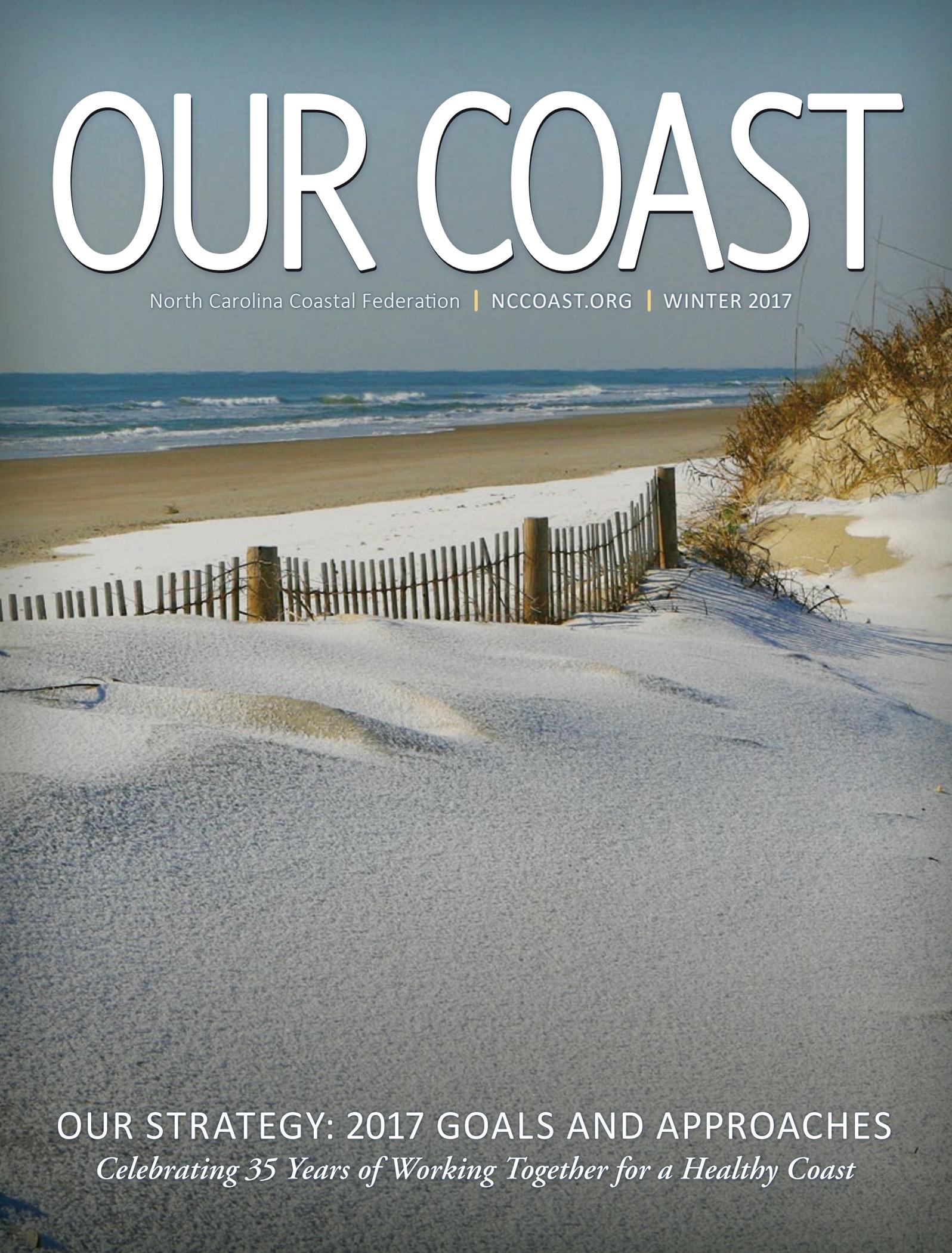


# OUR COAST

A coastal landscape featuring a sandy beach, a wooden fence, and the ocean under a clear sky. The foreground is dominated by a large, smooth sand dune. A wooden fence made of vertical posts and horizontal rails runs across the middle ground, separating the dune from the beach. The beach is wide and sandy, leading to the ocean with gentle waves. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

North Carolina Coastal Federation | [NCCOAST.ORG](http://NCCOAST.ORG) | WINTER 2017

OUR STRATEGY: 2017 GOALS AND APPROACHES  
*Celebrating 35 Years of Working Together for a Healthy Coast*



Photo by Vance Miller

**Dear Coastal Federation supporter,**

This past fall I enjoyed some spectacular days along our coast. Getting out on the water on my boat, catching fish and soaking in the beauty of our beaches and estuaries helps keep me motivated and inspired. It's a formula for renewal and inspiration that has worked since 1982 as I've had the pleasure to serve as the executive director of the North Carolina Coastal Federation.

There is nothing that beats watching the sunrise at Cape Lookout while catching trout, red drum, flounder, bluefish and false albacore. And where else except at Shackleford Banks can you run your boat along 13 miles of undeveloped beach and see only wild horses, as well as thousands of waterbirds and even a bald eagle? Just offshore, there are thousands of bottlenose dolphins, and in the past two months I've watched several humpback whales — one of which constantly breached and fed on menhaden.

