

NCCOAST.ORG | *Working Together for a Healthy Coast* | SUMMER 2020

# OUR COAST



North Carolina  
Coastal Federation  
*Working Together for a Healthy Coast*

**CELEBRATING  
2020 PELICAN AWARD  
WINNERS**



# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

## Leading from Behind

This summer the North Carolina Coastal Federation once again honors some special stewards of our coast with our annual Pelican Awards. These award winners are recognized because they support our organization's mission by giving of their time, talents and treasures.

What's so striking about each recipient is that they are ordinary people who make extraordinary contributions to protect and restore the coast. Our staff selects these winners after recognizing their amazing contributions. We thank them for what they have done, and even more importantly, publicize their good deeds to inspire others to follow in their footsteps. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "An ounce of practice is worth more than tons of preaching."

Pelican Awards have been given by the federation since 2003. You can see a description of previous award winners by going to [www.nccoast.org/about-us/pelican-awards/](http://www.nccoast.org/about-us/pelican-awards/). Previously, for seven years, we published an annual report card in our State of the Coast Report that graded the governor, lawmakers, local governments and citizens for their efforts to protect and restore the coast during the previous year. Over time, however, we realized that leaders succeed because they are able to jump in front of a "train" of supporters that make it easy for them to amplify their concerns and aspirations. Based upon this

realization, we decided to recognize the people who so effectively lead from behind and create the opportunities for our decision-makers to shine as well.

Even with COVID-19 and an economic recession, the work accomplished by our Pelican Award recipients helps the federation be successful. Here are some impressive statistics for collaborative work to protect and restore our coast completed in the first six months of 2020:

- Removed 118 tons of marine debris.
- Released the first ever N.C. Marine Debris Action Plan.
- Built 3,343 linear feet (more than ½ mile) of living shorelines.
- Planted 10,000 saltmarsh plants.
- Purchased 76 acres of waterfront property for preservation and recreation for \$7.4 million.
- Reduced 163,000 gallons of polluted stormwater during 1-year, 24-hour storms by installing retrofit projects.
- Restored 700 acres of freshwater headwater wetlands.
- Lobbied successfully for enhanced state authority to remove abandoned and derelict vessels from our coast.
- Obtained federal and state grants that are supporting more than \$14 million in contracts for nature-based green infrastructure projects that support an estimated 246 construction related jobs while reducing flooding and



marine debris as well as enhancing water quality.

- Trained marine contractors and helped to establish new business opportunities to fulfill market demand for living shorelines.
- Held engaging workshops to update the five-year strategy for Protecting and Restoring Oysters in N.C.
- Completed two major studies focused on growing the shellfish mariculture industry in N.C.
- Through Coastal Review Online, reached 336,000 readers and received 12 awards from the N.C. Press Association in February for our award-winning coverage.

Your support for our work is essential for us to be successful in carrying-out our mission. Thank you.

—Todd Miller, Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Todd Miller".



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PUBLISHED BY: North Carolina Coastal Federation  
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DESIGN: Lily Huffman

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# 2020 PELICAN AWARDS

Our 2020 Pelican Award winners have demonstrated exemplary commitment and undertaken meaningful actions to protect and restore the coast. Without these winners, the Coastal Federation would not be able to reach our goal of keeping our coast healthy and beautiful. Congratulations to the many dedicated individuals and organizations that have shown just how much we can accomplish when we work together for a healthy coast.



2020 Award photo taken by Tom Earnhardt; writer, co-producer and host of UNC-TV's Exploring North Carolina.

## Coastal Review Online Winners

### Peter Vankevich and Connie Leinbach *Dedicated Service to Coastal Community Journalism*

In the face of devastating challenges when Ocracoke Island bore the brunt of Hurricane Dorian's North Carolina landfall in early September 2019, Observer publishers Peter Vankevich and Connie Leinbach worked diligently to deliver important and often vital information to island residents. They also served as helpful sources for Coastal Review Online, the Washington Post and other news media in reporting to the world the situation on the island.

