



September 2021 Update for the North Carolina Coastal Wetland Conservation and Restoration Working Group

This update summarizes developments since the full working group meeting on June 7 and outlines the plan going forward.

At the June meeting, both subgroups suggested aggregating multiple projects for grant applications to two federal programs: the U.S. Department of Defense Readiness and Environmental Integration Program (REPI Challenge), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

Combining multiple projects makes each application more competitive and comparable to other regional-scale efforts in the US. Applying for these grants aligns with the intent of the working group: to identify and find funding for large-scale (regional) wetland restoration projects. Seven of the presented projects were chosen based on feedback as the most appropriate given the goals and prioritization (readiness, coalition of partners, potential for matching funding, willing landowners) of the group. If you want to review these projects, the interactive map and the project summaries are on [the landing site](#). The Mural records also remain active.

Alligator River Subgroup – RCPP application

Actions in 2021

- Selected three of the presented projects as anchor projects; the project goals align with two priorities identified in the RCPP: water quality and stormwater management. The projects—Lux Farms/Mattamuskeet Ventures, Lake Mattamuskeet Watershed, and Grassy Ridge— all include wetland restoration and best management practices on ditched and drained farmland. They each also include multiple landowners, so will be developed into multiple individual restoration projects. We will contact members of the group to develop the proposal. **ONGOING**
- Initiated discussions with the North Carolina NRCS representative, Jessica Schmelz (Federation and FWS). She has given us insight into aspects of the proposal and sought guidance from others in NRCS to answer our questions. **DONE (effort ongoing)**
- Spoke with recent recipients of RCPP awards, to get their insights into the process and answers to technical questions. **DONE**
- Created an ad hoc committee for the Lake Mattamuskeet Stakeholders Group to explore developing an RCPP proposal (FWS). That group is coordinating with the working group in discussions with NRCS about whether/how to combine our proposal efforts. **DONE (effort ongoing)**
- Developed and assessed a list of restoration methods possible within the FWS Grassy Ridge pilot project (**results out in Q4 2021**). The initial NC Coastal Federation Lux Farms project (**projected completion in 2022**) will be documented and methods/lessons learned will be disseminated to other agricultural lands in



the region and to other low-lying coastal agricultural lands in the U.S. facing similar issues. **ONGOING**

- Assemble team that will collect data and write application. Target is 2022 funding with probable deadline end Nov 2021, (schedule for RCPP NOFO expected imminently). May not be possible pending commitment/availability of matching funds, which would push project to FY2022 for 2023. **ONGOING**
- Assemble partners, identify matching funds and gain commitment **ONGOING** and approach landowners for preliminary discussions approach **Early 2022**.
- Address and assess legislative funding, match with project needs. **ONGOING, pending state and federal budget and infrastructure bills' approval**

Croatan/Cedar Island Subgroup – REPI Challenge Grant application

Actions in 2021

- Select parcels that are in areas designated as priorities for DOD training and anti-encroachment needs. The strategic focus is on large timber tracts north and south of the Neuse River. Five projects are selected, totaling 44,810 acres, almost all of which are ditched and drained wetlands. The projects: Pamlico, Newport, North River, a parcel adjacent to the Palmetto Peartree Preserve and three similar Jones/Craven county timber projects from the N.C. Coastal Land Trust. The proposed parcels are owned by Weyerhaeuser and other timber interests. **DONE**
- Generate more detailed GIS-based mapping with existing wetlands, prior-converted, and uplands and supportive materials. **DONE**
- Conduct initial discussions with members of the North Carolina Sentinel Site (Bill Cary). **DONE (effort ongoing)**
- Present maps to determine private investor and land trust interest in specific parcel acquisition. **ONGOING**
- Provide DOD with list of properties for review to determine prioritized list. MCAS Cherry Point will assess and provide feedback on interests/priorities and their process. **OCTOBER**
- Present maps to Weyerhaeuser's new ownership via introduction from Conservation Fund. Approach with strategy and list of properties and determine willingness to sell. **ONGOING**
- Target end Nov 2021 is expected pre-proposal date for REPI Challenge (Out 9/13/21—pre-proposal due Nov. 22). Considered possible with 2022 application as backup. **ONGOING**

Ongoing projects that are not included for this round of RCPP or REPI funding applications

The projects not included the RCPP and REPI applications are active projects and seeking partners and funding.

Actions for 2021

- Highlight these projects to state and national level agencies and a wide sample of regional stakeholders and potential partners. **DONE**



- Seek both active partners and appropriate funding sources. **ONGOING** If you or your organization have specific interest in one of these projects, contact Christine Miller - christinem@nccoast.org. **ONGOING**

2022 and beyond

Smaller teams will assemble and apply for federal grants and develop matching funding and partners.

There are no planned meetings for the remainder of 2021. Application deadlines occur in the Fall of 2021 and the Spring of 2022. The working group will be updated via email again when the proposals are submitted and when funding decisions are made.

We will try to schedule another meeting in mid-2022 and potentially semi-annually thereafter. We will poll the group.