As we embark on our 35th year of work

at the Coastal Federation, I'm constantly reminded that our coast is special and deserving of enduring passion to protect and restore it. But without your support, it would be impossible for us to do our jobs.

No one here at the Coastal Federation takes member support for granted. We try hard to live up to your expectations. Every donation carries with it a serious responsibility to be used both effectively and efficiently. I am proud that our work reflects that responsibility.

Our staff and board have devised a thorough and aggressive agenda for the next three years. You will find descriptions of our 10 goals and many planned actions within this newsletter. This work fully taps into all of our staff talents, volunteer resources and operating funds to protect and restore the coast.

Work to safeguard and improve water quality, fisheries habitats and public access, as well as to promote a better environment and economy in our 20

coastal counties, is paying big dividends for our coastal residents and visitors — and for fish and wildlife.

Like you, we've seen other coastal areas around this nation and world degraded and squandered by shortsighted land- and water-use decisions. While the North Carolina coast has some blemishes, it is relatively healthy and productive compared to many coastlines elsewhere. Our work is designed to keep it that way by making sure that people like you are fully engaged in our coast's stewardship.

Your support is vital as we undertake an agenda that's ambitious, but viable. Feel free to get in touch if you have questions or suggestions about our strategies for 2017.

Above all, thank you for your ongoing membership.

With best regards

— Todd Miller, *Executive Director*



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# The North Carolina Coastal Federation; 1982-2017

BY GLENN BLACKBURN

Since 1982 the Coastal Federation has grown into an extremely influential organization.

Thirty-five years ago, its office was a back bedroom in Todd Miller's house on Bogue Sound. Todd and in his words "... and my dog Kwawk" were the only employees. Membership cost \$5.

The headquarters is now a comfortable old building in the community of Ocean between Swansboro and Morehead City. Two regional offices are also located in Wrightsville Beach and Wanchese. There are over 16,000 members and supporters, over 30 staff members and a multimillion-dollar annual budget.

Todd remains executive director.

Throughout its history the Coastal Federation focused on two very different kinds of actions. One is supporting and guiding local groups involved in public debates over important environmental issues. The other is hands-on education and habitat restoration that is fundamental to the long-term health of the coast.

Five significant environmental victories help illustrate the influence of the Coastal Federation and how it works with coastal residents and visitors to protect and restore the coast.

Between 1982 and 1984, Todd and volunteers worked with watermen on the Albemarle-Pamlico peninsula to successfully block a proposed peat mine operation that would have destroyed 120,000 acres of wetlands and polluted fishing waters. From 1983 to 1987 the Coastal Federation partnered with the Stump Sound fishermen led by Lena Ritter to stop a proposed condominium development on Permuda Island that would have severely polluted Stump Sound. Then the Coastal Federation partnered from 1992 to 2002 with the Bird Island Preservation Society to conserve Bird Island near Sunset Beach.

This century, the Coastal Federation allied with Cape Fear Citizens for a Safe Environment from 2003 to 2007 to get new solid waste legislation approved by the state government and thereby block a large landfill proposed for Navassa, a small African-American community near Wilmington. Most recently the Coastal Federation partnered from 2008 to 2016 with several large groups of residents in and around Wilmington to prevent a Greek-owned corporation named Titan America from building a huge Portland Cement manufacturing plant that would have polluted air and water and destroyed thousands of acres of wetlands. (I am nearing completion of a book on the history of these public policy debates. Much of the book is based on interviews with the people involved.)

Beyond these specific accomplishments, since the mid-1980s the



*Lena Ritter, former president of the Coastal Federation's board of directors, was instrumental in protecting Stump Sound.*

Coastal Federation has negotiated to improve coastal management laws, rules and permits. This includes leading the push to protect coastal waters from polluted stormwater runoff. In recent years, the Coastal Federation has encouraged low-impact development that helps developers and homeowners minimize polluted runoff.

Today three coastal educators work with schools to teach students about hydrology and help them build rain gardens. In addition, three restoration scientists are on the staff. A wetlands restoration project covering more than 5,000 acres in Carteret County is nearing completion. A large hydrologic and wetlands restoration project in Hyde County is underway and will go on for years. A large oyster restoration project was completed a few years ago and another is ready to start. And dozens of living shoreline and stormwater retrofit projects have been carried out over the last two decades.

While advocacy, education and restoration continue to be the points of emphasis in the Coastal Federation's work, it now operates an award-winning coastal news service — Coastal Review Online — that belongs to the N.C. Press Association. The news service reports on coastal issues and concerns and produces hundreds of articles each year.

"It would be wonderful if we could work ourselves out of a job," says Todd. "However, that isn't ever likely to happen. The more we do, the more opportunities we see to protect and restore our coast."

*Glenn Blackburn, Professor Emeritus of History, University of Virginia's College at Wise. He is writing a history of the Coastal Federation based upon hundreds of interviews he has conducted with people who have been touched by the organization's work. Those interviews are on file at the UNC-Wilmington Randall Library as part of a special collection of Coastal Federation papers.*

## Coastal Economic Summit to be held March 22-23 in Raleigh

Investments in coastal habitat preservation, restoration and shellfish mariculture can help increase and protect the long-term economic prosperity of North Carolina's coastal communities. This will be the topic of a professional two-day summit organized by the North Carolina Coastal Federation in March.