CRO's relationship with Peter and Connie was well established before the storm but the partnership has become more valuable as we have worked to report on the continuing challenges Ocracoke faces and the community's resilience. They were key partners in our multipart series on changing attitudes toward climate science on the North Carolina coast that was part of the Pulitzer Center's Connected Coastlines initiative.



Jock Lauterer in his book, "Community Journalism," describes the term as "The heartbeat of American journalism. Journalism in its natural state." Connie and Peter have demonstrated the importance of local reporting and embody community journalism.

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# NORTHEAST WINNERS

## **Terri Kirby-Hathaway, Jodie Shelton-Herman and Jim and Emily Gould and Waveriders Coffee, Deli & Pub**

### ***Dedicated Community Leadership and Collaboration***

Green Drinks is an international organization with groups in over 500 cities worldwide that convene on a monthly basis to provide a space for people interested in environmental topics to gather freely. The Outer Banks Green Drinks group was led by Terri Kirby-Hathaway from 2010 until 2016, when Jodie Shelton-Herman and Jim and Emily Gould picked up the program as organizers with much success, as evident by the ever increasing attendance—the excellent jokes from them as MCs are the driver

behind the high attendance. Each monthly gathering usually features a speaker that typically stimulates a lively discussion among the local community members in attendance. The group has been generous enough to regularly invite Coastal Federation staff to present our work. Some of the recent speakers have presented about stormwater/wastewater management solutions for the future, the ecology of the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuarine System and oysters. Waveriders Coffee, Deli & Pub generously hosts the Green Drinks group at no cost, staying open extra hours and serving a full menu to attendees. The restaurant is also an Ocean

Friendly Establishment, committed to environmentally friendly practices. The OBX Green Drinks Team has created a wonderful community for people to gather and show their love for the coast.



## **Ivy Ingram and Matt Walker**

### ***Outstanding Community Advocacy and Engagement***

Matt Walker and Ivy Ingram served as the co-chairs of the Surfrider Foundation Outer Banks Chapter for over a decade. They personally led successful campaigns to oppose offshore drilling and reduce marine debris in addition to carrying out the mission of the Surfrider Foundation. Their campaigns focused on increasing local activism as well as lobbying for state and federal legislative action. Matt is certainly not afraid to vocalize his opposition to multiple offshore drilling proposals, nor to express the importance of protecting our coast to legislators. He continues to be a strong advocate and invaluable partner to the Don't Drill NC coalition. Ivy's 14-year leadership and dedication to protecting the Outer Banks coast has inspired many others in the region to follow suit. Her passion and positivity is inspiring to all those who are lucky enough to work with her. Her efforts laid much of the groundwork for the cultural shift toward the reduction of marine debris in the Outer Banks, but she had a hand in all of the chapter's work. Effective advocates like Matt and Ivy help make our coast a better place.



## **Bill Husted**

### ***Outstanding Volunteer Service to Our Coast***

Bill Husted is one of those volunteers that every non-profit organization pines for. He is genuinely interested in the work of the Coastal Federation from all aspects, but seems happiest to engage on issues that require action. He demonstrates a desire and capacity to tackle every task that is asked of him, and does it with grace, professionalism and true joy. He's participated in almost all aspects of our Wanchese office work. From collecting oyster shell as part of the restaurant-to-reef shell recycling program, to picking up trash on the side of the highway, to assisting with background research on new federation programs, he's able to tackle it all and tackle it with finesse. Furthermore, he has been instrumental in launching the newly created N.C. Oyster Trail. He participates in all of the planning meetings and brings forth good ideas and a business sense to the efforts around advancing Oysters. He's recruited many of the businesses and shellfish farms that are participants to the newly launched N.C. Oyster Trail. We couldn't do our work without Bill's assistance and smile.



