

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

July 20, 2020; 6:30 - 8:15 pm

Location: Virtual Meeting

Minutes created by Ginny Baker; submitted by Kristie Gianopulos

---

### 6:30 Meeting Called to Order

**Attendees :** Rick Savage, Kim Matthews, George Howard, Cam McNutt, Rachel Massa, George Matthis, Geoff Gisler, Kristine Cherry, Natalie Nelson (new attendee – introduced herself as an assistant professor for the Bio and Ag Dept. at NC state), Norton Webster, Heather Clarkson, Jim Merchant, Ginny Baker, Chad Guthrie

- Introductions  
Natalie Nelson (new attendee – introduced herself as an assistant professor for the Bio and Ag Dept. at NC State University).
- Adoption of the Agenda – Agenda Adopted (Heather Clarkson first and George M. second)
- Adoption of the Minutes May 2020 – 6:45 – (Christine is Kristine, Geoff made edit - Clean Water Rule should be Clean Water Act, Motion to adjourn was someone else- Kim Matthews not Tyler) Minutes Adopted (Rick first, George Matthews second)
- (asked during comments at 6:50) Norton pointed out that we needed to make sure there was not conflict of interest on the Agenda this should be done for decision item when board needs to vote. George Howard - also pointed out this can be done as a curtesy. Kim asked if there was any Conflict of Interest items to anyone with what is on the Agenda. No response. Kim said this will be added to future agendas as a standard item.

### 6:45 General Announcements

**Rick** – Jim Gregory (professor emeritus, NC State University) and John Taggart (professor emeritus, UNCW), both supporters of Carolina Wetlands, met with Waccamaw Souance tribe as recommend Bill Holman (with the Conservation Fund). The assisted with an informal wetland delineation and plant identification. The condition of wetland, how best to manage it, and wetland ecological services were discussed. This was a good learning experience for tribal members and school kids that learned some of the plants in the wetland too. The wetland was smaller than initially thought by the tribe. The meeting took place in Bolton NC.

**Cam** – [EcoExplore](#) pointed out a program at Arboretum for K-12 that he and Amanda Mueller have contributed to.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bx34Hdf8ajY>  
<https://youtu.be/A-CVx-184EQ> [youtu.be]

#### **6:45 Nominations Committee – Robert**

- Vote on Board members reapplying
  - George Matthis
  - George Howard
  - Geoff Gisler
  - Rick Savage

Kim - We will open up with nominations committee, if discussion needed, then four board members will leave.

Kristine – We have four spaces on board to be filled. All current board members in seats have volunteered to reapply to the board for another 3 year term. All are very active participants at Carolina Wetlands.

Rick – There are no limit on the number of terms allowed for board members currently in bi-laws.

Norton- motion to approve as presented. Heather seconded.

All four board members approved unanimously. Kim thanked them for signing up for another term.

- Nomination and voting on President of the Carolina Wetlands Association

Board will vote for the president. Kim asked for nominations.

Heather nominated Rick, Kristine seconded the motion. (George Howard suggested he not consider another term... with some humor). Rick was voted in unanimously to be president for another term.

#### **7:00 Committee Reports (5 minutes each)**

- Program Committee –(Jessica/Jim/Carrie) - Jim Merchant provided the update
  - Wetlands treasure community has 25 sites.
  - Engagement of our Wetland Treasures Community - Wetlands treasure community has 25 sites. The Program Committee would like to keep engaged with site managers by publicizing information related to the sites on Carolina Wetlands’ website (e.g. restoration to be done at sites, public workdays, maybe add a video, etc).
  - Self-Guided hikes and a hike challenge - The committee is considering creating a brochure for each site with different check box site activities to be completed by kids/families with a certificate/award offered to participants that complete all activities. Program committee also considering creating self-guided tours of wetland sites and would like to get feedback from tour participants.
  - George Howard suggested a wetland mitigation field trip, potentially in the fall, and will follow up with Jim later.

