

NORTH CAROLINA COASTAL FEDERATION

# State of the **COAST** Report

2007



25  
*Celebrating*

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS  
OF COASTAL CONSERVATION

## State of the **COAST**

*Coastal Review* is the quarterly newsletter of the North Carolina Coastal Federation (NCCF). NCCF is a non-profit tax-exempt organization dedicated to involving citizens in decisions about managing coastal resources. Its aim is to share technical information and resources to better represent current and long-term economic, social and environmental interests of the North Carolina Coast.

### NCCF BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Melvin Shepard, Jr., President**  
Sneads Ferry

**Dick Bierly, Vice President**  
Morehead City

**Olivia Holding, Treasurer**  
Raleigh

**Meg Rawls, Secretary**  
Beaufort

**Sam Bland** – Emerald Isle  
**Wanda Coston** – Wilmington  
**Bill Ducker** – Sunset Beach  
**Susan Edwards** – Greensboro  
**Ernie Foster** – Hatteras  
**James Barrie Gaskill** – Ocracoke  
**Bill Hunneke** – Greenville  
**Minnie Hunt** – Sunset Beach  
**Jackie Mardan** – Wilmington  
**Mary Hunter Martin** – Raleigh  
**Randy Mason** – Emerald Isle  
**Edmund “Beau” McCaffray** –  
Wilmington

**Dot McGee** – Raleigh/Newport  
**Margie Misenheimer** –  
Marshallberg

**David M. Paynter** – Wilmington  
**Ely J. Perry, III** – Kinston  
**Lewis Piner** – Wendell  
**Richard Powers** – Greenville  
**John Runkle** – Chapel Hill  
**Bland Simpson** – Chapel Hill  
**Donna Snead** – Emerald Isle  
**Melanie Taylor** – Chapel Hill  
**Doug Wakeman** – Pittsboro  
**Keith Walker** – Beaufort  
**Ginger Webster** – Corolla  
**Stephen Wolfe** – Jamesville

### STAFF

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
**Todd Miller**  
toddm@nccoast.org

**ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT**  
**Jennifer Adams**  
jennifera@nccoast.org

**DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS**  
**Rachael Carlyle**  
rachaelc@nccoast.org

**CAPE HATTERAS COASTKEEPER**  
**Jan DeBlieu**  
hatteraskeeper@nccoast.org

**CAPE FEAR COASTKEEPER**  
**Mike Giles**  
capefearcoastkeeper@nccoast.org

**DEPUTY DIRECTOR**  
**Lauren Kolodij**  
laurenk@nccoast.org

**BUSINESS MANAGER**  
**Jo Ann Marsh**  
joannm@nccoast.org

**PLANNING & COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR**  
**Christine Miller**  
christinem@nccoast.org

**EDUCATION COORDINATOR**  
**Sarah Phillips**  
sarahp@nccoast.org

**OFFICE ASSISTANT**  
**Rose Rundell**  
roser@nccoast.org

**SENIOR STAFF SCIENTIST**  
**Tracy Skrabal**  
tracys@nccoast.org

**DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR**  
**Sally Steele**  
sallys@nccoast.org

**POLICY DIRECTOR**  
**Jim Stephenson**  
jim@s@nccoast.org

**CAPE LOOKOUT COASTKEEPER**  
**Frank Tursi**  
lookoutkeeper@nccoast.org

**HABITAT RESTORATION SPECIALIST**  
**Dr. Lexia Weaver**  
lexiaw@nccoast.org

**BIOLOGIST EDUCATOR**  
**Ted Wilgis**  
tedw@nccoast.org



## NCCF's 12<sup>th</sup> Annual State of the Coast Report

The intent of the *State of the Coast Report* is to provide citizens who care about our coast with a tool to better understand the issues, challenges and solutions that are key to our coast's health. We hope this publication will move you to participate in the restoration and protection of our coast. To learn more, call the N.C. Coastal Federation at 252-393-8185. The opinions expressed in the *State of the Coast Report* represent the views of the N.C. Coastal Federation.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication required a major effort that combined the expertise of many people. Frank Tursi, NCCF's Cape Lookout Coastkeeper, was the report's editor and lead author. Jim Stephenson, the Federation's Policy Director, and Jan DeBlieu, our Cape Hatteras Coastkeeper, also contributed major articles. Christine Miller, NCCF's Planning and Communications Director, proofread the articles and oversaw printing and distribution, and Sara Birkemeir and George Scott at 8 Dot Graphics designed the publication.

We are also grateful to the following people who contributed time and effort: Marc Basnight, president pro tempore, N.C. Senate; Dick Bierly, vice president, NCCF Board of Directors; Derb S. Carter, director, N.C. office of the Southern Environmental Law Center; Courtney Hackney, chairman, N.C. Coastal Resources Commission; Bill Holman, visiting scholar, Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions, Duke University; Charles Jones, director, N.C. Division of Coastal Management; William Kirby-Smith, associate professor, Duke Marine Lab; Todd Miller, executive director, NCCF; Ed Mitchell, president, River Dunes Corporation; S. Wayne Mobley, chief, N.C. Shellfish Sanitation & Recreational Water Quality Section; Charles H. "Pete" Peterson, vice chairman, N.C. Environmental Management Commission; Lena Ritter, former president, NCCF Board of Directors; Melvin Shepard Jr., president, NCCF Board of Directors; and Steve Stone, assistant county manager, Brunswick County.



**North Carolina  
Coastal Federation**

3609 Highway 24 (Ocean), Newport, NC 28570

Phone: 252-393-8185 • Fax: 252-393-7508

E-Mail: nccf@nccoast.org • www.nccoast.org

The North Carolina Coastal Federation is located on Highway 24 in Ocean, NC, between Swansboro and Morehead City. Our offices, nature library and shop are open Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 5 pm.

LAYOUT/DESIGN by 8 Dot Graphics

# NCCF's Success Hinges on Marshalling the Good Sense of Coastal People

BY TODD MILLER • Executive Director, N.C. Coastal Federation

I remember talking to my father 25 years ago about forming an advocacy group to protect the N.C. coast. We were knee-deep in Bogue Sound at the time, catching clams. We were surrounded by mostly undeveloped shorelines that were on the leading edge of a growing wave of development sweeping over the coast. We knew that this growth, if not properly channeled, would destroy many of the special things that we loved about our coast.

My father was ending his career as a research chemist for the menhaden industry and as the director of the seafood lab at N.C. State University. His work connected him with seafood business owners and fishermen throughout the coast. I had gone with him on road trips to many out-of-the-way fishing communities where he was always welcomed as family.

Our coast, then, was that kind of place.

Growing up in the countryside along Bogue Sound was pretty special. There were fields of tobacco, corn, soybeans and watermelons outside of the picture window in the living room. Out back, the sound teemed with clams, fish, crabs, bay scallops and oysters. Summers were spent netting blue crabs that lived in lush beds of seagrass right off shore. The feel of clams between my toes (and an occasional crab) became part of my soul.

Childhood memories now rush through my mind much like a DVD movie playing in fast forward. Catching crabs fades into fleeting recollections of sailing across Bogue Sound to the mostly undeveloped Bogue Banks. On each return trip, there were more survey stakes, bulldozers, streets, houses and strip malls. Larger condominiums and shopping centers then started to overshadow the dunes. My high school years were spent working cash registers and pumping gas where just a few years before we played hide and seek in dense maritime forests.

While at college in Chapel Hill, the prospect of coming back to Carteret County to live seemed farfetched. However, the coast had shaped my educational interests, and finding myself living away from the water made me long to be back close to it. After taking courses in marine and political sciences and later environmental planning, a university

research job sent me around the country to evaluate water-quality protection programs. That experience taught me that active citizen participation is vital if environmental protection efforts are to succeed.

The city of Tampa offered me a job after graduate school to work in an innovative stormwater management program. While there for the interview, I strolled along the city's waterfront and found it littered with dead fish floating belly up in Tampa Bay. I declined the job, and decided to come home and form a coastal advocacy group. I did it so I could continue to be spoiled by our beautiful coast.

In this *State of the Coast* report, you'll read about what the Federation has done since 1982. For me personally, half my life has passed working for the Federation—and it's gratifying that the concept of bringing people together to advocate for a better future for the coast is working so well.

There are lots of things I've learned over the years, but the most important things tend to be pretty simple and mostly common sense.

Most importantly, I've learned to **take time to celebrate our coast**. It's vital to keep the coast front and center in all our efforts, otherwise it's too easy to get caught up in the minutiae and lose perspective. Taking time to enjoy and experience the coast is what refreshes and inspires our work. It's critical to let the coast shine in how we design our

programs lest we forget why we're concerned about it in the first place.

**Little things really do matter.** Decisions made every day about how land and water are used are ultimately what shape the coast. Big controversial issues that grab the headlines might attract lots of attention for a few days, months or even years, but eventually these issues fade

away while the decisions made each day by government agencies and investors (large and small) continue to determine the coast's future. If we don't focus our programs on trying to influence these everyday decisions then we may win a few high profile battles but we'll lose in our long-term effort to safeguard the coast.

**Early intervention and proactive actions are always the most effective ways to protect the coast.** By the time threats become visible, it's frequently too late to do much about them. It's critical to anticipate issues and use every law and regulatory tool to prevent problems before they occur. There are many examples where potential threats

*continued on page 19...*



**25**  
*Celebrating*  
TWENTY-FIVE YEARS  
OF COASTAL CONSERVATION

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Pages 4-6

#### CHAPTER 1: Born of Necessity: NCCF Forms to Protect Coastal Water Quality

Formed in 1982, the Federation spends its first decade working with coastal citizens challenging development permits and filing lawsuits in efforts designed to enhance protection of coastal water quality. In the process, it saves an island, gets tougher standards for marina siting and stormwater runoff, and helps fend off strip miners.

### Pages 7-9, 12-13

#### CHAPTER 2: Federation Matures Into Respected Advocate of Coastal Protection

NCCF comes to rely on more than mass rallies and lawsuits to push its coastal agenda. It now forms partnerships with state agencies, local governments and developers. It buys ecologically sensitive land, restores degraded habitats and educates thousands of people each year.

### Pages 10-11

#### A Chronology

Important dates in the history of the  
N.C. Coastal Federation

### Pages 14-15

#### CHAPTER 3: In the Face of Increased Growth, NCCF Must Expand Its Mission in the Future

To meet the challenges of the future, NCCF has embarked on an ambitious mission to extend its programs to all areas of the coast.

### Pages 16-19

#### 2006 The Pelican Awards

Recognizing the good work of people, groups and organizations to protect our coast

### Page 20

#### How You Can Help

How to help the N.C. coast and the Coastal Federation

**Cover:** Fishing off Cape Lookout.

## CHAPTER 1:

# Born Out of Necessity, NCCF Rallies to the Defense of Clean Water

BY JAN DEBLIEU • *Cape Hatteras Coastkeeper*

On an April day 25 years ago, key members of eight environmental groups met to talk about what they could do to keep development from ruining North Carolina's coast. There were representatives from Carteret Crossroads, the Pamlico Tar River Foundation, the Sierra Club, the National Wildlife Federation—and a 24-year-old native of Bogue Sound named Todd Miller.

The conversation that day at the N.C. Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores was sometimes animated and sometimes bleak. “We knew we had to put together a concentrated effort, or we were going to lose the coast,” says Miller, who had convened the meeting with a two-hundred-dollar grant from a small non-profit organization, the N.C. Land Use Congress.

The first tremors of intensive development were reaching north from Wilmington. Outside of Brunswick and New Hanover counties, the mainland was still dotted with commercial fishing settlements. But plans were quickly being laid for large subdivisions, condominium complexes and marinas.