Titled *Sound Economic Development: Creating a Rising Economic Tide for the North Carolina Coast*, the summit will convene elected and appointed officials, academia, businesses and other stakeholders to discuss and learn about opportunities for oyster and coastal environmental restoration as an economic development strategy for North Carolina. The recently-developed *Strategic Plan for Creating a Robust Coastal Economy with Coastal Restoration* will be presented at the event. This plan outlines an economic development strategy for the coast that:

- Builds upon and enhances the state's coastal environmental assets,
- Provides sustainable and improved economic opportunities and quality of life, and
- Ensures the sustainability of our coastal ecosystems, economies and communities.

An oyster reception and professional exhibits for lawmakers and summit participants will be held on Wednesday, March 22, as part of the event.

Visit [nccoast.org/economicsummit](http://nccoast.org/economicsummit) for registration information and a full agenda that includes a complete list of distinguished presenters from North Carolina, Virginia and Maryland.

## Meet our new board members

Working with fellow directors and staff, the North Carolina Coastal Federation's board of directors ensures effective and fiscally sound programs and operations by providing leadership, accountability, advice and direction. In November, the Coastal Federation elected three new members to the board — Carmen Hooker Odom, Tom Looney and Bill Smyth. For a complete list of board members visit [www.nccoast.org](http://www.nccoast.org).

### Tom Looney

#### WRIGHTSVILLE BEACH

Tom recently retired as vice president and general manager at Lenovo North America. Prior to that he spent 30 years with IBM in various leadership roles. He is currently chairman of the board of trustees for Wake Technical Community College and on the boards of the North Carolina School of Science and Math and of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina. He is a member of the President's Council and has been a volunteer for the Coastal Federation for 20 years. He grew up fishing and clamming in the waters off Long Island. He currently resides in Cary and Wrightsville Beach and is committed to protecting and preserving our coastal assets.



### Carmen Hooker Odom

#### MANTEO

Carmen Hooker Odom is self-employed as a health policy adviser. From 2007 to 2013, Hooker Odom served as president of the Milbank Memorial Fund, a New York-based foundation that conducts nonpartisan analysis, study and research on significant issues in health policy. Before joining the fund, she was appointed secretary of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services by Gov. Mike Easley in January 2001. Before



her appointment, she served as vice president of government relations for Quintiles Transnational Corporation in Research Triangle Park and as the group vice president for Carolinas HealthCare System (CHS). She is also an adjunct professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's School of Public Health. Before moving to North Carolina in 1995, Hooker Odom served as a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives for nearly 11 years and was House chairwoman of the joint committee on health care. Hooker Odom co-chaired the North Carolina Health Care Reform Commission and was a member of the North Carolina Institute of Medicine. She has served on the President's Council and Northeast Advisory Committee since 2014.

### Bill Smyth

#### COLUMBIA

Bill is a native North Carolinian and a graduate of Davidson, Middlebury and General Theological Seminary in New York with degrees in English literature and theology. A retired Episcopal priest, he has served in New York City, Roanoke Rapids, Tarboro and Columbia. He is a classical piano student. The shore of the Little Alligator River in Tyrrell County has provided a weekend and eventually permanent home for him and his wife Frances since 1993. They enjoy inshore fishing. He has been active with the North Carolina Coastal Federation in marine debris removal and oyster restoration. He has served on the Northeast Advisory Committee since 2014.



# OUR STRATEGY

In the following pages, you'll get a snapshot of our 10 goals for 2017.

## Our Approach

Since 1982, the Coastal Federation has worked to protect and restore the coastal water quality and habitats throughout the North Carolina coast. We engage people from all walks of life, both residents and visitors, who commit to preserving the coast for current and future generations.

## To achieve these goals, we:

Protect and restore water quality, wetlands, oyster reefs and shorelines.

Advocate for effective coastal management by promoting sound coastal policies.

Educate students, adults and community leaders to inspire stewardship of our coast.

Collaborate with partners, communities and individuals who seek to protect our coast.

Inform by providing the award-winning Coastal Review Online news service.

## Goal: Robust coastal economy depends on and reinvests in environmental protection and restoration.

The Coastal Federation is working with federal, state and local leaders, economic developers, private businesses and coastal residents to create and implement an economic development strategy for the coast that also protects and restores coastal resources. Investment in coastal restoration creates short-term and long-term jobs, boosts fisheries and ensures a clean environment that benefits the tourism industry. State investment in this strategy is critical in order to secure competitive federal funding that will help stimulate economic growth.

Our staff developed a draft comprehensive strategic blueprint to explain how programs and projects that protect coastal resources also strengthen economic growth along the coast. Growing the oyster industry will continue to be a priority, as the success of that industry benefits fishermen, contractors involved with environmental restoration projects, tourism and related service industries.

The economic blueprint will be presented in March at the summit titled *Sound Economic Development: Creating a Rising Economic*



**Tide for the North Carolina Coast.** This strategy has the potential to guide economic growth and protect the coastal environment for years to come.

