

NCCOAST.ORG | *Working Together for a Healthy Coast* | SUMMER 2021

OUR COAST



North Carolina
Coastal Federation
Working Together for a Healthy Coast

CELEBRATING THE COAST
Introducing the 2021
Pelican Award Winners

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of Our Coast,

The coast is “hot” right now. Not only are temperatures soaring, but the real estate and tourist economies are on fire. COVID-19 stimulated more people to visit and move to the coast, and many decided to stay here and work virtually. A robust economy here and elsewhere in North Carolina means that our state tax revenues are flush, and it’s exciting to hear lawmakers discuss big investments in flood reduction, nature-based stormwater management, oyster restoration and other forms of environmentally compatible infrastructure investments. Meanwhile, we keep a watchful eye on the tropics as they have become active well before the peak of hurricane season in September.

Over the past four decades, cycles of economic boom and bust combined with extreme weather have influenced the work of the North Carolina Coastal Federation. Whether up or down, the economy has silver linings for our efforts. For example, we’ve received economic stimulus funds because our habitat and water quality restoration work creates local jobs. When times are good, supporters are often even more generous with their financial support for our work.

The bottom line is that opportunities and challenges always exist, and that’s good because our coastal environment is increasingly stressed. Some of this stress is due to intense population

growth especially along our oceanfront counties. The coastal region is expected to grow about 26% by 2034. However, that growth is not evenly distributed, and is largely concentrated within oceanfront counties. Half of North Carolina’s 20 coastal counties actually lost population over the past decade, some at very high rates due to economic declines in many traditional coastal industries.

Tracing the courses followed over the last 40 years by the Coastal Federation to protect and restore our coast reveals many of these twists and turns. One constant has been the thousands of wonderful and generous friends we’ve met and engaged at various crossroads along that route. These supporters shape our work with their local knowledge, talents, inspirations and insights.

It’s been an awe-inspiring journey filled with adventures and wonderful relationships with people who help the federation achieve our mission. I fondly remember the people who are no longer with us. Their legacy includes many of the Coastal Federation’s most tangible and real-world accomplishments. And now we get to recognize the energizing work of our current set of 2021 Pelican Award winners. Their stories and accomplishments are described in this newsletter.

While the accomplishments of these past and current supporters of the



federation are remarkable, there still remains plenty of work and challenges ahead to carry-out the federation’s mission. That’s why it’s so reassuring to know that in future years we will have many more deserving candidates for Pelican Awards. Our access to this impressive human capital all but guarantees that our work to protect and restore our coast will succeed.

It’s been necessary to navigate some turbulent waters during my nearly 40 years before the mast here at the Coastal Federation. That makes me really appreciate those days when the wind is at my back because of all the helping hands that make the federation’s work much easier to accomplish.

Thank you.

—Todd Miller, Executive Director

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



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2021 Pelican Award Photo: "Painted Bunting (Passerina ciris)." Photographed in Brunswick County by Tom Earnhardt; writer, co-producer and host of UNC-TV's "Exploring North Carolina."



2021 PELICAN AWARDS

Our 2021 Pelican Award winners have made amazing contributions to the North Carolina Coast. Collectively, they have demonstrated exceptional commitment and undertaken meaningful actions to protect and restore the coast — even during the pandemic. Without them, the Coastal Federation would not be able to reach our goal of making the coast a better place to live, visit, work and play for current and future generations. Keeping our coast healthy and beautiful is no small task. 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.

Thank you to our 2021 sponsors for their support:

Lead: Carolina Brewery | Calvin and Kelly Carter Foundation | Restoration Systems LLC | SeaGlass Wine Company

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NORTHEAST WINNERS



TERRI KIRBY-HATHAWAY

*For Longtime Excellence in
North Carolina Marine Education*

Terri's knowledge and passion for marine science is as vast and deep as the ocean. She dedicated her 35-year career to marine science education, sharing her expertise of ocean sciences and aquatic environments with educators and audiences statewide. Terri was active in many state, regional and national professional organizations, and even helped to establish some of them.