Congress had passed the Clean Water Act in 1972, but the laws protecting the nation's rivers and coasts had gone into effect only in 1979. The state's Coastal Resources Commission was still wrestling with how to implement the Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA), enacted in 1974. “The law just provided the outline,” remembers Derb Carter, an attorney who worked then for the National Wildlife Federation. “There was literally a battle raging about what the state regulations should contain and how they should be imposed.”

The debate over the protections for wetlands was especially heated. Steep rises in the price of soybeans and grain had spurred landowners to put thousands of new acres into agriculture—often by ditching and draining wetlands.

As crops replaced marsh grasses, fishermen saw a decline in the cleanliness of local waters. In Hyde, Tyrrell and Washington counties, a company called Peat Methanol Associates wanted to dig up 120,000 acres of peat soils and burn them to manufacture methanol.

Something needed to be done quickly to protect the coast's fragile resources. Miller had an idea for what it might be. The previous year he had finished a master's degree in city and regional planning at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. After graduation, he had helped complete a survey of different programs across the country that sought to protect local watersheds. “The common denominator of the successful programs was that they had very active citizen involvement,” he says.

There were numerous small environmental groups in North Carolina's 20 coastal counties. But it seemed to Miller there was a need for a grassroots group that could address coastal policy statewide and facilitate work on local issues. “We had the Chesapeake Bay Foundation for a model, so we knew it could



**NCCF conducted a media tour in 1987 for the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuary Study.**



**The main road to North Topsail Beach floods in the mid-1980s. NCCF has long warned about unsafe development at Topsail.**

work,” he said. “But did we have the population to support it? Most of those kinds of organizations tended to be based in more urban areas.”

The environmentalists at the meeting thought it was well worth a try. That summer Derb Carter drew up incorporation papers. Members were chosen for a board of directors. Miller agreed to serve as an unpaid president. They called themselves the N.C. Coastal Federation, a name



**NCCF's board of directors meets in 1986 on the back porch of Todd Miller's house.**

thought up one afternoon on the drive back from a Coastal Resources Commission meeting.

### TAKING ON STRIP MINERS

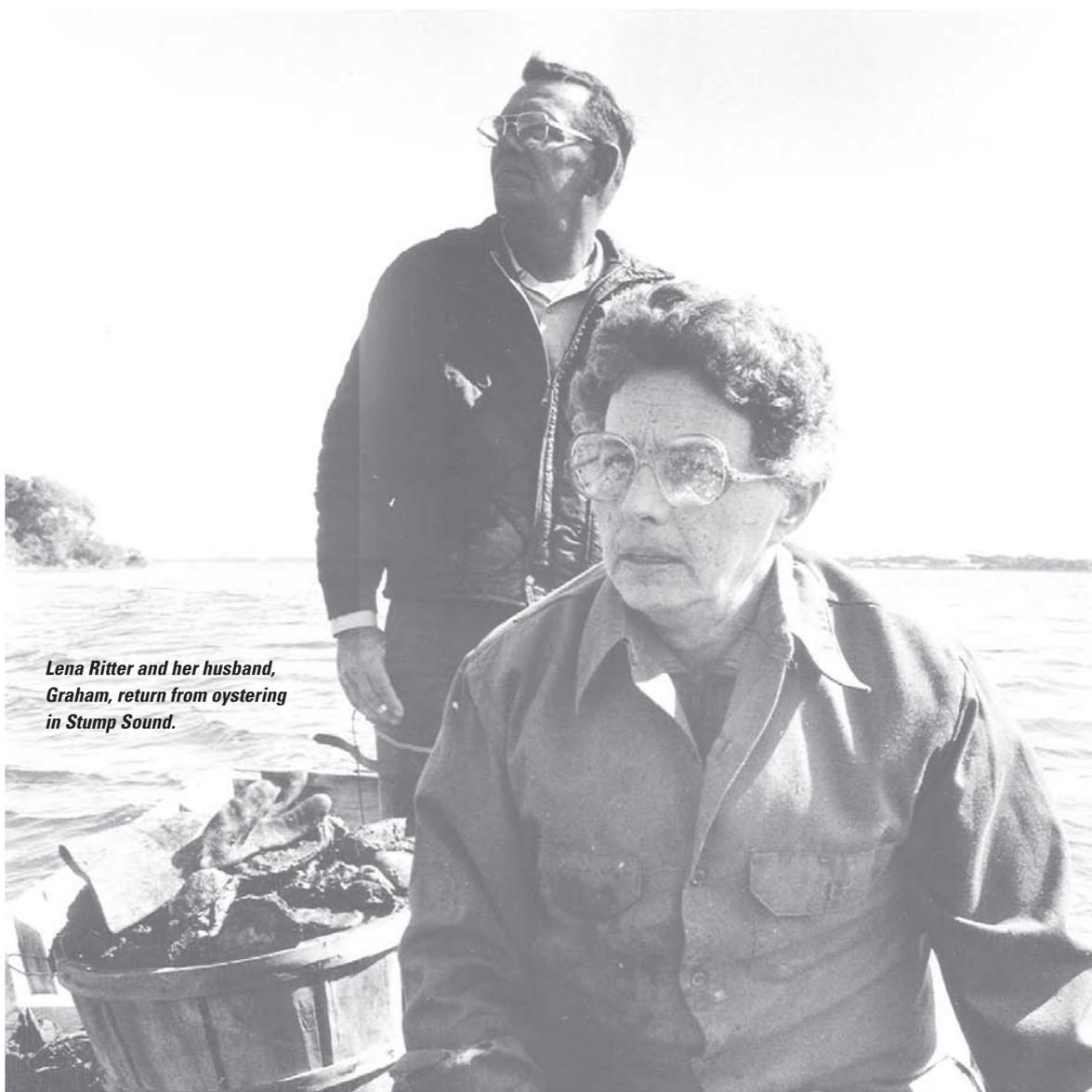
Miller initially operated the Federation from his house on family land in the small community of Ocean in Carteret County. There was no dearth of issues to address, but he and the board were wary of taking on too much. That fall he applied for a \$20,000 grant from the Mary Babcock Reynolds Foundation to launch a public information campaign about the environmental effects of mining peat.

Carter and others were fighting the Peat Methanol Associates proposal from Raleigh, but no one was working with the fishermen who would be hurt directly by the removal of wetlands soils.

The grant set the fledgling organization's direction for the next year and enabled Miller to start drawing a salary. He, David Celcelski and another part-time helper logged long days on the Albemarle-Pamlico peninsula, talking to fishermen about the dangers of peat mining. “They met them on the docks, or wherever they could find them,” Carter says. “It was pretty rough for a while. They weren't used to talking to environmentalists.”

But Miller and Celcelski were avid fishermen with quiet demeanors, and they were unusually persistent. They conveyed complex scientific information about the dangers of peat mining in a way that people with no scientific background could quickly grasp.

“That was the genius of the approach—take information, distill it down, and make it public,” says Don Ensley, who served as president of the NCCF board after Miller was



**Lena Ritter and her husband, Graham, return from oystering in Stump Sound.**

## Saving Permuda Island

BY JAN DEBLIEU · *Cape Hatteras Coastkeeper*

LENA RITTER REMEMBERS THE SIGHT WELL: a lone fisherman clamming in the blue waters of Greenwich Bay. As she stood at a podium preparing to address a roomful of scientists and public policy experts, she glanced out the window and wished for all the world that she were outside catching clams, too.

It was 1986, and Ritter had traveled to Warwick, R.I., to attend a conference on coastal waters sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. She hadn't wanted to go. She had never been on a plane before, and she was scared of flying. But, she says, "I was the symbol of the people they were trying to help." So she steeled herself, walked out on the tarmac at the Jacksonville airport, and boarded a small plane that looked like "a matchbox with wings and a prop."

Ritter, now 72, lives a mile from Stump Sound on a piece of family land she says has never been sold for money. She's fished for oysters and clams all her life and never expected to do anything else. But in 1983 her life was turned upside down by the announcement that a development company planned to build condominiums on Permuda Island, an untouched

strand a mile-and-a-half long in the middle of Stump Sound.

Ritter decided to fight. She hooked up with Todd Miller, NCCF's new executive director, and began the journey that would lead her to stand at a podium, ready to address dozens of people at a national conference.

It was Ritter who roused local fishermen and convinced them to speak out at public hearings before the Onslow County Board of Commissioners, and Ritter who spoke for those same fishermen at meetings of the state Coastal Resources Commission and Environmental Management Commission. It was she who worked most closely with Miller on strategies for fighting the development. Todd was "our guide and interpreter" for understanding the state rules, she says. "He was leading the blind through the woods. But I spoke a language that the fishermen understood."

For three years Ritter fought to preserve Permuda Island. Along the way, she joined the NCCF board. She attended so many county and state meetings that for a time she quit fishing and took a job on the graveyard shift at a local pie factory. "It freed up my days and gave me money to go down the road for meetings," she says. "But oh, I was tired. One

named executive director. "Then, give the information to the citizens and let them run with it."

Soon fishermen were posing hard questions to the state regulatory agencies. Carter remembers in particular a public hearing at Mattamuskeet High School in Hyde County. Nearly 600 coastal residents showed up to speak out against peat mining. "That was the turning point," he said. "That was the end."

In 1984 Peat Methanol Associates was refused additional federal subsidies it needed to start mining on the peninsula. A few months later the state adopted new water quality standards for wetlands that were stronger than federal regulations and effectively prohibited large-scale peat mining operations. The game was over.

The land that had been slated for peat mining was sold to the Nature Conservancy and then transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to be preserved as national wildlife refuges.

"The whole experience showed that Todd was right," Carter says. "There are a lot of people on the coast who share a common interest in protecting it. And when they get involved, it makes a difference."

### PROTECTING A FRAGILE ISLAND

Farming was not the only lucrative business in the early 1980s. The N.C. coast was in the process of being discovered, and waterfront property was suddenly in great demand.

U.S. Census figures show that in Carteret County, the population rose by a third during the 1970s to almost 42,000 people. The county's population would increase another 42 percent by 2000. The rate of growth was even more rapid in Dare County, where the number of residents ballooned from 6,995 in 1970 to 22,746 in 1990 and 29,967 a decade later. By the turn of the new century New Hanover County was home to a whopping

*continued on page 6...*

day I went to a Coastal Federation board meeting and just put my head down and slept."

The road to saving the island was filled with odd twists. At one point the county commissioners threatened to sue Ritter and three other opponents of the development for harassing them. Later, at the moment of victory, the money in the state budget that had been earmarked for purchase of the island mysteriously evaporated. Ritter began calling state legislators, and the funds reappeared.

In the end, Permuda Island was set aside as a state coastal reserve — and Ritter became known as an eloquent voice for the coast's commercial fishermen. In 1986 she was chosen from among 400 nominees to receive the first Nancy Susan Reynolds Award for exemplary leadership.

At the award ceremony in Raleigh, she told the audience, "My knees is a-knocking and my teeth is chattering, but I'll talk." And just as she would a few months later at the EPA conference, she spoke from her heart about Stump Sound, and oystering, and all that needed to be saved on the coast. "I don't remember a thing I said," she muses. "But the newspaper wrote the next day that I got three standing ovations."

*"Integrity. That's the first word that comes to mind when I think of the Coastal Federation. I can't tell you how proud I am to have been a part of it." – Mevin Shepard Jr.*

805 people per square mile — a density second in the state only to Mecklenburg County, the home of Charlotte.