Learn more at [nccoast.org/economicdevelopment](http://nccoast.org/economicdevelopment).



## **Goal:** Oyster habitats thrive and support vibrant fisheries, good water quality and stable estuarine shorelines.

**O**ysters are essential to our estuaries. They provide productive fish habitat, improve water quality and boost jobs in the fishing and tourism industries.

In the next three years, the Coastal Federation, N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries and other partners will implement the 50 Million Oyster Initiative. With private, state and federal funds, the groups will create 50 acres of oyster sanctuaries in the Pamlico Sound. Each acre supports approximately one million oysters. And with each oyster filtering 50 gallons of water per day, this project will clean 2.5 trillion gallons of water annually.

Along with our partners, we will also continue to implement an evolving blueprint for restoring and managing oysters. This blueprint, which outlines plans to achieve seven goals, will guide our work through 2020. The state legislature in 2016 allocated more than \$1 million in funding for oyster restoration work, and this funding helped us secure an additional \$1.275 million grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to build oyster sanctuaries.

**For more information, go to [www.ncoysters.org](http://www.ncoysters.org) or [nccoast.org/oysters](http://nccoast.org/oysters).**

### **Private, state and federal funding will help us to:**

- Work with the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries to build at least 15 acres of oyster reefs in Pamlico Sound in 2017.
- Install demonstration shellfish mariculture practices at our Wanchese office.
- Continue to incorporate oyster reefs in living shorelines.
- Continue to facilitate discussions and partnerships through the Oyster Workgroup and Steering Committee.



Photo by Vance Miller

## **Goal:** Living shorelines that protect water quality and natural estuarine function and provide thriving habitat for fish and wildlife.

**T**here are 12,000 miles of estuarine shorelines in North Carolina that provide some of the best fish and wildlife habitats in the world. Rising seas, storms and boat wakes are causing these shorelines to erode, threatening these valuable salt marsh and oyster habitats.

Hundreds of miles of bulkheads and rock revetments have been installed over the past few decades in an attempt to control erosion. As a result, salt marshes and mudflats along shorelines are being scoured away by reflected waves. When big storms strike, many of these erosion control measures are damaged or destroyed.

In cooperation with partners nationwide, the Coastal Federation works to encourage the use of living shorelines, a more effective and natural way to manage erosion. Living shorelines use salt marsh grasses and sometimes oysters, rock or wood to control erosion. Our projects show that in most locations, living shorelines provide a longer-term, less-expensive erosion control option that retains the shoreline's natural functions.

We will continue to promote better management of estuarine shorelines throughout North Carolina and nationally. In addition to continuing to build public living shorelines through a half-million-dollar Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, we will also focus on advancing the use of living shorelines through our cost share program for private waterfront landowners.

The Coastal Federation will lead efforts to educate waterfront property owners through the web-based Living Shorelines Academy, trainings and demonstration projects. We will also work with stakeholders to streamline the living shoreline permitting process.

**Learn more at [nccoast.org/livingshorelines](https://nccoast.org/livingshorelines).**



Photo by Wingate University

### **Visit Living Shorelines Academy Today!**

The Living Shorelines Academy is an online tool that features two training options — one for waterfront property owners and one for marine contractors.

**Visit [livingshorelinesacademy.org](https://livingshorelinesacademy.org) to learn more.**

*The Living Shorelines Academy was developed by the Coastal Federation and Restore America's Estuaries through funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.*



## Goal: Clean coastal waters support fishing, swimming and healthy communities.

The Coastal Federation is committed to reducing the amount of stormwater runoff that pollutes our waterways. We are ramping up our partnerships with coastal communities to tackle stormwater, the most serious source of pollution in coastal waters.

When it rains, stormwater quickly moves across hardened surfaces and picks up bacteria and other pollutants before discharging them into creeks, rivers and sounds. Stormwater runoff pollution leads to swimming advisories and closes shellfishing waters.

At the Coastal Federation, we're working with urban and rural coastal communities to develop plans for restoring local water quality and come up with solutions that allow stormwater to soak

into the ground. Our projects typically show a 50 to 90 percent reduction in stormwater runoff volumes.

We also work at the state and local levels to find economically viable ways to prevent stormwater runoff in new developments by maintaining the way the land soaks up rain instead of building systems that channel stormwater to waterways.

The Coastal Federation has an ambitious slate of projects including developing watershed restoration plans and improving stormwater management programs. Additionally, we will work with property owners, local governments and farmers to install projects that significantly reduce the amount of polluted stormwater reaching our coastal waters.

**Stay updated on our work at [nccoast.org/stormwater](http://nccoast.org/stormwater).**

### Low-impact development provides environmental, economical benefits

Finding better and more economical ways to control stormwater runoff is something that makes sense to Burrows Smith, who is a developer in New Hanover County. His 313-acre River Bluffs development uses low-impact development (LID) techniques to infiltrate, filter, store and evaporate runoff. LID slows down the flow of runoff to let it to soak into the ground. Instead of directing stormwater to ditches, pipes and

ponds, LID maintains a natural landscape that captures and absorbs rain before it can pollute waterways.