Terri's spunky teaching style leaves a lasting impact, and her passion and energy for the environment is contagious. She's developed extraordinary methods of teaching that bring excitement to the most mundane topics, and understanding to the more complex ones.

Terri lives by the example that science is everywhere, making great teaching tools of sand she's collected from past trips, unique beachcombing treasures from near and far, and an impressive collection of sea beans, seeds from tropical plants – to name a few. Any encounter with Terri will be memorable and inspiring. Whether it's in a meeting, classroom or at the grocery store, you will walk away having learned something new, as she never passes up a teachable moment. Terri is now nobly retired after working for 17 years with N.C. Sea Grant and 18 years with the North Carolina Aquarium on Roanoke Island, but her impact leaves a legacy in the marine science community. And with more time for beachcombing, there's surely still new stories for Terri to uncover.

TOWN OF DUCK

*For Dedicated
Community
Leadership
and
Collaboration*

Recognizing the need for shell recycling in the community,

the Town of Duck has created the first municipally-organized oyster shell recycling program in partnership with the Coastal Federation. Town staff members Sandy Cross, Alyson Flynn and Christian Legner led the effort, understanding the value and need for collecting oyster shells and recycling them for use in coastal habitat and restoration projects. Reflecting the interest of its community residents, visitors and businesses, the town formed a recycling program that is now setting an example for other municipalities. Town employees collect discarded shell from five local restaurants and haul it to drop-off points, often driving 20 miles in their personal vehicles, adding several hours to their work day. They have demonstrated that by setting an example, others will be inspired to follow suit. We are thankful to work with such a dedicated community on this visible Outer Banks shell recycling program.



BARBARA AND ANDY DELVILLAR

*For Outstanding Volunteer
Service to Our Coast*

Barbara and Andy DelVillar are some of the most compassionate people you will ever meet. Coastal Federation staff in Wanchese speak highly of Barbara's radiant personality and Andy's tenderhearted nature. They care deeply about the coast and

community and always seek out opportunities to support both in every way they can. This couple enhances almost every volunteer-based event the northeast regional office has hosted over the past few years. They support the annual Hatteras Island Oyster Roast, as well as help promote the Coastal Federation at community events. These two volunteers are as dependable as they come. In addition to participating in nearly every highway cleanup the federation has conducted over the past year, they go above and beyond and rally others to join them to protect our coast by conducting cleanups they organized on their own. The Outer Banks is a better place because of the volunteer contributions made by Barbara and Andy.



CENTRAL WINNERS

TOWN OF BEAUFORT

For Exceptional Leadership for Clean Coastal Waters

Through exceptional leadership, the Town of Beaufort is hard at work to protect and restore water quality for their residents and visitors. As a “clean water community,” the town strives to serve as a role model for responsible coastal stewardship for local governments. The town adopted a proactive ordinance in 2018 so that it has the authority to remove abandoned and derelict vessels from its navigable waters. This resulted in the removal of 12 vessels in 2018 when the town partnered with the Rachel Carson National Estuary Reserve to obtain funding from the NOAA Marine Debris program. In 2019, Beaufort was the first town to endorse the North Carolina Marine Debris Action Plan, and it continues to take an active role in preventing marine debris. Additionally, the town has committed to reducing its stormwater impact on surrounding waters. Beaufort’s stormwater committee, made up of town staff, university researchers and community partners, prepared and adopted a watershed restoration plan in 2018. Since then, the town has implemented several projects to address stormwater runoff including the installation of porous pavement for parking at the Lennoxville Boat Ramp and Orange Street.