The coast's new arrivals needed housing, and the burgeoning subdivisions built to accommodate them were taking a heavy toll on local waters. One of the most ill-conceived plans was for a condominium complex and marina on Permuda Island, a primary nursery area with rich shellfishing beds in Onslow County's Stump Sound.

"It was about the best oystering, or any other kind of fishing you'd want to do, in the state," says Lena Ritter, whose family had worked the waters of Stump Sound for seven generations. "There was no way it could have survived all those condos, driveways, swimming pools and a marina."

Miller, Ritter and other local community leaders such as Bill and Bernice Rice spearheaded the effort to save Permuda Island — and people began to take more notice of NCCF. The fledgling organization also successfully appealed a state CAMA permit for a condominium complex and marina on Hoop Pole Creek in Carteret County. Like Permuda Island, the property was adjacent to open shellfishing waters. Years later, NCCF bought land around the creek to protect it permanently.

NCCF also successfully filed a lawsuit with three other groups against the state Environmental Management Commission, claiming that three shopping centers proposed for Bogue Banks should obtain federal discharge permits for the stormwater they would dump into local waters.

#### STORMWATER BATTLES BEGIN

NCCF was on a roll. With additional grants from the Mary Babcock Reynolds Foundation and the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, the board hired an environmental scientist and a development director in 1985. They worked with Miller out of his house.

From the beginning, Miller and the board had hoped to forestall the kind of bad development that was ruining water quality along other coasts. But fighting developments one at a time was tediously slow. Board members agreed that the state needed better rules for protecting coastal waters.

Stormwater was a major source of pollution, yet the state had only weak rules for limiting the runoff from new development. During the mid-80s NCCF mobilized citizen

support for new stormwater development standards for the 20 coastal counties. The organization also promoted new state regulations for building marinas that would protect open shellfishing waters.

"We appealed a number of permits that forced the state to recognize that the standards for stormwater and marinas weren't protecting the waters," Miller says. "We could have appealed other permits, but we chose the ones that would help lead to better standards for the coast overall."

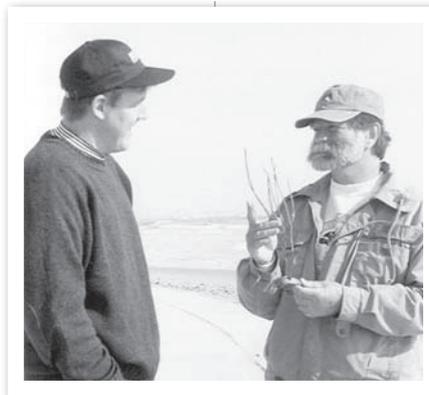
Congress in 1987 designated the Albemarle and Pamlico sounds as waters of national concern. As a result, the state and the EPA funded a multi-million-dollar planning effort known as

the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuarine Study, which pulled together citizens, scientists and coastal policy experts to create a plan for protecting the sounds. NCCF was a key player in the study for the next five years and it used grant money from the study to start a fledgling education program.

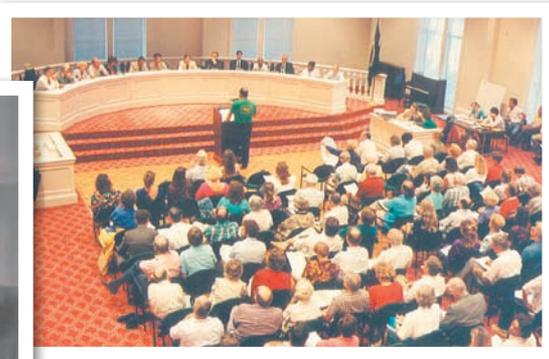
Lena Ritter joined the staff in 1988 as a liaison with local fishermen and coastal residents. A year later, Miller moved the organization from his home to a farmhouse on Hadnot Creek in western Carteret County. Still, Ritter says, "I don't know that there was enough furniture for us all to find a chair to sit in at the same time."



**Doug Rader addresses a meeting of NCCF members in the late 1980s.**



**Ted Wilgis, left, and Randy Mason headed NCCF's early environmental education programs.**



**Photo left: Jonathan Howes Photo above: Melvin Shepard urges the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners to approve a meaningful land-use plan.**

#### PROTECTING COASTAL WATERS

Although CAMA regulations applied to any land that lay within 75 feet of coastal waters, the NCCF staff believed more protection was needed for the state's cleanest waters, including the bays and creeks that were still open to shellfishing. The organization asked state officials in 1989 to designate 10 percent of the state's waters as Outstanding

Resource Waters (ORW), the state's highest water classification. The suggestion was not viewed kindly—until NCCF mobilized support.

"The state wasn't enthusiastic about it at all," Carter says. "But when it became clear that a large number of people on the coast wanted cleaner water, and that there was overwhelming public support for extra protection, things quickly changed."

New rules protecting ORW waters were adopted in 1990.

There were other initiatives, too. During its first decade NCCF helped lead the fight for a moratorium on new land-use plans in the 20 coastal counties. The hiatus gave the state a chance to develop a stronger land-use planning program to help communities shape the growth that threatened to overwhelm them.

NCCF organized a group called the Coastal Caucus that brought environmental groups together so they

could coordinate their efforts. It collaborated with WRAL-TV on a Save Our Sounds campaign that helped educate viewers about coastal issues and garnered support for strengthened state rules to protect water quality. "That was our first big public relations campaign," Miller remembers. "It gave us some legitimacy."

Courtney Hackney, the current chairman of the N.C. Coastal Resources Commission, remembers NCCF in the late 80s and early 90s as "a little on the radical side."

"They were involved in attacking things," he says. "You know—this development is bad and we're going

to stop it. They provided an interesting counter-weight to the pro-development CRC membership of the (Gov.) Jim Martin administration. I think if we heard some of their arguments today, we wouldn't find them radical at all."

NCCF moved in 1995 from the farm to its current building on N.C. 24 in Ocean. The symbolism of the move wasn't lost on Melvin Shepard, NCCF's longtime board president. "We went from being hidden out in the woods to making a big presence," he says. "It was a big step."

At the time of the move, Gov. Jim Hunt was in the second year of his third term as governor. He had appointed Johnathan Howes to head his Department of Environment, Health and Natural Resources. A former NCCF board member and UNC professor who had known Miller in Chapel Hill, Howes wanted to do something special to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the state's landmark Coastal Area Management Act. He was planning a year-long, statewide celebration, and he wanted NCCF involved. It would mark the beginning of a new phase for the Federation. Hiding in the woods would no longer be possible. □

# NCCF Broadens its Appeal, Matures Into ‘Full-Service’ Environmental Group

BY FRANK TURSI • *Cape Lookout Coastkeeper*

It was the *Year of the Coast* in 1994. You’re forgiven if you’ve forgotten. It was one of those well-meaning government efforts to call attention to a problem – in this case, the alarming deterioration of coastal water quality. A blue-ribbon commission was empanelled. Meetings were held and solutions were forwarded amid much fanfare and many speeches. Some of the recommendations were even implemented, but then attention shifted to other crises.

But the *Year of the Coast* was significant in another regard: it was a coming-out party of sorts for a small environmental group that had been steadily gaining membership and influence. Since its founding more than a decade earlier, the N.C. Coastal Federation played the usual role of an environmental advocacy group: it pointed fingers, challenged permits and filed lawsuits. It had also shown an unusual adeptness at rallying masses of people to save an island and fend off strip miners.

Times, though, were changing. More specifically, membership on the state’s Coastal Resources Commission, or CRC, had changed to the point that the Federation’s permit challenges were falling increasingly on deaf ears. The commission, which sets development rules along the coast, is the arbiter of permit challenges.

“We sort of lost our effectiveness in legal actions,” remembers Todd Miller, NCCF’s founder and executive director. “You can push that just so far. And we lost a sympathetic jury when the CRC changed.”

The *Year of the Coast*, though, offered a larger stage. Devised by the state’s then Department of Environment, Health and Natural Resources and endorsed by Gov. Jim Hunt, the statewide campaign was meant to focus on the value of our coastal environment and on the fundamental causes of its deterioration. The state chose the Federation to coordinate and promote the effort and to work with the committee that would make the policy recommendations. “It was a major turning point because it engaged us at a different level,” Miller says.

Instead of being an adversary, NCCF was, for the first time, a partner with state regulators. Instead of merely highlighting the potholes in

state policy, the Federation would attempt to point the way for new policy. It was a benchmark, one of those points in the history of an organization that marks a fundamental shift. From then on, the Federation would embark on a course that would ultimately reshape it.

Though at its core, the Federation would always remain

an advocacy group, increasingly it would come to rely on more than lawsuits and mass rallies to push its agenda. Over the next dozen or so years, NCCF would partner with state agencies on topics as varied as protecting coastal habitats, promoting fisheries reforms and devising a better way to share water quality information. It would work with coastal towns and counties on stormwater projects and land-use plans. NCCF would even engage developers to help them lessen the environmental effects of their shopping centers and subdivisions. The organization would place a greater emphasis on environmental education and would take a more active role in restoring degraded habitats and buying ecologically valuable lands. As a sign of its growing maturity, the organization would even become an influential player in



Photo left: Gov. Jim Hunt, center, helps stencil a storm drain in Wilmington as part of the *Year of the Coast* celebration. Photo above: Volunteers help build an oyster reef.



the state legislature.

Bill Holman watched the transformation, first as an environmental lobbyist in the N.C. General Assembly, then as a state official and now as policy analyst at Duke University. “I think of Todd and the Federation as being one of the first environmental organizations in the state to move from straight advocacy and telling people what they are doing wrong to the actual implementation of policy, of restoration projects,” he says. “There is still advocacy, but there are now new partnerships with local governments, state agencies, developers. I think the Federation has done a good job of being prickly when it needs to be and being open when it needs to be, and that’s not an easy thing to pull off.”

#### A CHANGING COAST

By the time of the *Year of the Coast*, the population of the 20 coastal counties had increased by more than 100,000 since the Federation’s founding. In some places, the growth was eye-popping. Dare County’s population grew by 70 percent. At the other end of the coast, the population of Brunswick County increased 42 percent. In between the two, Carteret and Onslow counties’ populations grew by more than a third.

The rural outback of fishing villages and farming towns had been discovered, and with the people came the predictable environmental deterioration. After years of fish kills and mysterious fish and crab diseases, the Pamlico River was declared commercially dead in the late 1980s. Algal blooms started killing fish soon after in the Neuse River. Spills from hog farms poisoned millions of fish in the New River, and sea grass beds and the scallops that depend on them began disappearing in Bogue and Core sounds. As wetlands and forests were turned into subdivisions and shopping centers, stormwater runoff polluted more

shellfish beds with bacteria.

The downward trend would only steepen during the 1990s and the first decade of the new century as the coastal population approached 900,000 and several coastal counties were among the fastest growing in the country. As the Federation celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we note with pride the progress made. But the population explosion on the coast means that bacteria from runoff still closes large portions of the state’s coastal waters after each heavy rain. Speculative land development is moving inland along the rivers and sounds, driving up land prices and property taxes and threatening to overwhelm coastal people and cultures. A combination of environmental and economic factors is slowly killing the coast’s once-rich commercial fishing industry, that is if they can even get to the water.

Charles “Pete” Peterson thinks things could be worse, however. He is a professor at the University of North Carolina’s Institute of Marine Science and a longtime member of the N.C. Environmental Management Commission, the state’s major environmental rule-making board. “What we’ve got of our environmental legacy still intact and what we’ve lost has to be viewed in term of population growth and whether advocacy by the Coastal Federation and other groups has capped that degradation,” he says, “I suspect that the answer to that is yes. While

many of us are saddened at what we’ve lost, there are grounds to be proud at what we’ve preserved.”