Using techniques that mimic the natural hydrology of the landscape protects local waterways and often saves money, too. Smith said his development group "saved about \$2 million in development costs on 100 lots by not installing curbing

and by using natural areas as infiltration basins and not having to excavate for wet ponds." River Bluffs received a Pelican Award from the Coastal Federation in 2014 and a Lower Cape Fear Stewardship Development Award in 2015.





## Goal: Coastal land and water uses are environmentally compatible.

The Coastal Federation advocates for land and water uses that are compatible with North Carolina's beautiful and productive coast. We strive to find ways to plan, design, permit and build our land uses (neighborhoods, shopping centers, farms, highways and industries) so they don't degrade or harm our water quality, beaches and fisheries. The state's unique wetlands, shorelines and waters are essential to its economic and environmental health. Wise management of these resources often requires mobilizing partners to advocate for them at state and local levels. We engage with the public, businesses and elected officials, and as a last resort occasionally take legal actions to protect our coast.

In 2017, that means we will:

- Support the adoption of new federal and state rules that streamline the permit process for living shorelines.
- Ensure an industrial special-use permit is adopted and enforced in New Hanover County to vet heavy, potentially polluting industry.
- Develop the lower Cape Fear River blueprint, which will provide a sustainable management strategy for the lower Cape Fear River estuary and resources.
- Monitor any proposed wind energy projects.
- Oppose offshore oil and gas exploration and seismic surveys off the North Carolina coast.

The Coastal Federation has a daily presence in the North Carolina General Assembly. We will continue to track legislation, review permit applications and push for laws that protect North Carolina's coastal environment and encourage clean economic growth.

Find out more at [nccoast.org/compatible](http://nccoast.org/compatible).

## Goal: Environmental justice is achieved.

All people deserve to live, work and play in healthy and safe places, and everyone should have a voice in management decisions that affect the future of their coastal communities.

If left to chance, it doesn't always work that way. The Coastal Federation reaches out and tries to engage every person who has a stake in the work that we do to protect and restore the coast, because we're more effective when a wide variety of people engage in our work.

But we can do better, and we must make it a priority to reach communities, especially those that are typically underserved by environmental groups such as the Coastal Federation. Our staff is responsible for consistently evaluating how to make our work and programs inclusive of all coastal residents and visitors.

Our mission is to work together for a healthy coast — and we can't do that without engaging with diverse audiences and ensuring everyone has equal opportunities to learn and to be involved.

Learn more at [nccoast.org/environmentaljustice](http://nccoast.org/environmentaljustice).





Photo by Sam Bland

## Goal: Oceanfront and inlet beaches support traditional public uses and natural habitat functions.

The Coastal Federation strives to work with — not against — the natural processes of North Carolina’s barrier islands. Rising sea levels, storms and efforts to engineer the natural functions of our coastlines threaten habitat and public access. Using hardened structures like terminal groins as a means of erosion control is costly, and states that have used these structures are now dealing with unintended erosion and degraded natural beaches and habitat.

In 2017, we will continue to evaluate constructed terminal groins for adverse effects, as well as to oppose the construction and permitting of new terminal groins, especially in communities where residents and visitors have expressed strong opposition. We will also educate people on why these structures are so damaging.

Opposing a harmful erosion control method is not enough as rising sea levels continue to encroach on North Carolina’s beaches and as more people move to the coast. Therefore, we will help develop and promote long-term barrier island management strategies that make them more resilient to climate change and less hazardous places to invest. We will also continue to work with local governments to secure funding for dredging long-established navigational channels, as well as support the use of dredged sand where appropriate for beach nourishment projects.



### Rich Inlet: Two strikes against a terminal groin

The Coastal Federation’s advocacy efforts paid off in 2016, as Figure Eight Island homeowners rejected funding a proposed terminal groin near Rich Inlet at the north end of the island, where the volume of sand has been increasing in recent decades. The Figure Eight Island Homeowners’ Association sent out a special assessment to determine support for the groin, and a majority of homeowners responded “no” or did not respond, which counted as a “no” vote.

The Figure Eight Island Homeowners’ Association’s application was already in jeopardy because several property owners stated they would not grant easements for the terminal groin’s construction on their property. Without this permission, it is impossible to apply for a permit under the N.C. Coastal Area Management Act.

Learn more about our advocacy efforts at [ncoast.org/inlets-beaches](http://ncoast.org/inlets-beaches).



## Goal: Coastal environment is free of marine debris.

**M**arine debris takes on many different forms — from bottle caps and balloons to lost crab pots and other fishing gear. Marine debris is not only unsightly, it is hazardous to fish, wildlife and humans. Because of its widespread scope, it's not a problem the Coastal Federation can face alone.

The Coastal Federation teams up with coastal residents and visitors of all ages to reduce the amount of marine debris along the North Carolina coast. When we restore a salt marsh by removing trash during volunteer cleanups, inspire action through in-the-estuary education or work with local fishermen for our annual Lost Fishing Gear Recovery Project, our impact is greater because we collaborate with others. This year, we will continue to conduct volunteer-based regional cleanups on our properties and other locations that are debris hotspots. We will also seek funding to continue to hire fishermen to help remove lost crab pots.