- Next meeting Monday August 17
- Science Committee - Ginny/Robert
  - Ramsar Application status (Kristie/George/Curt)
    - George Howard – A support letter from the Shannon Deaton of the Wildlife Resource Commission was received and is required in application process. The letter was slow to be received (4 months), but it was a very detailed and well-thought out letter.
    - Curt Richardson said there are still a few things missing in the body and appendix. He recently added some pictures of habitat to go with the wildlife and rare species pictures. Sarah Ward was to provide an update on bird numbers.
    - George Howard - We received specific instructions on how to submit RAMSAR nomination applications from Mike Wicker. The applications goes to the Assistant Secretary of International Affairs. It is important for the application to receive bipartisan support. Both senator's offices, Richard Burr and Tom Tillis have been informed of the application. The senator's offices may suggest support be received from the county commissioners. Hopefully they don't, as seeking support from Hyde, Tyrell and Washington Counties could be risky and opens a can of worms. George is asking for letters without needing county commissioners.
    - George, Kurt, Kristie are to meet and do final tweaks. Kim asked about timeframe for review, Curt thought 6 mos. Rick will forward WRC letter.
  - State of the Wetlands Report – being worked on.
  - Concentration of Whitepapers – being worked on.
  - The Landowner's Wetland Restoration Guide is currently posted on Carolina Wetlands website (under the Learn→Landowner section [here](#)). A webinar on the guide may be planned. Also being considered is expanding the guide to something more comparable to the Wisconsin Wetland Association Wetland Restoration Guide. This would probably need to be done with a grant. When the guide is printed it will be distributed to various nature centers, wetland centers, etc. (e.g. Ellerbe Creek).
- Development Committee – Kim
  - Volunteer Coordinator report – Rachel Massa reported not having access to the volunteer report. Kim said she would follow up with Rachel and show her how to access, it is a google doc. Rachel asked for committee leaders please send member list to Rachel or point out location on one-drive
  - Outreach Update – Kim is working with April on postings.
  - Fundraising Campaigns - Kim asking for a committee to form to get these efforts off the ground. Heather and Geoff volunteered. Timeframe to meet in August and September Will get some non-board members to volunteer.

- Fall – Photo contest and calendars
  - Annual Campaign - need volunteers to help plan in November in December
- Policy Committee – George Matthis
  - Mission statement – Mission statement does not include internal policy so is being edited. The mission statement will be provided for review.
  - Financial Policy review – Currently out for review. Norton did an excellent detailed job of pulling this together. The policy committee needs to review and will hopefully endorse.
  - The policy committee needs to work on an Employee manual and will start next month.
  - COVID 19 policy – What is our policy? NC State needed this for grant so we also need guidelines (masks, hand sanitizer, in-person meeting, field-trips?). Kristine- should guidelines mirror our organizations liabilities related to Covid? If we create guidance are we setting ourselves up to assume liability? Chad - We have general insurance policy that would need to be checked. Heather – What about using a waiver, such as with the volunteer monitoring. Rick asked Chad to check insurance policy and come up with a policy. Chad said he will need to check policy exemptions.
- Executive Committee – Rick/Kim
  - ASWM webinar - June 24 (Rick and Kim) – There was an emphasis on state and regional associations, who we are and how we got started. Kim put together the presentation and Rick and Kim gave the presentation together. Wisconsin Wetland Association, our mentor, also gave a presentation. Carolina Wetlands has been in existence for 5 years and the Wisconsin Wetland Association has been in existence for 50 years
    - Over 200 attendees
    - Recording and PPT: <https://www.aswm.org/aswm/aswm-webinarscalls/9722-past-2020-capacity-building-webinar>
  - Led to meeting with Eastern Band of Cherokee and United States Eastern Tribes (USET)
  - Vetted the Financial Policy document – made a few edits and sent to policy committee
- Finance Committee – Norton, Heather
  - Rick shared that a very large donation was recently provided by an individual who has given to organization with time, knowledge and playing the devil’s advocate, THANK YOU CHAD!!!. Chad will also start leading Swansboro effort. Norton - This was a tremendous financial boost, thank you. Rick also shared that Kristine Cherry has been very generous two years in a row. Kristine – Rick you have built a good team!
  - Balance – Not much change, expenditures have been similar since last board meeting, big thing was Paypal with Chad’s contribution. All documents and accounting is in order in case Carolina Wetlands is ever audited. Net income is negative but will change when money is transferred from PayPal account which will put us back in the black. Expenditures have been constant, when grant money is received we will track expenditures spent and make sure we stay on budget.
  - Budget questions/update?
  - Procedural Policy update and Board review