TOWN OF PINE KNOLL SHORES

For Dedicated Advancement of Nature-Based Resilience Solutions

The Town of Pine Knoll Shores may be small, but it delivers big on resilience issues. Since its formation, the town has put natural resources at the forefront of development. This ideology has continued under current leadership as it implemented several projects in partnership with the Coastal Federation to face ever increasing pressures from climate extremes. In 2019, the Coastal Federation partnered with the town to develop a watershed restoration plan to reduce the volume of stormwater reaching Bogue Sound and the ocean. Facing chronic flooding due to the confluence of stormwater and groundwater, the town searched for solutions that could address these problems while also remaining water quality friendly. In a display of public/private partnership with the Crystal Coast Country Club, the town landed on an innovative, multi-tiered approach that uses a series of perforated pipes and pumps to manage groundwater levels and improve infiltration capacity to decrease instances and severity of flooding. There is another phase in the works to include more residential areas to the system. In addition to this project, they’re also currently working on two other stormwater management practices, and have built a 460-foot linear living shoreline to protect public access to Bogue Sound. These projects demonstrate the town’s commitment to meeting climate challenges with nature-based solutions.



CARTERET COMMUNITY COLLEGE

For Outstanding Leadership Supporting Living Shorelines

Carteret Community College prides itself on offering lifelong learning with the intended purpose of improving the quality of life in Carteret County and eastern North Carolina. Faced with a constant battle to stop shoreline erosion that was threatening its campus, it turned a serious maintenance headache into a wonderful learning opportunity for its students, staff and the community it serves. Hurricane Florence significantly eroded the College’s shoreline, compromising an existing bulkhead and walkway, only footsteps from classrooms and offices. However, college leaders noticed how well their decade-old living shoreline along the western portion of their property fared after the storm, and were incredibly impressed that the salt marsh and oyster habitats were still intact. Recognizing this success, rather than just repairing their shoreline and installing additional bulkheads, they did not hesitate to build another 1,250 feet of living shoreline on campus instead. This project came together through a collaboration among the previous college president, Dr. John Hauser; current president, Dr. Tracy Mancini; Vice-President of Operations and Facilities, Steve Sparks; Grants Coordinator, Kristi Mroch; Arendell Engineers; T.A. Loving Company; and the Coastal Federation. Through this effort, the school’s entire shoreline is now protected from storms, while at the same it provides salt marsh and oyster habitat for fish, shellfish, and other wildlife and is helping to improve coastal water quality.



SOUTHEAST WINNERS



CADE THARRINGTON

For Exceptional Volunteer Contributions to Our Coast

Cade Tharrington, a recent graduate from Hoggard High School in Wilmington, N.C., helped create a virtual Touch Tank Tuesday during the summer of 2020, when the Coastal Federation had to limit face-to-face learning experiences because of the pandemic. During such stressful and uncertain times, we knew exactly who to call on for assistance, not only because of our trust and faith in Cade, but because of his creative input and ability to think outside the box. Cade's flexibility and especially his adaptability made him the perfect person to take on these complex projects. He faced the pressure of these projects with poise and grace. From tolerating extreme weather conditions while collecting species from our local estuaries, to patiently and meticulously filming our new virtual programs, and creating activity sheets and educational materials, Cade went above and beyond the call of duty. Not only does Cade volunteer with the Coastal Federation, he also is the co-president of his high school's Environmental Concerns Organization Club, member and water quality event team captain for the North Carolina Science Olympiad, and is a North Carolina Youth

and Government House Representative with the YMCA North Carolina Youth and Government. Cade Tharrington is an impressive young man who has contributed greatly to his community.



CAPE FEAR GARDEN CLUB

For Outstanding Community Efforts to Beautify, Conserve, Educate and Inspire

The Cape Fear Garden Club is the oldest such club in North Carolina and reportedly the second-largest in the country. It is an incredibly generous and stalwart supporter of area nonprofits aligned with its mission to "beautify, conserve, educate, inspire, and contribute to people of all ages using horticulture and garden development." Through its hosting of the annual Cape Fear Garden Club Azalea Garden Tour, the club is able to award tens of thousands of dollars in grants and scholarships each year. Even with the cancellation of the garden tour in 2020 due to the pandemic, club members rolled up their sleeves, volunteered and donated funds to keep projects going.

The Coastal Federation has benefited from the club's volunteers and grants since 2010. Funds from the club built and now maintain seven large rain garden and wetland stormwater reduction projects at Bradley Creek and Alderman Elementary Schools in Wilmington. The club has also supported the installation of habitat gardens and wetland nurseries at the federation's Stanback Coastal Education Center in Wrightsville Beach, which has thousands of visitors and school groups each year. These examples, along with scholarship grants to the University of North Carolina Wilmington and Cape Fear Community College, and conservation efforts at the Audubon North Carolina's bird sanctuary at Battery Island, demonstrate the club's dedication to its mission.