In addition to our cleanup and lost fishing gear programs, the Coastal Federation will begin to develop a comprehensive marine debris strategy for the entire coast. We will build a network of partners and community groups to ramp up our efforts and streamline a coastwide marine debris program. This will help pave the way in reducing marine debris by creating long-term reduction plans for the state.



Photo by Chris Hannant

**For more information about our marine debris projects, visit [nccoast.org/marinedebris](https://nccoast.org/marinedebris).**



Photo by Mark Hibbs

## Goal: Control invasive species that degrade our coast.

This year, the Coastal Federation is taking on a new threat to coastal marsh health — a non-native plant called *Phragmites australis*.

Once *Phragmites* becomes firmly rooted, aggressively spreads and grows up to 12 feet high, it can diminish a marsh's natural productivity as bird and fish habitat. Once established, *Phragmites* is almost impossible to eradicate even when sprayed with repeated doses of chemicals. The Coastal Federation wants to determine if there are environmentally responsible ways to control it.

To combat the threats posed by *Phragmites*, we will:

- Analyze scientific literature to document the threats *Phragmites* poses to the natural productivity of North Carolina's estuaries.
- Examine the adequacy and safety of existing control efforts by government agencies and landowners.
- Hold a *Phragmites* workshop in order to explore ways to better safeguard our coastal marshes.
- Use what we have learned from research of effective management efforts to explore the feasibility of controlling it through early intervention rather than relying on chemical herbicides.

Once we learn the best ways to address *Phragmites*, we will turn our attention to carrying out management recommendations. The goal is to avoid the plight of other states that waited too late to undertake effective control programs and must now live with *Phragmites* as it permanently dominates and diminishes the productivity of coastal marshes.

For the latest updates, visit [nccoast.org/invasive](http://nccoast.org/invasive).

## Goal: Special coastal properties are preserved, protected and managed to enhance environmental stewardship.

The preservation and restoration of coastal lands is integral to clean and healthy coastal waters. The North Carolina coast is rich with wild spaces that help perpetuate the productivity of our coastal ecosystems.

The Coastal Federation has been involved with the preservation of tens of thousands of acres of special properties since 1982. These lands are strategically located in sensitive environmental areas such as the headwaters and shorelines of coastal rivers, creeks and sounds. Many of these properties were either once slated for intensive development or had already been extensively ditched and drained. Ownership of some of these lands was transferred to various state or local government agencies for long-term preservation and public uses. More than 6,700 acres are still managed by the Coastal Federation and benefit other areas of our mission, such as restoring water quality, creating oyster habitat, restoring and establishing wetlands, protecting vulnerable species, educating the public and increasing accessibility to natural spaces.

The Coastal Federation continues to identify and seek ways to protect even more special coastal lands either through purchases or donations by property owners. This year we will lobby for larger legislative appropriations for the North Carolina Clean Water Management Trust Fund to provide more state funds for land acquisition and continue to seek federal and private grants. We will also continue to utilize our properties by holding on-site events and programs that educate the public about the Coastal Federation's restoration projects and enable residents and visitors to be good stewards of our coastal environment.

Learn more at [nccoast.org/riparianlands](http://nccoast.org/riparianlands).



# 2017 ADVOCACY UPDATES

The Coastal Federation advocates for a clean, healthy coast at state, local and federal levels. Our lobbyist Rob Lamme and his associate Sara Lang wrote on what our priorities are for the year in the state legislature.

Restoring North Carolina's oyster industry, investing in natural strategies to protect the coast from storms and making sure that taxpayer dollars are not wasted on expensive beach erosion schemes top the Coastal Federation's priorities for the North Carolina General Assembly's 2017 session.

The General Assembly began its 2017 session on Jan. 25 after a one-day session on Jan. 11, during which legislators elected officials and began appointing committees. The legislature is expected to complete its 2017 work sometime this summer.

This year, the Coastal Federation plans to continue the progress made in 2016 in regard to oyster restoration funding. Thanks to successful lobbying efforts, the General Assembly invested more than \$1 million in state funds last year to restore the state's historic oyster beds in Pamlico Sound. This funding enabled the Coastal Federation to secure match funding through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The 2017 session begins just a few weeks after legislators earmarked more than \$200 million in state disaster relief for the victims of Hurricane Matthew, which was responsible for 28 deaths and more than \$2 billion in damage, mostly in eastern North Carolina. Lawmakers are expected to invest additional dollars in Matthew recovery and, hopefully, disaster preparation and mitigation, during the 2017 session.

When they begin this work, the Coastal Federation will advocate for investments in a variety of coastal restoration efforts aimed at softening the next big storm's impact. Suggestions include expanded funding for living shorelines, oyster bed and wetland restoration and stormwater controls — which help prevent coastal erosion and limit storm-related pollution.

Finally, the Coastal Federation will be watching for any effort to weaken existing laws that prohibit the use of state funds on expensive erosion control schemes — including terminal groins — that can cost taxpayers millions of dollars. Lawmakers approved these taxpayer protections several years ago — with the Coastal Federation's support — and they should remain on the books to ensure that state coastal conservation dollars are used efficiently and effectively.



