treasures tours
 - New 2020 Wetland Treasures: Pocosin Lakes, Botany Bay in SC, Brogden, State park in SC near a state park, Panthertown wetland complex, Bunched Arrowhead preserve
 - This year is 5th anniversary of the program – want to announce them in a bigger way, like at an event, rather than just through newsletter; do a press release
 - Chad recommended calling the Conservation Network personally and asking them to give us more press, since it's the 5th anniversary
 - More extra tours of older treasure sites are in the works, since it's our 5th anniversary
- Science Committee - Ginny/Robert
 - RAMSAR update – Howard Phillips is the manager for Pocosin Lakes NWR
 - George H. Met with staffers for Burr and Tillis – went very well
 - George H. wants to invite a politician to the wetland treasures tour of that place
 - Needs some support on what to do after get the politicians on board
 - Burr doesn't seem to have a problem, but have to talk to 3 people (staffer wants to tell the boss something) Burr is big on the Land and Water Conservation Fund, all of these people involved in that
 - J. Lucy, Appalachian Land Trust, also going to talk to Tom C of TNC, Camilla
 - Progress is slow, but he has a mission and planning to get done in a week or so
 - He has been doing things for Tillis, so he should not have a problem agreeing to sign
 - Next step is the official endorsement letter that they sign to the Dept of Interior
 - He wants to get them from 2 republican conservative senators to maximize chances of the USFWS approving
 - Curt talked to RAMSAR and they indicated that Gov. and the USFWS
 - One site in California was approved in 2019
 - Curt will do some checking on what happened with the other sites that were nominated and that didn't make it through

- State of the Wetlands Report
 - Series of other projects that aren't finished yet and want to finish them before they move on to something else
 - White papers on different topics – looking for volunteers to review them in the next couple months, Rick will send them out to a group of people
 - Wetlands restoration brochure for landowners – Kristie, Heather Patti, Ginny B. met and revised it
 - Unique wetlands classification – Ginny meet with a NCDWR has a streamlined process for designation, especially if a Wetland Treasure is eligible for a
- Development Committee – Kim
 - New volunteer log hours form on the website under Support tab, please use for any time you spend on Carolina Wetlands related things, including meetings; no username and password required
 - Rachel Massa is volunteering to be volunteer coordinator, will be reminding people to log hrs and submitting reports to the board and will be working on retention and recruitment for volunteer opportunities
 - Logging hours is important for general cost share for the volunteer monitoring grant, but also for future funding opportunities
 - Kim M has revised the website with a new home screen, links to treasures, new menu at top
 - Meet and Greet – started in December, had one in Durham and Cary, working on one in Raleigh (Feb 11)
 - George is going to work on the donors companies trying to get them there
 - Maybe different location for Feb – will be publicized by the end of the week
 - Heather has volunteered to do Chapel Hill Meet and Greet event in March
- Policy Committee – George
 - Sponsorship policy document was sent out, George Matthis put it together
 - George H, Chad G, and Rick were approving of it, but it needs to be tailored to our \$500 level; Kim, Chad, and George M and George H will work on finalizing that document
- Executive Committee – Rick
 - See Attached Executive Committee meeting Summary
 - See Attached list of activities
- Finance Committee - Chad
 - Norton Webster is chair of this committee now
 - Total funds available \$7,670.66 (some in bank and some in PayPal Giving Fund, dispersed on 25th of every month)
 - Expenditures since 11/18/19 - \$1,101.95 – travel, insurance (about \$138/month)

- We received \$3,542.00 from annual giving campaign (\$3072 came from PayPal Giving Fund and the rest from checks and cash)
- BUDGET plan for coming year – Norton presented
 - Income broken down into donation, fundraising, sponsorships (20 donations at \$500/each); overhead from the grant too (\$2000)
 - Main expenses are for attending 4 conferences this year – ASWM, WRRRI, South Carolina Water Resources, Carolina Climate Resilience
 - Norton says we should consider setting up a reserve account – monthly or quarterly basis deposit into that separate account, maybe \$2000 to start
- Motion to accept budget for 2020 – Curt motioned, Geoff seconded, all in favor
- Motion to create a reserve account with \$2000 – Kim M motioned, Curt seconded, all in favor

7:15 Fundraising

- Summary of status sent to board members
- Corporate dues? – the biggest corporation said it was a lot easier for them to pay dues rather than donate a charitable organization; we did not file/organize as a membership nonprofit, so we can't charge dues. Rick and Chad still feel we are not in a position to switch to
- Kim will make a new webpage with our sponsorships once we get the money
- George H wants to invite all them personally to the Meet/Greet event
- Planning to go another fundraising campaign in May
- Wants to work more on really showing more appreciation, especially for the larger donors

7:20 Project Status

- Workshop:
 - NC Coastal Conference recap
 - Attendees liked the materials
 - Trying to do the 3 hr workshop in 90 min, but 15 attendees and got some good feedback
 - A coalition (NOAA, Corps, communities like Swansboro, us invited to be part to help them do more nature-based solutions
 - Rick will contact them to remind them we want to partner with them
 - Town of Swansboro
 - Frank T asked that we come down and give the workshop to his town council, maybe in February
- Stoney Run (Dunn, NC)

- Toured site – landowners generally are interested (Rick, Norton, Chad, David Shouse) Wesley Johnson has done a lot of legwork talking to lots of people
- Discussed general strategy (partners will be needed) (like dam coming down, park component, env. equity component)
- Next steps: get a planning grant
- Volunteer Wetlands Monitoring Project
 - Rick has contacted all the sites; has agreement
 - Working on job description – part time volunteer coordinator, hiring in March, recruiting in April, training in May (grant budgeted \$25,000 over 2 years)
 - Potentially 2 sampling locations at three sites
 - M. Burchell was looking at best way for us to get our \$; may have to invoice
 - Meeting again next Wednesday

7:40 Advising Landowners and organizations on wetlands

- Got a request from the Waccamaw Souix – Bill Holman referred them to us. They want a site visit to make sure they do have a wetland, like they think they do. Interested in what they can do with it from a conservation/education/recreational perspective.
- We want to make sure everyone understands that we won't do anything regulatory in any way
 - Unofficial boundary, yes/no wetland, describe condition, advice on restoration or management, advice on ecosystem services that are getting or could get
 - Anything in writing?
- Probably will ask for a donation rather than “getting paid” per se
 - Need to be careful that it does not look like
 - Make sure the requestor is initiating the question about paying us and we respond that we don't charge anything, but they can give a donation (as opposed to advertising or saying that we request a donation of a certain amount)
- People tentatively scheduled
- Science committee recommends getting some sort of waiver signed by them, but Chad says if they are inviting us and accompanying us, that should cover us without a waiver
- Ideally we find local volunteers
- If we can find a common public list of consultants, that would be good, but also could refer people to local regulatory offices or Soil and Water Conservation. (SWS has a listing of professional certified wetland scientists)
- Written disclaimer should be at the end of whatever written report/email that is sent to them

7:50 Other Business

- Curt R mentioned a speaker coming on Feb 27th talking about a big restoration project

8:15pm Curt R. motioned for adjournment, Kim M. seconded, all in favor