Peterson admits that his hypothesis – that the coastal environment would be worse if the Federation didn’t exist – is impossible to prove but he points to some compelling evidence. Without NCCF’s diligent work, it is questionable whether the state would have been moved to designate coastal waterways as Outstanding Resource Waters, its highest water classification. NCCF’s dogged persistence pressured the state to reform its requirements for coastal land-use plans. Its lawsuits protected water quality in the Pamlico Sound and wetlands along the southeast coast. The organization, said Peterson, has shown real leadership in policy issues such as stormwater control.

“In the area of stormwater, the technical



**NCCF in 2006 helped organize meetings on growth in eastern Carteret County, like this one in Symrna.**

understanding of the Federation has been out in front of some academics and regulatory agencies,” he said. “That’s particularly true of novel solutions that are outside the box of things we’ve normally used.”

#### A BENCHMARK YEAR

The yellow school bus lumbered down the sand path that winds its way between two soybean fields. It lurched to a stop, and the high-school kids from Greenville piled out. They had come to plant trees that will help transform these old farm fields.

Nothing quite symbolizes the new direction that the N.C. Coastal Federation has taken since its founding than its ambitious North River Farm project in eastern Carteret County. Using state and federal money and collaborating with private investors, the Federation and its partners began buying the 6,000-acre farm in 2000 and are in the process of returning it back to wetlands. Today North River

*“North Carolinians love our coast, and the Coastal Federation has been our voice for protecting the coast. No organization has done more to protect our coast over the last 25 years than the Coastal Federation.” – Derb S. Carter Jr.*

*"Other groups at their core are just advocacy. One thing I admire about the Federation is that is a full-service environmental group. It does education, it does service, it does policy, it preserves property and it does a good job of engaging its members." – Bill Holman*

Farm is the largest such restoration project ever attempted in North Carolina. The hope is that the restored wetlands will cleanse stormwater and lead to the reopening of now-closed shellfish beds in the adjacent North River. In the process, the Federation uses the farm as a giant outdoor classroom where college researchers test various restoration techniques and children and adults plant trees and marsh grass and build oyster reefs while learning about coastal ecosystems.

It's this melding of land acquisition, habitat restoration, advocacy and environmental education that makes the Federation so different from most other conservation groups. And it can all be traced to 1996, another of those benchmark years.

During that year, NCCF joined with ten other environmental groups to restore one million acres of estuarine habitat in America by 2010. With the commitment came federal grant money that allowed NCCF to hire additional staff to begin restoring degraded habitat. "So we went down that road," Miller remembers, "though we had never done restoration before. It felt like the right thing to do."

We're fast learners. Since 1996, NCCF has completed 47 restoration projects and restored more than 40,000 estuarine acres. The wide array of projects includes oyster reefs, long leaf pine forests, wetlands, salt marshes and "living shorelines," which are alternatives to traditional wooden bulkheads and rock walls.

Later in 1996, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Toyota USA chose NCCF to be part of a nationwide effort to educate school children about the environment. The resulting infusion of money allowed the Federation to turn a limited, part-time education program into a full-blown effort that provided field trips, teacher training, curricula, and restoration opportunities for middle-school children statewide. Though they have changed through the years, NCCF's education programs have touched literally thousands of people.

But it was the N.C. General Assembly that made the North River Farm project possible and NCCF's transformation complete. It passed a bill in 1996 that created the N.C. Clean Water Management Trust Fund, an innovative program that has spent hundreds of millions of dollars across North Carolina to solve the state's most intractable water pollution problems. NCCF



tapped into the trust fund for the money to buy North River Farm and thousands of other acres along the coast that the Federation and its partners have since preserved.

#### PRESERVING COASTAL LAND

Hoop Pole Creek is now a quiet retreat amid the summertime bustle of Atlantic Beach. Tourists and residents walk along the trails that wind through the lush maritime forest that covers the last bit of undeveloped shoreline in town. They can watch herons

**NCCF staff has educated thousands of people about coastal ecosystems.**

tens of millions of dollars from the trust fund and federal sources to preserve almost 10,000 acres of ecologically important coastal land. They range from the immense, such as North River Farm and the 1,463-acre Quaternary Tract on

the White Oak River, to six acres on Jones Island in the mouth of the river. In almost all cases, the public later uses the land that NCCF buys. Nearly 2,400 acres on the White Oak River, for instance, will be turned over to the state Wildlife Resources Commission as public game lands. Jones Island will become part of Hammocks Beach State Park.

NCCF has been successful in attracting trust fund money because both organizations want the same

thing, Miller says. "Our missions seek the same things: clean water and protected land. Our goals are straightforward—our efforts dovetail. There's a natural alignment between our interests and their interests," he explains. "The benefits of these projects are real."

Holman, who headed the trust fund for several years, thinks it goes beyond good intentions. Because of its deep roots in coastal communities, the Federation can put together good projects, he says. "I give a lot of credit to Todd, the staff and members of the board for having their connections

*continued on page 13...*



**Todd Miller, center, takes part in the Clean Water Lobby Day in Raleigh.**



**NCCF newsletters have kept people informed about important coastal issues.**

*"I respect Todd, the Coastal Federation and their vision for the coast. Every day they just get up and do what has to be done to make that vision reality." – Dr. Bill Kirby-Smith*

**1982:** In an attempt to bring greater public involvement to decisions about the future of the coast, Todd Miller formed the N.C. Coastal Federation (NCCF), which he operated out of his house in the community of Ocean in Carteret County. NCCF focuses on threats from the peat mining industry, which was proposing to strip mine 120,000 acres of peat in northeastern North Carolina.

**1985:** NCCF appeals several coastal development permits in Carteret, Onslow and New Hanover Counties raising issues regarding the effects of marinas and polluted stormwater runoff on shellfish waters. These appeals result in major revisions to state water quality standards and eventually the establishment of coastal stormwater runoff standards and a prohibition on siting marinas in open shellfish waters.

**1989:** NCCF analyzes pollution from TexasGulf Chemical Co. and finds that discharges from the company's phosphate mine along the Pamlico River don't conform to federal standards. The company, now called PCS Phosphate, eventually installs an innovative waste-recycling system that dramatically reduces phosphorus and fluoride discharges into the river.

**1994:** In a critical departure from its usual contentious role, NCCF works with the state for the first time to coordinate and promote the work of the Coastal Futures Committee appointed by Governor Jim Hunt and to organize activities surrounding his designation of the *Year of the Coast*. The event focuses on the coastal environment and the fundamental causes of its deterioration. A blueprint for management reforms was established. NCCF involvement has far-reaching implications on the organization's future direction. NCCF begins Coastal Adventures, its first environmental education program.

**1997:** NCCF became the first organization to buy land with a grant from the new N.C. Clean Water Management Trust Fund. With a \$2.5 million grant, NCCF buys 31 acres surrounding Hoop Pole Creek in Atlantic Beach to protect shellfish waters from urban development. The purchase is the first of many that over the next 10 years would preserve almost 10,000 acres of coastal land. | NCCF opens an office in Wilmington, the organization's first field office.



*NCCF joined WRAL-TV in 1988 in a year-long educational effort called Save Our Sounds.*

**1992:** NCCF helps mobilize more than 1,000 people to participate in a public hearing on Atlantic Beach's proposal to build a centralized sewer system and dispose of the waste on Open Grounds Farm. The town decides to stop pursuing the project.



*NCCF prepares for the opening of its new headquarters building in Ocean in 1995.*

# NCCF Timeline

1982

1984

1985

1986

1988

1989

1990

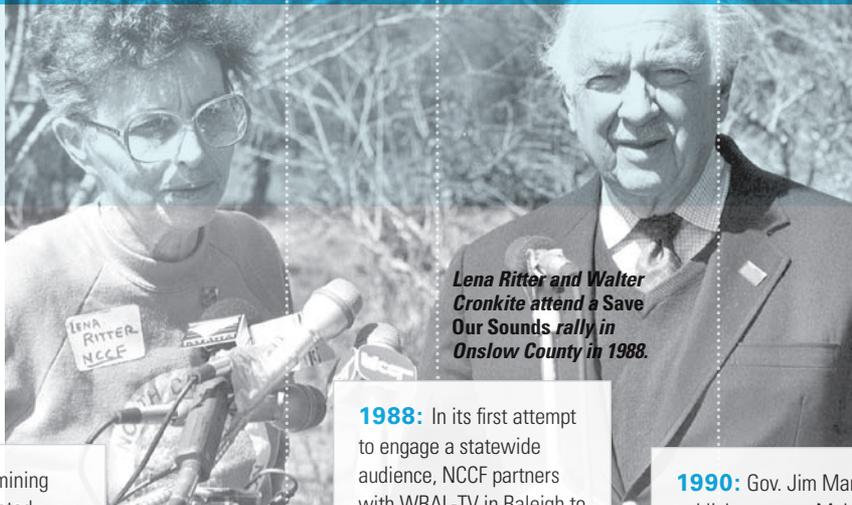
1992

1994

1995

1996

1997



*Lena Ritter and Walter Cronkite attend a Save Our Sounds rally in Onslow County in 1988.*



*NCCF helped a group of citizens save Bird Island in Brunswick County.*

**1984:** The peat mining proposal was defeated. NCCF had worked with fishermen, environmentalists and scientists for two years. The issue gained national attention, including coverage on the *CBS Evening News* and PBS's *MacNeil-Lehrer Report*. NCCF later helped get new rules for peat mining that effectively prohibited large-scale peat mining in the state. The wetlands formerly targeted for peat mining are now mostly preserved as national wildlife refuges.

**1986:** The state finds the money to buy Permuda Island in Onslow County, preventing a massive condominium project. NCCF had worked with residents for two years against the project. Today, Permuda is publicly owned as a natural and historic estuary preserve.

**1988:** In its first attempt to engage a statewide audience, NCCF partners with WRAL-TV in Raleigh to produce *Save Our Sounds* – an educational campaign that includes a book, an award-winning documentary, public-service announcements, weekly news reports and a Coastal Celebration Festival that attracts 10,000 people.

**1990:** Gov. Jim Martin publicly opposes Mobil Oil Corporation's proposal to drill exploratory wells off the N.C. coast. NCCF had helped lead the opposition against the drilling for several years. Martin's opposition was a turning point, and the company would eventually drop its plans to drill off the N.C. coast. NCCF takes a leadership role in the state's designation of 10 percent of coastal waters as Outstanding Resource Waters (ORW) – North Carolina's most protective water quality classification.

**1995:** NCCF works with citizens against a bridge and causeway to Bird Island in Brunswick County that would have supported development on one of the state's last remaining uninhabited barrier islands. The state denies the permit. NCCF opens its headquarters building in Ocean in western Carteret County. | NCCF publishes the first of its annual State of the Coast reports. | NCCF forms a partnership with seven other organizations from across the country to create Restore America's Estuaries, a national coalition with the goal of restoring estuaries nationwide. That partnership begins NCCF's long commitment to restoring degraded coastal habitat in North Carolina.

**1996:** NCCF's environmental education programming blossoms when the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Toyota USA choose NCCF from among 190 conservation groups to launch a new education project named CLEAN (Children Linking the Environment Across the Nation). CLEAN-NC provides canoe field trips, teacher training, curriculum and restoration action projects for middle school children statewide. Over the next decade, tens of thousands of children and adults would take part in NCCF's various educational programs.