## Want to keep up with the Coastal Federation's work in the legislature?

Sign up for our new, legislative update in the monthly e-newsletter, and check out [nccoast.org/raleighreport](http://nccoast.org/raleighreport) for regular updates.

## New DEQ Secretary named

Governor Roy Cooper recently selected Michael Regan, a longtime environmental advocate and eastern North Carolina native, as the new secretary of the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

"Michael cares deeply about clean air and water, not only that that can keep us healthy but can also boost our economy," Cooper said in a press conference in January.

Regan is a veteran of the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) and worked with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on air quality for the Clinton and Bush administrations from 1998 to 2008. While at EDF, he worked on a legal challenge and eventual settlement with Duke Energy that required the utility to retire its oldest and dirtiest coal-fired power plants.

As a consultant, he has experience working with industry and utilities on policy and regulation impacting the environment and public health.

Regan outlined his top priorities, focusing on transparency and leadership.

"My first goal is to look at the men and women who serve in DEQ. There's a lot of expertise and passion, and I want to get their advice," Regan said.

Regan has talked and written about the connection between a clean environment and economic development. In a blog for EDF, Regan discussed the ways clean energy and energy efficiency can address rural poverty in eastern North Carolina by building diverse and inclusive partnerships.

Regan is a graduate of North Carolina A&T State University and George Washington University.

Under a new law currently being challenged in court, Regan's nomination was still awaiting confirmation by the state Senate at the time of publication.

# EDUCATION UPDATES

Our educators and staff are hard at work teaching students and adults alike about the coast and the many ways we can protect it. Check out these highlights.



## State Farm grant enables Coastal Federation to create service-learning program

More students in the Wilmington area are getting to spend time in our coastal environment through the “Restoring Coastal Creeks and Habitat” service-learning program created by Coastal Federation staff.

The State Farm Youth Advisory Board selected the Coastal Federation as a recipient of a \$38,141 grant for its education programs in the Wilmington area. Out of 750 applicants, the Coastal Federation was one of just 63 organizations to receive a grant.

Through grant funding, staff will work with the Wilmington-based Blue Ribbon Commission on the Prevention of Youth Violence (BRC). The commission runs summer and after-school programs for students who live in the Youth Enrichment Zone (YEZ), an area of Wilmington with high poverty and crime rates. Staff will also work with high school students at New Hanover High School and the Ashley High School Marine Sciences Academy.

Students so far have participated in stormwater runoff and oyster lessons, taken field trips to area marshes and interacted with marine animals in a touch tank. In the future, they will get to monitor wetlands, help with shoreline restoration and continue oyster lessons. Some high school students will also help mentor younger students.

Ted Wilgis, education coordinator at the Wrightsville Beach office, is leading the education efforts for the program. After one of the first field trips with elementary school students from BRC, he said it was nice to see kids laughing while tracking hermit crabs and catching fish.

“We focus a lot on the ecological and economical importance of the coastal environment,” he said. “The joy that these students felt was a reminder of its power to instill wonder and happiness as well.”

## Oyster education continues in classrooms during wintertime

In the winter, when the temperatures are too cold for outdoor activities, our educators head into school classrooms for oyster lessons. The Coastal Federation’s multifaceted Oyster Education Program connects students to the coast by teaching them about the oyster both in the classroom and in the field. Educators lead oyster dissections and other labs with students at local high schools. Students learn more about the biology of the oyster and how these versatile organisms are important for conservation and restoration efforts. Educators also teach elementary and middle school students about oysters by explaining the importance of oyster reefs in creating fish habitat and cleaning water. Oyster education is also ongoing throughout the year at volunteer events involving living shorelines and oyster reefs.

## You’re invited — join us for a stormwater workshop in Wanchese

The Coastal Federation’s education efforts extend beyond students — our staff is hosting a free workshop on managing stormwater runoff at the Wanchese office on March 25. Participants will learn about water quality, stormwater runoff and ways to decrease runoff in their own yards. At the workshop, participants will get to see best management practices (BMPs) — such as rain barrels and rain gardens — in use at the Wanchese office. They will also learn how to use a stormwater calculator to determine the amount of runoff that flows off their property and to identify which BMP is best for them. Workshop participants will receive a free rain barrel and leave with a better understanding of how stormwater runoff affects water quality in Dare County and what steps people can take to mitigate those impacts. Check [nccoast.org/events](http://nccoast.org/events) for registration details.

# RESTORATION UPDATES

We work with volunteers, students, fishermen, contractors and scientists to restore coastal habitats along the North Carolina coast. Check out two of our highlighted projects below.

## Lost crab pots collected throughout entire coast in 2017

Crab pots are commercial and recreational fishing gear used to trap blue crabs. Unfortunately, some of these pots are lost during storms and when hit by boats, creating marine debris in our coastal waters. Since 2014, the Coastal Federation has teamed up with various partners including North Carolina Sea Grant, N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries Marine Patrol and local watermen to collect lost crab pots from parts of Albemarle and northern Pamlico sounds with funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. In the first two years of this project, we turned trash into treasure by recovering the pots and recycling them into new fish habitat as oyster reefs, which are still monitored today.