- Other - Rick plans to create spreadsheet of the who's who of Carolina Wetlands, Rick will put this on One-Drive and will ask people to fill in as needed (skills and contributions).

## 7:45 Projects

- **Partnering with the Town of Swansboro**
  - Meeting with Board of Commissioners was held on July 13, last Monday. Rick and Norton attended. Chad will lead effort in future, but did not attend this meeting.
  - Norton - Rick presented to town commissions, city staff and mayor. A joint workshop with planning board and commissioners will be held. Also looked at several sites in town. Rick thought went the meeting went well and Swansboro really needs our help. Swansboro has done a lot of planning and wants to be implementing projects.
    - Went extremely well, lots of good questions
    - Next steps: City Manager will schedule follow-up meeting
    - Samantha Burdick, Resiliency Coordinator for NC DCM hopefully will attend
  - Funding: Pursue CAMA Planning grant
- **Stony Run (Dunn, NC)**
  - Norton – no updates on next steps may start to engage land owners while waiting on grant.
  - Applied for an EEG (Attorney General's office) for the Planning process (\$38K) was submitted by the May 28, 2020 deadline.
  - Starting a project plan
  - Need to engage with landowners and other stakeholders
    - Wesley Johnson (name of company) has started
    - Dunn Vision Group ('Imagine Dunn') has a public kick off event on Tuesday July 28th at 7pm:
    - Harnett County Parks and Recreation is doing a Greenways/Trails plan. Complete survey: <https://www.harnettgreenwayplan.com/>
- **Volunteer Wetlands Monitoring**
  - NC State University now has approval to go out in field and have started doing some site visits to fine tune monitoring. The plan is to go to Hemlock bluffs for dry run of procedures including installing a well.
  - QAPP preparation is being done by NC State University
  - Setting up and doing site activity:
    - Hemlock Bluffs July 22 (start equipment installation)
    - Roberston Millpond, July 15: Determined general veg plot locations, etc.
    - Mason Farm, July 29: Determine locations of monitoring sites
  - Goal to hire coordinator by end of September, start date is flexible
    - Position description is drafted. Position would help volunteers and make sure that safety procedures followed.
    - Hope to be able to start monitoring sites in October.
  - COVID-19 precautions, any concerns

**7:50 Duke Wetlands Center expansion - Curt Richardson**

**Had to leave early, did not present.**

**7:50 WOTUS lawsuit(s) and how Carolina Wetlands can help - Geoff Gisler**

There were two cases where plaintiffs moved for preliminary injunction (to put the rule on hold). The motion in the North Carolina case was unfortunately denied. The state of Colorado's injunction was granted, so the rule has currently gone into effect in 49 states. There could be a quick trip to Supreme Court. SELC has filed a case in South Carolina which may be decided early next year.

The suggestion for Carolina Wetlands is to look for on the ground impacts. Are there examples that we can point to as showing harm. This could be used to give the court a real example. Please look for wetlands separated by artificial berm or berm and upland or wetlands types that are not as wet (e.g. pocosins, pine flats, sites higher in the watershed or on interstream flats). Look for activities that up until a month ago were clearly NOT legal.

**8:00 Other Business**

<https://rsshorelines.com/> – George Howard shared a link on Living Shorelines that his company, Restoration Systems, is promoting in case anyone is interested or has contact that might be.

**8:15 Adjourn**

Norton motioned first, with Kim second.