**1999:** NCCF helps the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation write a grant to buy Huggins Island, a 110-acre undeveloped island in the mouth of the White Oak River in Onslow County. The state later adds the island to Hammocks Beach State Park. | NCCF's program to preserve estuarine shoreline goes into full swing with plantings and erosion-control projects at the N.C. Maritime Museum in Beaufort, Hammocks Beach State Park in Swansboro and in Long Beach. | NCCF works with Weyerhaeuser to help develop an environmentally friendly subdivision in Pamlico County. Now called River Dunes, the subdivision is under construction and includes strict buffer requirements, no individual boating docks and limits on impervious surfaces.

**2001:** After more than 10 years of work by NCCF and other groups to save one of the state's last pristine barrier islands, the state bought 1,300 acres of Bird Island in Brunswick County and made it part of its coastal reserve program. | In partnership with the Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association, NCCF appealed a state stormwater permit for the South Brunswick Water and Sewer Authority, claiming that the permit won't protect shellfish waters.

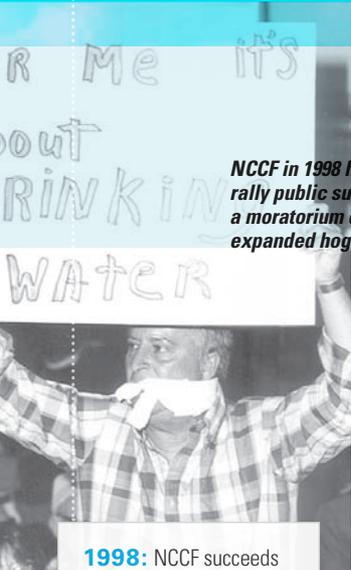
**2003:** In a lawsuit brought by NCCF and another group, a federal judge affirms federal protection of wetlands by ruling that a development company in Onslow County illegally ditched and drained more than 200 acres of wetlands. The developers would eventually agree to restore the ditched wetlands and 15 acres of freshwater wetlands and donate 200 acres of conservation easements. | NCCF begins to actively lobby legislators for stronger coastal environmental protections. It succeeds in getting bills passed that promote more natural shoreline erosion-control projects, prohibits the building of seawalls and other hardened structures along the oceanfront and inlets, and creates an NCCF license plate. | NCCF's education program, in partnership with Progress Energy, creates wetland nurseries at six middle schools and conducts restoration projects at six coastal waterfront sites. The program eventually expands to nine schools and educates more than 250 students a year.

**2005:** NCCF and its partners score more legislative successes: the largest increase in funding for oyster restoration in 30 years, a state commission to explore the possible effects of global warming in North Carolina and to make recommendations to lessen those effects, and a \$100 million appropriation for the N.C. Clean Water Management Trust Fund. | NCCF staff, summer interns and volunteers take almost 400 visitors at Cape Lookout National Seashore on beach and marsh walks in a new education program with Cape Lookout National Seashore and the Carteret County Parks and Recreation Department.



*Increasing stormwater pollution has closed many productive shellfish waters, like these in the White Oak River.*

1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006



*NCCF in 1998 helped rally public support for a moratorium on new or expanded hog farms.*

**1998:** NCCF succeeds in helping to obtain a moratorium on new hog farms and expansion of existing farms in North Carolina. The moratorium is intended to allow time for development of new technology for treating hog waste.

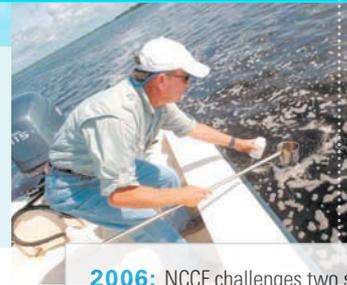


*NCCF was instrumental in persuading the state to pass requirements on the type of sand that can be pumped onto our beaches.*

**2002:** The ShoreKeeper Learning Center opens. Renovations transformed the former electrical contractor building into offices and classrooms for NCCF's growing environmental education program. | NCCF opens a field office in Manteo.

**2000:** NCCF buys 1,981 acres of farmland on the North River in Carteret County with a grant from the N.C. Clean Water Management Trust Fund. The wetlands on the property, which would eventually include almost 5,000 acres, are currently being restored in one the largest wetlands restoration projects in the country. | Along with several other environmental groups, NCCF settles a lawsuit against the state over permits for the Nucor Steel Plant on the Chowan River. The settlement resulted in significant changes in the way the state does business with industry. | The national Water Keeper Alliance grants NCCF approval to license three Coastkeepers, the only organization in the nation to be granted coast-wide licensing. | The N.C. Coastal Resources Commission unanimously approves a 30-foot buffer between development and all coastal waters. NCCF worked for more than four years to promote the new development standard. | NCCF offers first student summer camp, the Student ShoreKeeper Institute, for middle school students from around the state.

**2004:** NCCF hosts "Encore for Oysters," a conference in Morehead City that highlights the plight of the state's oyster population. The conference serves as a public unveiling of an ambitious plan devised by NCCF and others to restore and protect oyster habitat. The N.C. Wildlife Federation gives NCCF the prestigious Governor's Conservation Achievement Award for 2004 Land Conservationist of the Year... Acting on a tip from NCCF's Cape Hatteras Coastkeeper, the N.C. Division of Coastal Management and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers cite the state Department of Transportation for illegally dredging a channel in Currituck County. The case would lead to the resignation and conviction of several DOT employees, including the head of its Ferry Division.



*Mike Giles, NCCF's Cape Fear COASTKEEPER®, take water samples in 2006 after a sewer leak in Wilmington.*

**2006:** NCCF challenges two state stormwater permits, in Dare and Carteret counties, in an attempt stop a permitting program that state regulators admit has failed to protect water quality. | NCCF works with Cedar Point and Wal-Mart on a stormwater plan for the giant retailer's proposed store in the Carteret County town. Wal-Mart volunteers to install a system that will far exceed the state's requirements. | More legislative successes – stiffer fines for violating the Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA), one-year moratorium on new landfills and a study to examine the environmental and social impacts of giant dumps, a tax credit for oyster shells donated to the state, a ban on the disposal of oyster shells in landfills. | Speaking of oysters, NCCF energetically works with volunteers on shell collection from restaurants and to establish public shell drop-off sites. The program has grown from 3,000 bushels of recycled shell in 2003 to more 13,000 bushels in 2006. | NCCF works closely with residents of eastern Carteret County who fear that rapid growth will pollute their waters and threaten their rich maritime culture. A year of public meetings attended by thousands of people forced the county commissioners to pass minimal growth controls.

## Huh? NCCF Often Partners With Developers, Local Governments

BY FRANK TURSI • *Cape Lookout Coastkeeper*

People who know very little about the N.C. Coastal Federation believe they know this: we're a bunch of radical extremists who oppose all growth and development and would like nothing better than to see the entire coast become one big bird sanctuary. That's what some developers on TV say, so it must be true, right?

How, then, do they explain Ed Mitchell's odd notion? "People can take a narrow view of what the agenda of the Coastal Federation may be," he says, "but what I've learned is that they are quite willing to work together with others, to look beyond the traditional mindsets and to form collaborations for the overall good of the environment."

Mitchell is no doe-eyed tree hugger. He's a developer, and heads a company that is building a large waterfront subdivision in Pamlico County. Instead of fighting him, NCCF helped advise Mitchell on ways to develop the property without harming coastal water quality. The resulting River Dunes subdivision now includes environmental protections such as innovative stormwater controls, large waterside buffers and conservation

the subject, and the developer has committed to incorporating some of those ideas into his site plan.

Still not convinced? How about Emerald Isle Woods? That's the name of a new park that's used to treat the stormwater that routinely floods the western end of the beach town on Bogue Banks. A radical, vindictive environmental group might have simply pointed an accusing finger and let the town drown in its own excesses, flooding Bogue Sound with pollutants in the process. Instead, NCCF helped Emerald Isle write a grant proposal that attracted the state money needed to buy the land for the park.

To drive home the now not-too-subtle point that we're anything but anti-growth extremists, we direct your attention to Lowe's Home Improvement Center and Wal-Mart, which are opening stores in two western Carteret County towns. Each will be in the headwaters of polluted creeks. Did we rush to the courthouse to stop them? No. Our actions were less dramatic but could end up better protecting those creeks than any legal remedy could. We worked with each of the towns and with the companies on voluntary stormwater plans that, in each case, exceed state requirements by almost tenfold.

"We recognize that development of our coast is going to happen," notes Todd Miller, NCCF's executive director.

The environment benefits because successful collaborations, such as those with River Dunes and Wal-Mart, offer on-the-ground examples of less-damaging ways to develop coastal land. In return, our partners can often tap into the Federation's expertise in areas such as stormwater control and land-use planning.

As officials in Brunswick County learned, the Federation's well-established reputation with state and federal regulators can also be beneficial to them. NCCF joined with the county and other partners in an EPA-funded project to recommend ways to allow growth along the Lockwood Folly River without destroying the river in the process. It is one of the few relatively undeveloped watersheds in one of the fastest-growing counties in the country.

"We certainly recognized the credibility that the Coastal Federation had regionally, with EPA and with other environmental groups," says Steve Stone, Brunswick's assistant county manager. "We realized that we may differ on tactics but we wanted the same thing. If we had submitted that proposal to EPA on our own, I don't know if we would have gotten it. So right off the bat, the Federation gave us credibility."

Stone concedes that some of his county commissioners were skeptical of the partnership. They, too, apparently had seen the TV reports about an environmental group gone wild. But those doubts gradually dissipated during the two-year project, and the county became an ally on other issues. It supported a landfill moratorium that the Federation successfully pushed in the N.C. General Assembly last year. The county also partnered with neighboring New Hanover County on a project to devise a local ordinance to better control stormwater. NCCF helped get federal money for the project. "I would really like to think that we could expand to other constructive relationships," Stone says.

Mitchell found that working with the Federation is also good for business. Lots in River Dunes start at \$175,000 and top out at \$1 million. Sales, Mitchell said, have been steady, and the first homeowners move in this spring. The "green" development strategies that evolved because of the collaboration with the Federation have been featured in newspapers and magazines.

"You can't do this for every project, but for the larger ones setting good examples is part of doing good business," Mitchell explains. "The planning process with the Coastal Federation expanded to our architecture, our landscaping. It's become a mindset. Our customers appreciate that. Most people want to be involved in something that is well-planned and that protects the natural environment. We've attracted those kinds of people."

What a nutty bunch of radicals we've turned out to be.



**Brunswick County assistant manager, Steve Stone, left, takes part in a boat tour of the Lockwood Folly River.**

areas and a ban on private docks. None would have been required by the state. "Our plan continues to get better every day," Mitchell notes. "Without that collaboration, we would have never known what was possible."

Okay, but that's an aberration, the cynics snort.

Well, what about Bogue Watch? The developer of that subdivision in Carteret County asked the Federation about ways to control stormwater that go beyond state requirements. We put him touch with one of the country's leading experts on

"Preserving water quality has always been our standard, and we will oppose projects that don't meet it. But we've always been willing to work with local governments and developers who sincerely desire to protect our coastal environment."

*"The Coastal Federation has been a real friend to commercial fishing communities, avoiding radical positions that many of its individual members may prefer for a more conciliatory, middle ground to sustain fishing and at the same time protect the environment. That's something the Federation can be proud of." – Charles H. "Pete" Peterson*

*"I have incredible confidence and satisfaction in the Coastal Federation. I think it's one of the best organizations I have ever worked with, not just on the coast but in the 20 plus years I've been in the legislature. I hold you in high regards." – Marc Basnight*



Continued from page 9...

around the coast," Holman said. "You look at North River Farm. That wouldn't have happened without Todd's ability to talk with the landowner. The money was out there but it hinged on Todd's ability to persuade the landowner to sell. That's part of being in a community with people who have good information and pass it on at the right time."

#### ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING

Yes, the Coastal Federation has bought a lot of land. Yes, it has educated thousands of people and restored large expanses of coastal habitat. But it can still get right prickly when it needs to, pushing for tougher enforcement of environmental rules and adequate agency staff to do it and clamoring for better policies to control stormwater or to protect wetlands.

Despite all the changes in the last 25 years, NCCF remains an advocacy group, having been in the thick of almost every environmental policy fight on the coast over the past two decades. As an old hand in these matters, its opinions are certainly listened to and even valued, notes Charles Jones, head of the state's Division of Coastal Management. "The Coastal Federation is a very credible organization that does its homework," he says. "At all levels, the opinion of the Coastal Federation is certainly considered."

Agencies also listen to the Federation because they know what the consequences might be if

Photo above: **Volunteers plant marsh grass as Carteret Community College in Morehead City.**

they don't, says Holman, who once headed the state's Department of Environment and Natural Resources. "I believe state agencies respect and respond to the comments made by the Coastal Federation because the Federation has a long track record of raising issues and will challenge a permit decision if it's dissatisfied," he says.

That influence has lately extended to the Legislative Building in Raleigh where NCCF lobbyists have scored some major successes since 2003. Among the bills that NCCF and its allies promoted and got passed are those that banned the building of seawalls and other hardened structures along the oceanfront and inlets, led to the largest increase in funding for oyster restoration in 30 years and created a state commission to explore the possible effects of global

warming in North Carolina. Other successes include increased fines for violating the Coastal Area Management Act and a one-year moratorium on new mega-landfills so that the state could study their environmental and social impacts.

The emphasis on legislative lobbying runs somewhat counter to the Federation's original philosophy of trying to work with state agencies to strengthen existing programs, Miller says. "That's been a big change in philosophy, partly due to our frustration over the inability of agencies to do their jobs," he explains. "We want to help agencies have both adequate personnel numbers and strong, effective laws to enforce."

Legislators, like heads of state agencies, listen to people they respect, notes Holman, who once was the only environmental lobbyist in the legislature. "Success in the legislature is all about building relationships," he says.

It's also about demonstrating that the Federation can live up to its word and deliver. "Whether it's galvanizing grassroots activism, educating N.C.'s citizens about the coast, restoring fragile resources, or serving as a watchdog for the coast, they get it done," says Rep. Pricey Harrison, a long-time advocate for the environment. "There's nothing else like them in the state."

In the N.C. Senate, cultivating one relationship is particularly important. Marc Basnight, a Manteo Democrat, is the longest-serving president pro tempore the N.C. Senate has ever had. That makes him one of the most influential power brokers in Raleigh. He says he has come to rely on the Federation's clear-headed, honest opinions on coastal environmental issues. "I believe in you," Basnight said. "You've built trust with me. You wouldn't do much with me if you were just a lobbyist."

All of which proves Melvin Shepard's point. A native of Sneads Ferry in Onslow County and the owner of a store that supplies commercial fishermen with nets and other types of gear, Shepard is the longtime president of the Federation's Board of Directors. "Integrity. That's our strongest quality," he says. "It's solid and people everywhere recognize it." □



Photo above: **Ted Wilgis, NCCF's first COASTKEEPER®, monitors water quality in New Hanover County.**  
Photo right: **NCCF preserved Hoop Pole Creek as the last undeveloped shoreline in Atlantic Beach.**

# NCCF Must ‘Bulk Up’ to Meet the Challenges of the Future

That NCCF has grown and matured since its founding 25 years ago is unmistakable. A staff that once consisted of founder Todd Miller and his dog has grown to 16 people (though still only one dog). From a back room in Miller’s house on Bogue Sound, NCCF eventually moved to a spacious headquarters building in Carteret County and formed field offices in Wilmington and Manteo. To press its agenda, NCCF’s focus gradually shifted away from lawsuits and permit challenges and toward education, restoration, land acquisition and legislative lobbying. As one of our long-time observers, Bill Holman, notes, we have become “a full-service environmental group.”

Yes, we have so far held our own, increasing our membership to 8,000 and earning the respect of many state regulators and developers. We have, we like to think, proven influential in preventing the worst kinds of environmental abuses while championing better laws and tougher rules.

Our coast is still relatively pristine and healthy compared to most other coastal areas in the United States. In most North Carolina coastal sounds, rivers and tidal creeks, we can still catch fish and shellfish and eat them without worrying about getting sick. We can still swim on most of our ocean beaches without worrying about pollution and we can still dry off by walking beautiful sandy beaches. There are even good examples of where development, business and industry have respected the natural ability of our coast to assimilate our pollution and are operating in harmony with, and with minimal damage to, our natural ecosystem.

We like to think that we had something to do with all that. We also wonder: will it all be enough?

By all measures, we are on the cusp of another boom.



North Carolina surpassed New Jersey in population last year, and demographers expect the growth to accelerate rapidly as aging baby boomers, with their 401(k)s and love of waterfront views, retire. The population in the coastal counties, according to the forecasts, will approach 1.2 million in 2030, a 43 percent increase since 2000. Four coastal counties are expected to be among the 10-fastest growing in the state.

And we are, let’s face it, the problem. The correlation between people and pollution is clear and undeniable. The more of us, the more of it.



One suspects that Hilton Head, Myrtle Beach, Miami and Ocean City were all once nice places. Will our children add Wilmington, Morehead City and Nags Head to the has-been list?

A recent report by the advocacy group Environment North Carolina begs that question. It noted that the predicted population growth will lead to an explosion of land being converted to development. Most of that land is currently forested or cultivated. More than 207,000 acres in the state’s coastal plain will be converted to development in the next 20 years, the report predicts.

That’s 28 acres a day, or an area about the size of our reserve at Hoop Pole Creek in Atlantic Beach. Poof. Gone each day. An area the size of Swansboro will be developed in 27 days. The area of newly developed land

would equal the size of Morehead City in four months, of Wilmington in 2.5 years, the Croatan National Forest in 15 years and all of Pamlico County in 20 years.

Too many people competing for a finite amount of coastal land and water makes it increasingly difficult to balance all the competing demands. And the folks whom we have always relied upon to stand up for what we cherish most about our coast—the people most closely connected to the coast because it’s part of their heritage, their livelihood or their peace of mind—are finding themselves quickly becoming strangers in a changed land.

The challenges that the Federation will face in the future as the coastal population continues to boom will be daunting, Miller say, but not insurmountable. “There are no silver bullets,” he said. “It will take hard work, and we’ll have to get more people out there.”

The people he’s alluding to are all of you reading this. We have always recognized that while people can be our coast’s worst enemies, people are also our coast’s best friends. We have always done our best work by marshalling the good sense of coastal people and others who love it. Our guiding principle has always been that as long as we respect natural coastal processes and the capacity of land to assimilate our pollution, it is possible to maintain coastal communities that live in harmony with our environment. This has allowed us to connect people with environmental management and stewardship programs in a concrete way. We frequently find that fishermen, farmers, tourists and other ordinary citizens who love our coast but don’t want to love it to death are our most effective advocates for environmental protection.

Expanding the ability of the Federation to harness the clout of people who are already closely connected to our coast is what *Turning the Tide: Campaign for Tomorrow’s Coast* is all about. Over the next five years, this campaign is designed to double the number of people who work with us to protect and restore our coast. This will be done by putting additional resources to work where they are most needed—in the coastal communities from Calabash to Currituck.

Our goal is ambitious. We will turn the tide on coastal pollution and degradation by investing additional resources in the northern, central and southern areas of

*There are few conservation groups that compare with the NC Coastal Federation in effectiveness and impact. Their secret is a combination of inspired leadership, creative and resourceful programs and, above all, an unusually large and diverse membership. To appreciate their legacy, try to imagine what the NC coastal region would be like today without the efforts of the NC Coastal Federation during the last 25 years. – Joseph Kilpatrick*

our coast. This investment will be made over a five-year period, and is designed to become self-sustaining as we engage more people and paying members in our work. It will take a doubling of our membership to sustain the increased capacity we will be developing.

Each of our three regional offices—in Dare, Carteret and New Hanover counties—will be restructured to offer similar programs that combine our environmental advocacy, restoration, preservation and education work. Each regional staff will be comprised of a Coastkeeper, a specialist in habitat restoration and an environmental educator. These offices will work to see that people are engaged in decisions that affect environmental management and provide opportunities for hands-on work to restore degraded habitats and to learn about environmental issues and resources through field activities and restoration work.

We will continue to acquire key lands that will protect and restore water quality and fish and shellfish resources. To help our staff pursue these activities, we will also structure our board committees around our regional offices and their needs.

The central regional office will still be at our headquarters in Carteret County. At headquarters we will

have two staff teams that provide support to our regional operations. One of these teams will coordinate our lobbying efforts and the technical services that our regional offices will need to translate their work at the local level so that it benefits coastal management efforts throughout the coast.

This team will include our experienced legislative lobbyist, land-use planners, writers and conference organizers. A second team will handle the organizational development and business functions of the Federation—providing for the membership services, fund raising, communications and organizational needs of all three regional offices.

The hard work and commitment of the Federation and its supporters has done a lot of good on the coast. To maintain the coast we

love in the face of growing pressures, it’s going to take a lot more work and dedication over the next 25 years and more. With your help and the help of others like you, we’ll meet the challenge and be able to enjoy our coast well into the future, and our children and grandchildren will, too. □



## Goals of the Campaign

**Program Goal:** Bring back functioning coastal ecosystems so that they are healthy and productive.

- Expand the number of restoration projects conducted coast-wide
- Expand the land-acquisition program of prioritized areas for preservation and restoration along the N.C. coast
- Engage more people in coastal management and restoration and protection efforts

We will do this by developing three fully staffed field offices

in the Cape Hatteras, Cape Lookout and Cape Fear regions. To accomplish this level of staffing, we will need to:

- Hire professional education and outreach staff for the Wilmington and Manteo field offices
- Implement environmental education programs at the Wilmington and Manteo field offices
- Hire a habitat restoration specialist for the Manteo field office.
- Establish a public field office in Manteo
- Organize three board committees around the field offices.

**Program Goal:** Double our membership through a stronger regional presence so that field offices are self-sustaining after five years.

We will accomplish this by taking the following steps:

- Engage all NCCF staff in outreach and membership recruitment
- Hire a membership director for our headquarters office to service membership and coordinate continued membership expansion in the regional offices
- Increase visibility of NCCF statewide

# 2006 Pelican Awards

## Lifetime Achievement

Derb S. Carter, Jr.

## Legislator of the Year

Sen. Dan Clodfelter

## Business of the Year

**Northern Coast:**

Albatross Fleet

**Central Coast:**

Emerald Isle Realty

**Southern Coast:**

Heck of a Peck Restaurant

## State Government Official

Charles Jones

## Local Governments

**Northern Coast:**

Columbia and Tyrrell County

**Central Coast:**

Cedar Point

**Southern Coast:**

New Hanover County Soil and Water District

## Citizen Action

**Northern Coast:**

Manns Harbor Zoning Committee

**Central Coast:**

Elmer Eddy

**Southern Coast:**

PenderWatch and Conservancy

## Environmental Education

**Northern Coast:**

Manteo Middle School Rain Garden

**Central Coast:**

Sheila Moore, Croatan High School

**Southern Coast:**

Brian Bishop and Ashley High Science Club

## NCCF Volunteers of the Year

**Northern Coast:**

Steve Downing

**Central Coast:**

Jack Cleaves

**Southern Coast:**

George Daly

## Conservation & Restoration Project

**Northern Coast:**

Sonny and Doris Van Dorpe

**Central Coast:**

Wildlife Resources Commission

**Southern Coast:**

Airlie Gardens

*The Pelican Awards recognize the effective work of citizens, government officials, legislators, non-profit corporations, educators and businesses to improve environmental quality on the N.C. coast. These award winners have demonstrated exemplary commitment and undertaken meaningful actions to protect and restore our coast in 2006.*

*Congratulations to all.*

## Lifetime Achievement

**Derb Carter** has spent his life looking after the environment of North Carolina. A lawyer and native of Fayetteville, N.C., Derb has been on the forefront of the movement to protect the state's environment for more than 25 years.