# CENTRAL WINNERS



## **Town of Swansboro**

### ***Dedication to Restoring Coastal Water Quality and Habitats***

Swansboro is the kind of town that doesn't just prepare a plan to just let it sit on a shelf. Quite the opposite. After unanimously approving their watershed restoration plan, the Town of Swansboro quickly swung into action to implement it. Swansboro had teamed up with the Coastal Federation to develop a watershed restoration plan in 2017 to set a framework for reducing polluted stormwater runoff flowing into Foster, Halls, Hammocks, Historic and Ward/Hawkins creeks and ultimately the White Oak River. To begin implementing the plan, the town installed three rain gardens, two permeable pavement parking lots and two cisterns that collect runoff from their public works and fire stations. The Town Hall Complex now showcases model Low Impact Development techniques for the community to see and learn from. But the town didn't stop there. It worked with the Coastal Federation to install a 250-foot living shoreline to restore salt marsh habitat and reduce erosion along the town's shore. An additional project to reduce runoff with permeable parking is currently in the works, and the town is actively seeking additional funds to install an underground chamber to infiltrate

additional runoff. Swansboro made a commitment to clean water and is seeing it through. These projects demonstrate the town's extraordinary efforts toward protecting and restoring water quality and habitat along our coast. We are proud to partner with the town and value our continued work on the White Oak River.

## **Diane H. Miller**

### ***Dedicated Leadership in Support of Living Shorelines***

The Town of Oriental has geared up to fight. Their opponent; strong storms and hurricanes that have increasingly battered and eroded the town's shoreline and its valuable wetland habitats. In the ring: Town Manager, Diane Miller, has had enough of the impacts of these natural events on the town's infrastructure, businesses, residences, coastal environment and its people. She has stood strong and worked proactively to first identify the town's vulnerabilities, and then determine their solutions and seek the funds necessary to safeguard and increase the town's resiliency. In particular, Oriental's Whittaker Pointe peninsula was in trouble. The Pointe serves as the primary defense for almost 300 town buildings, businesses and residences against the waves and surge from the Neuse River during storms and routine high wind events. Unfortunately, over 15 acres of the peninsula's shoreline had eroded away. Diane worked diligently to secure multiple grants and funding to work with the Coastal Federation to build a living shoreline around the entire peninsula to slow down and reduce the impacts of waves, thereby restoring the marsh habitat that was lost and reducing further erosion of the Pointe. The living shoreline provides a stronger and more environmentally productive town coastline.



## **Kenneth and Joy Tilley**

### ***Preserving Coastal Waterfront Open Space for Future Generations***

Ten acres known as "Swimming Point" near the Newport River entrance to Core Creek, north of Beaufort, is preserved thanks to Kenneth and Joy Tilley of Earlysville, Virginia. Last year, the couple donated the undeveloped property to the Coastal Federation, valued at \$50,000, so that it could be preserved in perpetuity. The parcel includes saltmarsh and a pine forest. It's adjacent to the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway and Bell and Powell creeks. It includes productive habitats for fish and shellfish, and this donation helps keep them that way. While the Tilley's reside in Virginia, they own a second home in Carteret County. The family has deep connections on our coast. "From a great-great-grandfather who was the lighthouse keeper at Cape Lookout, more to a great-grandfather whose fishing boat was named for my mother, we seek a legacy of clean water and an accessible, healthy, productive coast for future generations," Ken Tilley told the Coastal Federation. "Preservation of the natural habitats of the North Carolina coast is of the greatest importance, and we are so pleased to take this opportunity to give land for such purpose," Tilley said. "My family's roots have long been embedded in coastal Carolina."