Thanks to more recent funding from the North Carolina General Assembly that is administered through Sea Grant, this project expanded coastwide and enabled the Coastal Federation to hire 72 watermen to clean up crab pots in coastal sounds this year. Learn more at [nccoast.org/crabpot](http://nccoast.org/crabpot).



## Living shoreline will protect waterbirds from habitat loss

New Dump Island is an 11.5-acre island in Core Sound near the community of Atlantic in Carteret County. The island was created years ago out of sand that was dredged out of Core Sound in a failed attempt to make Drum Inlet navigable. It is now owned by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission and managed for nesting colonial waterbirds. Continued erosion caused by sea level rise, storms and boat wake will result in the loss of crucial nesting sites for brown pelicans, terns, egrets and herons.

The Coastal Federation is leading a project to reduce future erosion. In 2017 we will be constructing living shorelines comprised of oyster shell bag sills and landward salt marsh grass plantings to protect the island and create oyster and salt marsh habitat. The oyster shell bag sills attract juvenile oysters, or spat, which grow into reefs. These oyster reefs help filter water and provide fish habitat, which provide long-term benefits for the coastal environment and economy.



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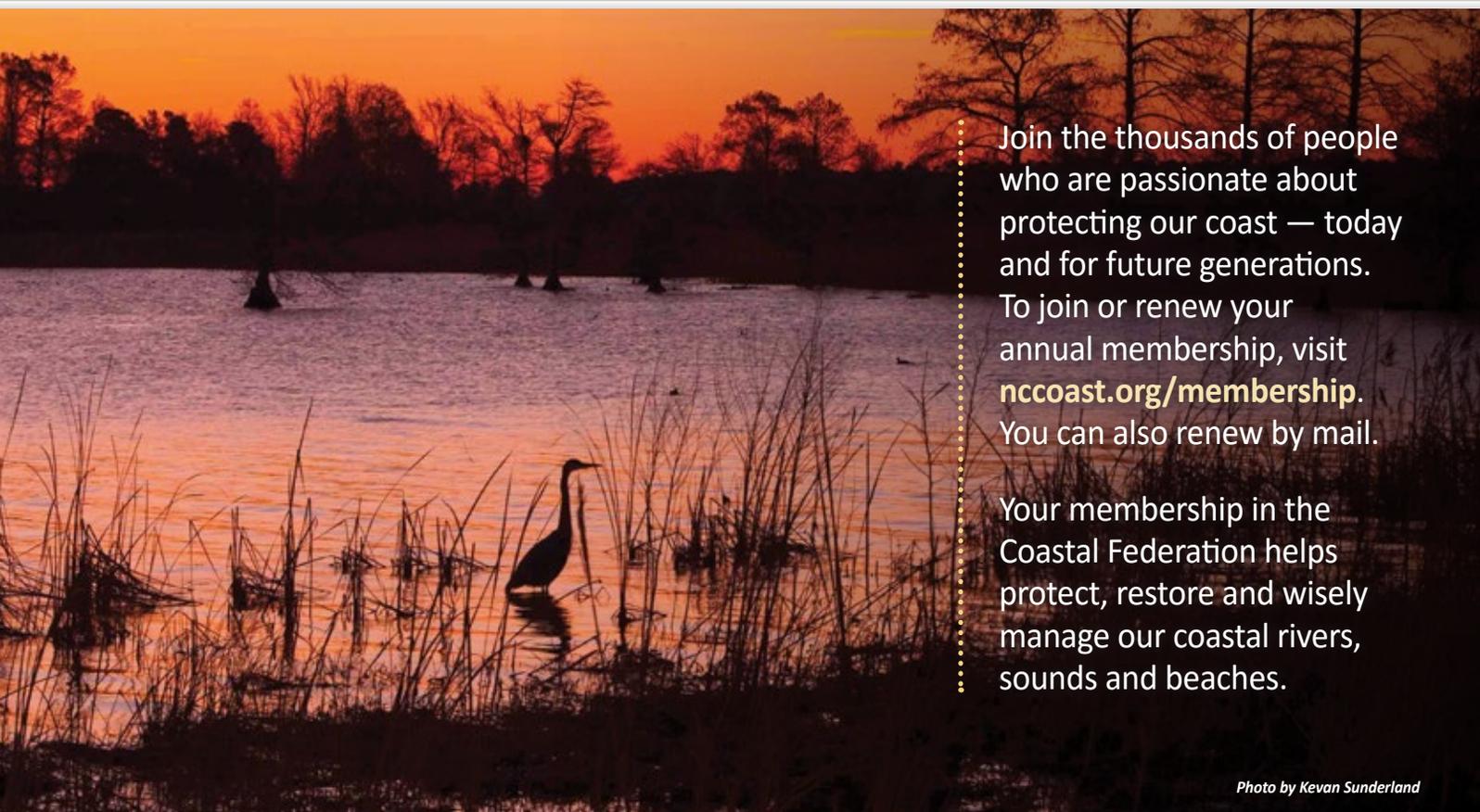
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Your membership in the Coastal Federation helps protect, restore and wisely manage our coastal rivers, sounds and beaches.

*Photo by Kevan Sunderland*



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