Few people know that Derb was a key player in helping to form the N.C. Coastal Federation. He drafted our Articles of Incorporation and successfully applied for our non-profit status. Derb accompanied Todd Miller, NCCF's founder and executive director, to Winston-Salem in 1982 to visit the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation and successfully helped NCCF secure its first grant (\$20,000) to work on preventing peat mining on the Albemarle-Pamlico peninsula.

Derb's strategic and legal advice combined with the federation's grassroots organizing stopped plans to strip mine 120,000 acres of peat on the peninsula. Most of the land targeted for mining is now protected as national wildlife refuges.

Beyond providing NCCF with legal guidance, Derb helped steer the Federation through just about every major policy issue we've tackled, including siting marinas, stormwater regulations and the designation of Outstanding Resource Waters.

NCCF hasn't been the only benefactor of Derb's expertise and passion for the environment. He served as director of the National Wildlife Federation's southeastern office in Raleigh and also did the extensive groundwork that led Environmental Defense and the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) to establish branches in North Carolina. Derb eventually went to work full-time for the SELC, and now serves as its director in North Carolina.

An avid birder, Derb has a keen sense for devising strategies that will successfully protect the environment. There have been few environmental victories in North Carolina during the past 25 years in which he hasn't played a key role. Through it all he's kept his sense of humor and the cooperative spirit essential to successfully working in diverse coalitions of interests--ranging from commercial



**Derb Carter**

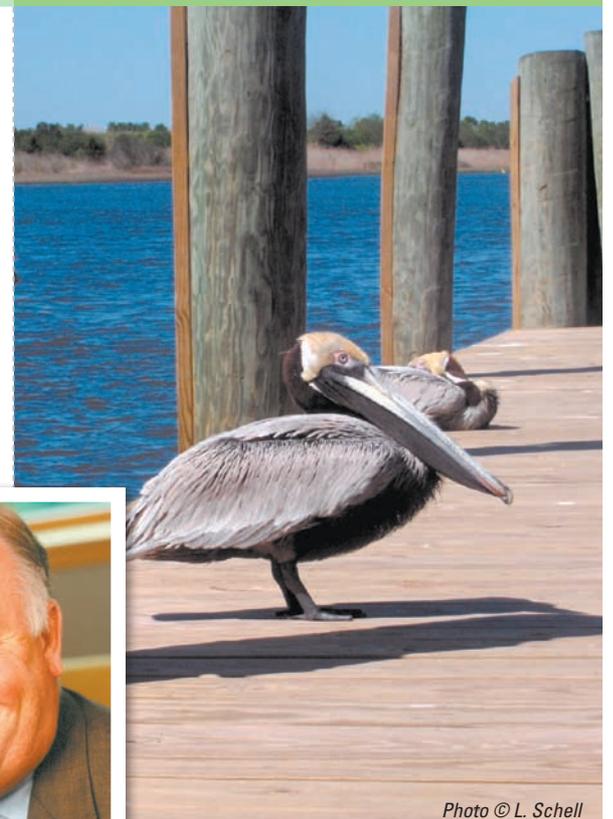


Photo © L. Schell

and recreational fishermen and farmers to retirees and just plain citizens.

Derb is one of the country's leading wetlands lawyers and received the 2000 National Wetlands Award from the Environmental Law Institute. He was also recognized by the NC Wildlife Federation as North Carolina's 2004 Conservationist of the Year in the Governor's Conservation Achievement Awards.

## Legislator of the Year

**Sen. Daniel G. Clodfelter** is a natural politician. He's smart, savvy and a strong advocate for the issues he becomes involved in. Clodfelter is an attorney who represents portions of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County in the state Senate. He also serves as a trustee of the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and co-chair of the legislative Environmental Review Commission.

In 2006, Clodfelter instructed legislative staff to find a compromise between the Environmental Management Commission's Phase II Stormwater rules and a temporary stop-gap law passed in 2004. He sponsored the compromise Stormwater Management 2007 legislation and ushered it through the General Assembly. The 2006 law requires development in 24 rapidly growing counties to apply for stormwater permits and, most importantly, incorporates effective stormwater controls for shellfishing waters.

## Business of the Year

**NORTHERN COAST:** There are certainly faster sports fishing boats on the Outer Banks. But none have the long history of the Albatross, the boat that brought charter fishing to Cape Hatteras in 1937. And few business owners work as hard as Ernie and Lynne Foster to ensure that the rich fishing culture of

Cape Hatteras lives on. The Fosters, owners of the **Albatross Fleet**, were instrumental in starting 'Day at the Docks,' an annual festival celebrating the Cape's fishing and fishermen. Ernie served on the N.C. Legislature's Waterfront Access Study Committee. And when it comes to development issues, he is known as a voice of reason and moderation. Ernie also serves on the NCCF Board of Directors.

**CENTRAL COAST:** Being kind to the environment is more than a family tradition; it's a business practice at **Emerald Isle Realty**. Over the years, owner Julia Batten Wax and the company's staff have helped coastal visitors appreciate the importance of our coast's natural resources by sponsoring NCCF publications, events and membership promotions, and initiating a matching donation program for vacation rentals. When Julia and husband Mark built a new home on the island they called on NCCF for advice and kept their shoreline natural, helping to protect Bogue Sound water quality. Julia also served on the N.C. Legislature's Waterfront Access Study Committee. One of the Federation's first and most loyal business members, Emerald Isle Realty understands the connection between environmental protection and good business.



Julia Batten Wax



Bob Rivenbark of Heck of a Peck Oyster Bar

**SOUTHERN COAST:** Bob Rivenbark grew up loving North Carolina oysters, and eventually he opened up his own restaurant, **Heck of a Peck Oyster Bar** in Wilmington. He soon discovered it was hard to find a steady supply of high-quality local oysters. He had to rely on out-of-state suppliers, and this led him to look for ways to help restore his favorite oysters. When approached by the Division of Marine Fisheries in 2004, Bob didn't hesitate to be one of the first restaurants statewide to join the oyster shell-recycling program. He started donating his shells so that they could be used to restore oyster reefs. To date he's donated over 2,500 bushels of oyster shells.

### State Government

**Charles S. Jones** began his career with the N.C. Division of Coastal Management in 1978 as a field consultant. He climbed the ladder to become the district manager of the Morehead City



A commercial fisherman strings nets at the Day of the Docks celebration on Hatteras Island.

office in 1986, assistant director for permitting and enforcement in 1997 and division director in 2004. As Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Bill Ross put it "Charles' 29-year career with the division has been marked by his love for the North Carolina coast; his expertise in planning, regulatory and resource management matters; his superb people skills; and his rock-solid commitment to the mission of the division and the department." We agree. He retired this spring.

### Local Governments

**NORTHERN COAST:** How do you promote economic development in a place where 80 percent of the land area is wetlands? For the past decade officials in **Tyrrell** County and **Columbia** have worked together to attract development that will protect the region's wetlands and waters. Tyrrell County formally

adopted ecotourism as an economic development strategy and formed the Tyrrell County Ecotourism Committee, the first of its kind to promote and protect the county's vast natural resources through tourism. Columbia officials recently received a Small Town Economic Prosperity grant from the N.C. Rural Economic Development Center so they can chart a future using smart growth initiatives. In fact, the motto for the local Chamber of Commerce is "People and nature working in harmony."

**CENTRAL COAST:** On a peninsula in western Carteret County and surrounded on three sides by shellfish waters, officials in the **Cedar Point** worked diligently in 2006 to protect local water quality. Cedar Point formed a partnership with NCCF and several state agencies in a two-year federally funded project to find the bacteria sources in four watersheds in the river and recommend ways to eliminate or reduce them. Cedar Point's Planning Board and Town Council realized that the runoff from a proposed Wal-Mart could undo the project's benefits. They refused to approve the Wal-Mart site plan without stringent controls on stormwater. The company readily agreed and devised a plan that its engineers say will contain as much as 10 inches of rain in 24 hours. The state would have required that the development hold merely 1.5 inches.

**SOUTHERN COAST: The New Hanover Soil and Water Conservation District** administers the Lower Cape Fear Stewardship Development Award Program, which recognizes development projects in the region that demonstrate outstanding environmental stewardship through the protection, conservation and improvement of our natural resources. The program is recognized by Brunswick, New Hanover and Pender counties,

all three Soil and Water Districts, the City of Wilmington, UNCW, Wilmington-Cape Fear Home Builders Association and the Wilmington Regional Association of Realtors. Now in its third year, this outstanding program has helped promote the value of developing the "right way," both economically and environmentally.



Elmer Eddy

with the threat of development that didn't fit with the village's traditional fishing culture, residents put together the **Manns Harbor Zoning Committee** to tackle the sticky issue of writing a zoning plan. And that's not all. When a development corporation asked the NC Department of Transportation to realign Highway 64 so it would have room to build houses on a marginal piece of land, the group traveled to Raleigh to protest. The DOT board listened; the developer's request was denied.

**CENTRAL COAST:** Since moving to Swansboro in 2000 to be closer to the grandkids, **Elmer Eddy** has acquired something of a reputation. "Trash Man of the White Oak," they call him. You can

### Citizen Action

#### NORTHERN COAST:

A few years ago the idea of zoning in small coastal communities like Manns Harbor was, well, pie-in-the-sky. But faced

*"Ya'll's purpose is to stir people's emotions. You don't get that by saying poetry. Human nature is human nature and sometimes harsh things were said. But you've worked hard to try understand where everybody is coming from, that there are two sides to every issue. The Coastal Federation has mellowed to looking at both of those sides." - Charles Jones*

find Elmer and his small band of volunteers out on the water most weeks picking up. "We'll do every foot of shoreline in the White Oak River basin. That's our goal," he says.

To meet that lofty mission, Elmer and his Stewards of the White Oak River Basin paddle about twice a week. "That gives us the most satisfaction, to leave the place clean after we've gone through. That milk jug or white Clorox bottle ruins the picture. They're like a slash in a Rembrandt," Elmer explains.

**SOUTHERN COAST:** Founded in 1986 by a small group of concerned citizens, **PenderWatch & Conservancy** is a grassroots non-profit conservation group dedicated to the preservation and conservation of the environment in eastern Pender County. In 2006 members of PenderWatch worked with the state and NCCF to expand the oyster shell-recycling program to three drop off sites located in Hampstead and Surf City. Dedicated members use their own vehicles and equipment to "ferry" the recycled shell to a stockpile site. PenderWatch stay active in local government, attending planning board and county commission meetings and providing critical review and comments on development plans that help shape the future of Pender County.

## Environmental Education

**NORTHERN COAST:** Thanks to 80 middle school students, 30 NCCF volunteers and more than 800 native trees, shrubs and perennials, two barren retention basins at the new **Manteo Middle School** were transformed into flourishing rain gardens. Katherine Mitchell, a horticulturalist at the N.C. Aquarium in Manteo, helped design and plant an oasis of coastal native plants, and science teachers Marlene Stalls and Mary Ann Hodges taught students how the plants in the rain gardens will help filter pollutants that would otherwise flow into nearby waters. Exploring these outdoor classrooms will enhance science, math and art classes alike and serve as a working example of stormwater management for Outer Banks residents. The project was funded by a grant from the Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Program.