# SOUTHEAST WINNERS



## **Barnes Sutton**

*Dedicated Leadership in Cultural Heritage and Conservation Efforts*

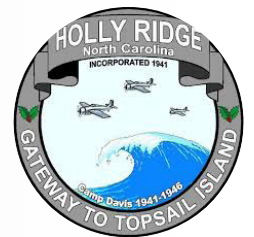
The Town of Navassa is a small town located due west of downtown Wilmington, on the Cape Fear River, and is one of the fastest growing communities in Brunswick County. During the Antebellum period, Navassa was home to numerous rice plantations. One plantation was eventually sold to a creosote wood treatment plant, and operated as such from 1936-1974. The plant left a legacy of contamination at the site and adjacent groundwater and soils, and was added to the list of EPA's Superfund Priority Sites in 2010. Since 2016, the town has been working with the EPA, a multi-state settlement trust and countless partners to clean up the pollution and remediate the environmental damages in the primarily underserved community of Navassa. And into this scenario stepped Barnes

Sutton, who has been the Director of Planning and Development for the Town of Navassa since 2017. With an impressive background in urban planning, historic preservation, community revitalization and transportation, Barnes has led the town through a period of unparalleled growth, while also representing the town's interests throughout the cleanup and redevelopment of the Kerr-McGee creosote treatment site. Barnes' dedication, commitment and leadership of a visioning process to ensure the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage of Navassa is truly admirable.

## **Onslow County Solid Waste, Town of Holly Ridge Public Works Department, Joseph Huie, Joseph Huie Jr., Joshua Whitney and Michael Willis**

*Collaborative Efforts to Keep Our Coast Clean of Debris*

Soon after Hurricane Florence, aerial imagery of the coast showed that a huge number of docks and other waterfront structures were damaged or destroyed. The debris picked up by the storm was strewn about, littering coastal waters and habitats. Finding, collecting and disposing of the debris has been a true community effort. Jody Huie, along with his dad, Joe Huie Jr. and two fellow commercial watermen, Michael Willis and Josh Whitney, all from Sneads Ferry along the New River, have worked tirelessly in the southeast region, with a 24- foot skiff and their hands, to collect and remove 190 tons of debris from the marshes and islands of Onslow, Pender and New Hanover counties. One of the cleanup's focal areas was Stump Sound. As debris was stockpiled at the Coastal Federation's Morris Landing Clean Water Preserve, the Town of Holly Ridge's public works department stepped in without being asked and loaded 45 tons of debris into dumpsters. This invaluable support was matched by Onslow County's Solid Waste Department, who supplied dumpsters and their transport free of charge during the cleanup of Stump Sound. This saved the crew countless hours and the project thousands of dollars of grant funds that was then used to collect more debris. The collaborative crew does not consider their job done and are continuing to partner with the Coastal Federation to clean up additional debris from the water, marsh, tidal creeks and dredge spoil islands in Onslow County and along the southeast coast. We are grateful for this incredible collaboration working to free our coast of marine debris.



## **Greater Wilmington Chamber Foundation**

*Outstanding Business and Community Volunteerism*

On a Saturday morning each April, thousands of volunteers fan out across Wilmington and New Hanover County to roll up their sleeves and tackle community stewardship projects through the Wilmington Chamber's Work On Wilmington (WOW) program. The results are amazing. Projects that would normally take weeks or months are completed in just half a day. WOW is organized each year by the current class of Leadership Wilmington, a civic leadership development program of the Wilmington Chamber Foundation that educates participants about the community they live in and encourages them

to get involved. Initiated by the 2006 Class of Leadership, WOW works in partnership with community organizations and agencies to create meaningful, hands-on service projects that improve quality of life and achieve tangible results. Since 2010, WOW has partnered with the Coastal Federation, New Hanover County Schools and Carolina Beach State Park to engage over 800 volunteers in water quality protection and habitat restoration projects. Volunteers have pulled weeds, installed plants and spread mulch to maintain rain gardens and stormwater wetlands at schools to ensure polluted runoff soaks into the ground instead of Hewletts Creek. Volunteers also built a 200-foot oyster reef along the shoreline of the Cape Fear River as part of a living shoreline project in Carolina Beach State Park. Hats off to these amazing volunteers who annually give of their time for the coast.



