

2026 COASTAL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Session 1

Location: Beaufort Hotel
2440 Lennoxville Road, Beaufort NC
Date: March 9 - 10, 2026



North Carolina
Coastal Federation

Day 1 – Exploring the Natural & Cultural Landscape of the North Carolina Coast

9:00 – 10:00 am	Registration & Continental Breakfast <i>Participants arrive, check in, and mingle.</i>	Beaufort Hotel
10:00 – 10:15 am	Welcome <i>Opening remarks and welcome to the inaugural Coastal Leadership Institute Cohort.</i>	Braxton Davis Executive Director, NC Coastal Federation
10:15 – 11:00 am	About the Coastal Leadership & Cohort Introductions	Amanda Lyle Chief Community Engagement Officer, NC Coastal Federation
11:00 am – 12:15 pm	Into the Sound Country: Stories of the Natural Worlds of the North Carolina Coast, from Sea Beaches to Deep Swamps, from Little Rivers to Inner Islands & More <i>Through photographs, commentary, and brief readings, this session explores the ecological breadth of the North Carolina coast, touching on coastal aquifers, changing water levels, storm flooding, disappearing islands, and ghost forests.</i>	Bland Simpson Kenan Distinguished Professor Emeritus, UNC Chapel Hill Author, <i>Into the Sound Country</i> Pianist, <i>The Tony Award-winning Red Clay Ramblers</i> Ann Cary Simpson Photographer & Collaborator, <i>Into the Sound Country</i> Board Member, NC Coastal Land Trust
12:15 – 1:30 pm	Lunch	Beaufort Hotel
1:30 – 3:00 pm	Our Coastal Heritage: Past, Present, and Future <i>A historical exploration of North Carolina's coast and the stories that shape its identity.</i>	Dr. David Cecelski Historian and Author

3:00 – 5:00 pm	Field Trip: Beaufort's Hidden History & Coastal Connections <i>An exploration of community, culture, and conservation from Cedar Street to Front Street, highlighting the layered histories that shape Beaufort's working waterfront. Transportation provided.</i>	Sharon Harker Mayor, Town of Beaufort Board Member, NC Coastal Federation
5:00 - 7:00 pm	Hotel Check-in and Break <i>Check-in to your hotel room and relax before dinner. Participants are also welcome to gather informally in the hotel lobby, porch, or bar area to continue conversations with fellow cohort members.</i>	Beaufort Hotel
6:30 - 7:00 pm	Optional: Pre-Dinner Drinks & Icebreaker <i>Join fellow cohort members for an informal gathering at the bar before dinner. This is an optional opportunity to connect and get to know one another before dinner.</i>	34° North Restaurant Bar Beaufort Hotel
7:00 - 9:00 pm	Cohort Networking Dinner <i>An opportunity to continue conversations, build relationships, and connect more informally with fellow cohort members following the day's sessions.</i>	34° North Restaurant Beaufort Hotel

Day 2 – Down East Field Trip Experience

7:00 – 8:00 am	Breakfast & Coffee <i>Grab-and-go breakfast and coffee available — enjoy in the lobby or take with you. Please be on the bus by 7:55 am.</i>	Beaufort Hotel
8:00 am - 12:00 pm	Field Trip: A Day Down East: Community Perspectives from Core Sound <i>Travel through Down East communities for a field-based learning experience exploring the landscape, culture, and working waterfronts of this unique region.</i>	Karen Amspacher Executive Director, Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center Down East Resilience Network
12:00 - 2:00 pm	Lunch & Conversations <i>Lunch followed by a facilitated conversation with Down East community members. Building on the morning's bus tour, the discussion will explore shared challenges and opportunities facing rural coastal communities across North Carolina.</i>	Core Sound Waterfowl Museum & Heritage Center Lunch sponsored by the Down East Resilience Network
2:00 - 3:00 pm	Museum Tour	
3:00 - 3:30 pm	Travel back to Beaufort Hotel	

The Coastal Leadership Institute is made possible through the generous support of our sponsors. Thank you for investing in the leaders and partnerships that will shape the future of North Carolina's coast.