**CENTRAL COAST:** A teacher for more than 30 years, **Sheila Moore** recognizes the importance of offering hands-on experiences to her students. Sheila is an earth and marine science teacher at Croatan High School in Carteret County. Her class has volunteered more than 500 hours by monitoring NCCF's oyster reef and shoreline restoration projects all over the county. They also have filled hundreds of oyster bags used in restoration events along the entire N.C. coast. Last year, Sheila and a group of students attended a legislative oyster roast in Raleigh, describing student involvement in environmental restoration projects to legislators and state officials.

**SOUTHERN COAST:** Oyster shell recycling is taking off in New Hanover County. **Bryan Bishop**, a biology and earth science teacher at Eugene Ashley High School, decided to link his classroom studies to NCCF's efforts to get oyster shells back into local waters. Bryan and the **Ashley High School Science Club** students collected oyster shells from local seafood markets and restaurants and dropped them off at the N.C. Division of Marine



**George Daly at his favorite occupation – shoveling oyster shells**

**Don Ellison, PenderWatch president, and board member Jack Spruill talk about shell recycling with Teresa Morgan, co-owner of Ace Hardware in Hampstead, at the store sponsored recycling site. Co-owner Tommy Reeves is not pictured.**

Fisheries shell collection site. The science club has also done extensive research on oysters and presented their report to the National Student Summit on Oceans and Coasts in Washington.

## NCCF Volunteers of the Year

**NORTHERN COAST - Steve Downing** is an enthusiastic and capable volunteer who took NCCF's Coastkeeping Captain course in the spring of 2005. Since then Steve has become an integral part of NCCF's northern coastal program. He led the sampling team for what turned out to be the most polluted stormwater outfall in the northeast during NCCF's 2006 coast-wide study. He participated in the 2006 Oyster Forum in Manteo, helped plant the rain garden at Manteo Middle School, and has volunteered to help build a boardwalk across the largest garden. According to Cape Hatteras COASTKEEPER® Jan DeBlieu, "I can't think of a time when I've asked Steve to help that he's turned me down." Steve lives in Nags Head with his wife, Sarah.

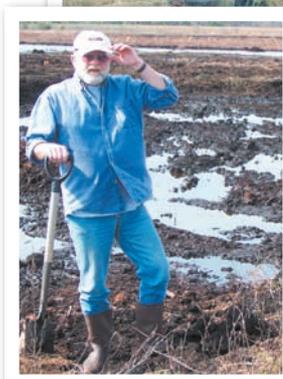


**Steve Downing**

**CENTRAL COAST - Jack Cleaves** has been a Coastal Federation volunteer since 2005 and has donated almost 100 hours of his time to oyster and shoreline restoration, mailings, festivals and more. In 2006, Jack volunteered for eleven different Coastal Federation events. He's pruned trees for us, bagged oysters,



**School children plant trees to create a rain garden at Manteo Middle School. (above) Jack Cleaves plants trees at North River Farm. (left)**



planted marsh grass, taken water samples, helped at festivals, and stuffed envelopes. "He attends every event with enthusiasm and a smile

and is always willing to work longer to see a project through to completion," said Rachael Carlye, NCCF's director of operations.

**SOUTHERN COAST:** In 2006 the Coastal Federation worked with the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries to greatly expand its oyster-shell recycling efforts as part of the overall state initiative and legislative action. To accomplish this effort volunteers are needed to pick up shell from restaurants and drop-off sites. **George Daly** is a member of the Coastal Conservation Association and Fish for

*"The thing impresses me most about NCCF is the breadth of its influence and reach at all levels. Whether it's galvanizing grassroots activism, educating NC's citizens about the coast, protecting fragile resources, or serving as a watchdog for the coast, they get it done. There's nothing else like it in the state." – Pricey Harrison*

Tomorrow, and a Wilmington resident area for more than 25 years. Mike Giles, NCCF's Cape Fear COASTKEEPER® said, "George is an avid fisherman and instantly recognized the connection between a healthy oyster population and his favorite pastime." His previous volunteer work included monitoring turtle nests on Lea Island for over six years. He looks forward to assisting with reef construction and monitoring activities at NCCF's oyster reef restoration sites in the year ahead.

## Conservation or Restoration Projects

### NORTHERN COAST: Doris Van Dorpe

learned about NCCF in early 2005, when she and a friend signed up to take the Coastkeeper Captain course in Manteo. A year later Doris and her husband, **Sonny**, decided they wanted to preserve most of their 178 acres on the Scuppernong River. NCCF staff worked with the couple to craft a conservation easement that allows them to keep to keep two houses and a business on the property, but that permanently



**Bryan Bishop**



**Volunteers hoist bags of oyster shells to build an oyster reef at Arlie Gardens.**

protects the deep swamp forests and stands of pine from development and logging. The Van Dorpes own Diamondite Rotary Tools, which manufactures parts for building airplane engines. NCCF holds the conservation easement.

**CENTRAL COAST:** When it comes to acquiring and protecting land, the **N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission** has a different approach. The Commission's willingness to take on the perpetual management of public lands stems from its understanding that it should protect as much land as possible while the land is still available for protection.

Working directly with the NCCF in 2006, the Commission agreed to take on management responsibilities for two important properties, the Quaternary Tract and Huggins Farm along the White Oak River covering more than 2,100 acres. These riverfront parcels were originally purchased through grants from the N.C. Clean Water Management Trust Fund and will be a huge public asset for sportsman and outdoor enthusiasts.

**SOUTHERN COAST:** In 1999, New Hanover County purchased the **Airlie Gardens**, a 67-acre public garden, habitat and watershed improvement site, with support from the Clean Water Management Trust Fund, the County Commissioners and local residents. During 2006 and 2007, Airlie Gardens formed a partnership with NCCF and NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program to restore oyster reef and marsh habitat along 400' of the garden shoreline along Bradley Creek. Airlie has also provided coordination, staff assistance and the facilities for community oyster bagging events, in support of the restoration of a three-acre oyster reef in Myrtle Grove Sound. Airlie has also established a community oyster shell drop-off station, and they have hosted a speaker series on NC's oyster protection and restoration efforts. □

## continued from page 3... NCCF'S SUCCESS HINGES ON MARSHALLING THE GOOD SENSE OF COASTAL PEOPLE

to the environment don't materialize simply because the safeguards we have in place worked. And when laws, rules, permits and public persuasion all fail, lawsuits based upon an extensive public record are always more effective than last-minute legal actions.

**Finally, have faith our system can work, that it can protect the environment.** In most cases it works well if used the way it's designed. This means that lots of people must participate in government decision-making since that's what makes our democratic system of government tick. Good scientific, legal and technical support is important to our work, but public involvement and support are essential. We must always engage as many people as possible so that government works for us and not special interests.

Public involvement is so critical to successful efforts to protect our coast, and I'm constantly energized by the goodwill and talents that so many people bring to our efforts. Time and again folks from all walks of life step forward and do their part to help. This includes our board of directors, staff and members who constantly find creative ways to give of themselves that far exceed ordinary expectations. The synergy that results from all these individual contributions is a powerful and unstoppable force. Without it, the Federation would accomplish little, and the coast would be a dull and disappointing place.

People engage in our work for two simple reasons—

they love the coast and they don't want to love it to death. You can't stereotype folks who work with us. Some simply like to walk the beach and watch birds, others fish and hunt, some own and develop property, and others depend on the water or land for their livelihoods. Our programs give opportunities for all these diverse people to become engaged in giving something back to the coast they cherish. Some get their hands dirty doing environmental restoration, others lobby for more effective laws and rules, and still others review permit requests. Some contribute by developing land in more sustainable ways, and many are happy to help educate and recruit other people to become more engaged in our work.

This public engagement is our most powerful force in protecting our coast. Back in 1986 we invited an environmental advocate from Rhode Island to be a guest speaker at the first meeting for the EPA-funded Albemarle-Pamlico Estuary Study. She was completely awestruck that 600 people would turn out on a Saturday morning for such an event. That's because in North Carolina, protecting the coastal environment isn't an abstract goodwill issue, it's about protecting and maintaining something that's vital to our way of life.

This report explains how over the years the Federation has evolved and what lessons we've learned from these experiences. New programs have been added, tactics have changed and matured, and the people working

with us have expanded in number. The one constant is our emphasis on harnessing the energy of people who want to do something good for the coast. Focusing that interest in ways that result in better decision-making is always our biggest challenge and opportunity. It's easy to get impatient and lose confidence that people will make better decisions once informed and engaged. When we take shortcuts and don't put the effort into informing and engaging more people to participate, the results are predictably disappointing.

The Federation is preparing itself for the next 25 years by undertaking a Friends of the Coast campaign that is focused on expanding our capacity to do what we do best—connect people with decisions that are made every day so that they can help decide the future health of our coast. You'll read in this report how we're putting more boots on the ground in places that need extra attention. This will expand our ability to be an even more effective catalyst to engage citizens in coastal management decisions.

We continue to find many new friends as we reach out for help. It turns out there are a lot of people who want to be spoiled by the coast and not vice versa. Their willingness to help safeguard the coast is directly proportional to how much there is to lose if the work of the Federation is not successful. As long as our coast remains a wonderful place, there's plenty of help and work to keep the Federation busy for the next 25 years. □

## North Carolina Coastal Federation

3609 Highway 24 (Ocean)  
 Newport, North Carolina 28570  
 252.393.8185  
 www.nccoast.org



 Please recycle.



## Join The North Carolina Coastal Federation Today

### Your membership donation will be used to:

- Restore degraded coastal shorelines, wetlands and habitats
- Educate students about marine ecosystems and what they can do to keep them healthy
- Protect valuable shellfish waters
- Encourage good environmental rules and laws and their enforcement
- Educate decision makers about better ways to protect natural resources
- Purchase and protect land that is critical to water quality
- Engage the public in projects and activities that restore and protect the coast
- Help Keep the North Carolina Coast a spectacular place for future generations

### While your contribution is hard at work for the Coast, you can enjoy these member benefits:

- Annual *State of the Coast* Report
- Discounts on events and workshops
- Members' Preview of annual native plant sale
- Quarterly newsletters
- Discounts in the Nature Shop
- Checkout privileges in the NCCF library
- Action Alerts



\* Buy the NCCF license plate and support our coast! \*  
[WWW.NCDOT.ORG/DMV](http://WWW.NCDOT.ORG/DMV)

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Yes, I want to help protect and restore our coast. Please enter my membership in the North Carolina Coastal Federation today.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Individuals or Families  \$35  \$50  \$100  \$250  \$500  \$1,000

Businesses, Groups & Organizations  \$50  \$100  \$250  \$500  \$1,000

Additional benefits: \$100 level – NCCF hat; \$250 level – NCCF shirt and hat; \$500 level - NCCF hat and shirt and listing in NCCF's Annual Report; \$1,000 level – NCCF hat and shirt, listing in Annual Report and invitation to a private NCCF event.

Please make your check payable to NCCF and mail with this form to 3609 Highway 24 (Ocean) Newport, NC 28570 or complete the credit card information:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Card:  Visa  MC  Am Exp.  Discover

Credit Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Expir. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Membership fees minus the value of benefits received are tax-deductible. Fair market value of benefits are: \$35-\$50 level: 0; \$100 level - \$10; \$250 level - \$20; \$500 level - \$25; \$1,000 level - \$50.

Check here if you wish to waive benefits and receive the maximum deduction.