# COASTWIDE WINNERS

## **Paula Gillikin** *Exceptional Leadership and Facilitation of Coastal Stewardship*



Paula Gillikin is a Beaufort native who exemplifies leadership in protecting coastal habitats and wildlife. Her dedication to this cause has been evident throughout her life. Paula has been the Central Sites Manager for the Rachel Carson and Permuda Island National Estuarine Research Reserves since 2007. Her role involves ensuring that these sites are protected as outdoor classrooms for research and education. She is a skilled facilitator, and has been crucial in the development of the North Carolina Marine Debris Action Plan, which is a collaborative effort to reduce marine debris litter along the North Carolina coast. She acts as a facilitator for all action plan meetings and workshops, and also serves on the leadership team, Advisory and Implementation Committee and several subcommittees. From 2018 to early 2020, Paula helped manage and organize the removal of almost 127,000 pounds of debris, including 11 abandoned vessels, along the Town of Beaufort's waterways in partnership with the town and National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration. Paula has demonstrated true commitment to the coast and works diligently for its future.

## **Whitney Jenkins** *Exemplary Commitment to Coastal Resource Training and Collaboration*



Whitney Jenkins, Coastal Training Program Coordinator with the North Carolina Coastal Reserve & National Estuarine Research Reserve, brings complex coastal environmental issues and accompanying solutions to audiences coast wide. What began as a few invitations from Whitney to present at her coastal workshops has transformed into an effective and lasting partnership to collectively educate, train and engage coastal communities about coastal environmental issues key to the Coastal Federation's mission. Most recently, when the Coastal Federation was forced to change a series of oyster stakeholder meetings from in person to virtual due to COVID-19, Whitney jumped into action to make it happen. Her efforts resulted in six successful virtual meetings that engaged over 200 participants. Whitney is a true pro and her expertise in group facilitation, organizing events and recruiting important participants has been, and will continue to be, invaluable to the Coastal Federation.

## **Bill Hart** *Decades of Outstanding Leadership to Restore North Carolina's Coastal Waters*



Bill Hart is a guy you need to know if you want something done to protect and restore the coast. As New Hanover County Soil and Water Conservation District supervisor and chairman, Bill has a lifetime of achievement working to tackle stormwater runoff and other coastal issues. One such achievement is his key role in the creation of the statewide Community Conservation Assistance Program. This innovative program provides cost share funding for people to reduce runoff from their property. As Bill's brain child, the statewide program was signed into law in 2006, and has since become a model followed outside of North Carolina. In addition, Bill helped create the Lower Cape Fear Stewardship Development Awards program that annually recognizes outstanding development projects that protect, conserve, improve and provide awareness of the natural resources in the Lower Cape Fear region. Bill has served on numerous boards and committees in New Hanover County, where he resides. We are fortunate to have such a visionary and dedicated individual looking out for the future of our coast.

## **N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission Engineering Division**

### ***Dedicated Partnership to Protect and Restore Coastal Water Quality and Habitat***

Public-private partnerships can be easy to initiate, but lasting and effective collaborations are often hard to come by. The Coastal Federation and the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission Engineering Division have formed a lasting partnership to reduce stormwater runoff and promote living shorelines at public boating access areas across the coast. It began with a boating access site in the Town of Beaufort that was slated for paving. Engineers with the Division were receptive to doing things differently, and together, the Coastal Federation, the Town of Beaufort and the Wildlife Resources Commission pooled resources to use permeable paving grids on the site to collect and infiltrate polluted stormwater instead of conveying it to Taylors Creek. This successful project led to an agreement to continue working together for clean water and healthy coastal habitats. Since signing the agreement, the partners have reviewed and discussed half a dozen other projects for possible incorporation of innovative stormwater management strategies. We are proud to work with this great group of dedicated and talented professionals.





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## Don't Miss Touch Tank Tuesday Live!

Head to our Distance Learning Lab for the last few weeks of this summer's **Touch Tank Tuesday Live!** YouTube series. It highlights the Coastal Federation's goals and some of the amazing animals that live along our coast.

**Check out all of the virtual offerings at our  
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