TOWN OF TOPSAIL BEACH

For Dedicated Leadership in Coastal Resiliency and Conservation

Like all of North Carolina's coastal barrier island towns, the Town of Topsail Beach faces daunting challenges, including ocean and soundside beach erosion, flooding, and storm damages to property and infrastructure. Leaders

in Topsail Beach must balance their responses with the desire for managed growth and protection of property values, services, and the safety of their residents and visitors. And while they do all of this, they must work to protect that which draws us to the North Carolina coast: clean and healthy beaches, sounds and wetlands.

It's a delicate balancing act that has been tested time and again by Mother Nature and the hurricanes she throws at Topsail Island. But the leaders of Topsail Beach rise to the challenges, implementing a resiliency plan that includes innovative approaches to reducing polluted stormwater runoff and flooding, oceanside beach nourishment, the construction of three living shoreline demonstration projects, and protecting conservation lands at the south end of the island. These proactive efforts, along with the town's outstanding commitment to their residents, visitors and the environment, are worthy of this year's 2021 Pelican Award for outstanding coastal leadership by a municipality.



COASTWIDE WINNERS



DR. BRANDON PUCKETT

*For Leadership and Expert Scientific Research
Advancing Coastal Restoration*

To say that Brandon Puckett and his research have helped to advance habitat restoration efforts in North Carolina would be an understatement. A leader in habitat modeling and protected reserve design, Brandon's doctoral research at North Carolina State University and subsequent work at the N.C. National Estuarine Research Reserve, part of the N.C. Division of Coastal Management, has laid the foundation for hundreds of acres of new oyster sanctuary in Pamlico Sound, a better understanding of marsh resiliency and has helped to advance water quality protection efforts in the state.

Not only does he produce excellent research that helps to inform our work, he is always willing to go above and beyond in his desire to help communicate the results to anyone who needs to understand them. It is a rare gift to not only conduct good research but to also be able to communicate it effectively. Brandon is an instrumental partner who helps to bring national perspectives and understanding to crafting and refining the strategies and actions outlined in the statewide Oyster Steering Committee's North Carolina Oyster Restoration and Protection Strategy: A Blueprint for Action. Brandon's work and partnership are critical to the continued success of our work, and we thank him for his dedication to North Carolina coastal habitats.



CAMILLA HERLEVICH

*For Exemplary Lifetime Dedication to Saving Critically Important
Coastal Lands and Habitats*

Back in 1992, an exceptional woman with vision and drive took it upon herself to ensure that special coastal places along our beautiful North Carolina Coast were protected in perpetuity instead of being altered or developed. With that vision, the North Carolina Coastal Land Trust was founded by Camilla Herlevich, and it has become the state's sole accredited regional land trust focused on our state's coastal lands. Under Camilla's leadership, the Land Trust has saved beaches that became state parks and preserves, streams that provide clean water, forests that are havens for wildlife, working farms and nature parks for all to enjoy.

The Coastal Federation had the pleasure of first working with Camilla back in 1992 when we collaborated for a decade to save Bird Island in Brunswick County. Camilla led the acquisition efforts, and in 2002, following purchase, Bird Island was formally dedicated as the state's 10th Coastal Reserve. In addition, Camilla guided the Coastal Federation in 1997 when it acquired 31 acres at Hoop Hole Creek in Atlantic Beach. This property was the first ever purchased with funding from then newly created N.C. Clean Water Management Trust Fund, and Camilla provided hands-on help in leading us through this brand-new acquisition process. During her tenure

Photo: N.C. Coastal Land Trust

at the Land Trust, over 80,000 acres of special coastal lands were saved and many more acres are slated for future protection. Thanks to Camilla, we can all visit, enjoy and marvel at the coastal lands that have been saved because of her dedication and love for our coast.



North Carolina
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