

OUR COAST

North Carolina Coastal Federation | NCCOAST.ORG | SPRING 2018



North Carolina
Coastal Federation
Working Together for a Healthy Coast

**SUMMER EVENTS
& COASTAL HAPPENINGS**

Dear Friend of the Coast,

It's that time of year to celebrate and connect with our coast. As the tide rolls in and out twice a day, the salt marshes that frame our estuaries become greener and more alive with birds, fish, crabs, oysters and clams. It's now possible to wade without wearing boots and see firsthand the appearance of some of the most diverse and abundant creatures on earth all in one place — our North Carolina coast. And if you're really fortunate, you can even buy or catch your dinner and taste our coast through its amazing seafood.

Dr. James Morris, who grew up in Sea Level and is an ecologist for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) lab in Beaufort, recently shared some amazing facts about the biodiversity of our coast. According to Morris, scientists document that our state has about 685 fish species compared to 450 species in South Carolina and 350 species in Virginia. This richness of fish, plants and wildlife is because we're at the intersection of the Labrador Current and Gulf Stream. This mixing of cool and warm waters produces a natural system that is one of the most diverse and productive in the world.

Morris points out that the Great Barrier Reef has about 1,250 species across its 2,300 linear miles, or about 0.9 species per mile. In comparison, the North Carolina oceanfront coastline averages about 2.3 species per mile, meaning we can legitimately claim that our coast is more diverse than even the Great Barrier Reef. In an 1899 letter to Congress encouraging the establishment of the NOAA Beaufort Lab, the Commissioner of Fish and Fisheries



wrote "...the best place for the prosecution of marine fish-cultural operations and the conjoint scientific investigations was Beaufort harbor. The harbor and adjacent waters teem with animals in great variety and abundance."

In this issue of *Our Coast*, you can read about numerous opportunities to get your feet wet along our coast with the Coastal Federation. We want to share with you why our coast is the best place on

earth to live, work and play, and how our programs aim to keep it that way. The diversity of our natural environment translates into many treasured cultural traditions that are part of the fabric of our lives. Our work here at the Coastal Federation builds upon our rich coastal cultural heritage that is too valuable to push aside in the name of "progress." We seek a coast that sustains healthy and economically diverse communities that coexist and depend upon our productive coastal resources.

Make sure you take some time to really get to know the North Carolina coast this spring and summer. Here at the Coastal Federation, we are certain that the more you get out and experience all the coast has to offer, the more committed you will become to our efforts to protect and restore North Carolina's perfect coast.

With best regards
—Todd Miller, Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Todd Miller" with a horizontal line extending to the right.



North Carolina
Coastal Federation
Working Together for a Healthy Coast

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COVER PHOTO: Sam Bland. *Black skimmers nest May through July. According to Audubon North Carolina, they got their name because of the way they skim the water for prey.*

Join the **NORTH CAROLINA COASTAL FEDERATION**

2018 PELICAN AWARDS AND TASTE OF THE COAST

On the banks of Bogue Sound

SATURDAY, JULY 28 | 5:30 - 9 P.M.
CRYSTAL COAST CIVIC CENTER, MOREHEAD CITY



Enjoy live music, a silent auction and delectable tastings from local seafood restaurants and oyster growers. Try them all and pick your favorite!

Tickets are \$50 for Coastal Federation members and \$60 for non-members.

nccoast.org/celebrate



Photo by Rachael Carlyle



Photo by Sam Bland



Photo by Rachael Carlyle



Coastal Review Online wins 12 awards

Congratulations to the team at *Coastal Review Online*! Journalists for our daily, nonprofit news service took home 12 awards from the North Carolina Press Association in March, including six first-place awards. Stay up to date with the latest coastal news at coastalreview.org.

Coastal Federation featured on *Exploring North Carolina*

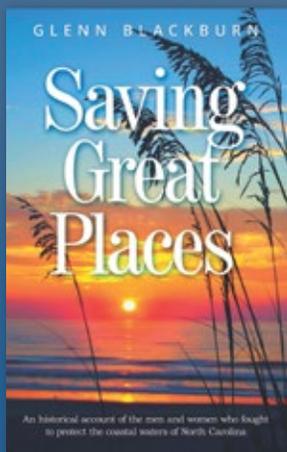
The UNC-TV show *Exploring North Carolina* featured the Coastal Federation in an episode that aired April 19. The episode is the third in a four-part series titled "Water in NC: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow." Tom Earnhardt, board member, is host, producer and writer for the show. The episode is available to watch at nccoast.org/exploringnc.

NEWS & NOTES



Our State's April issue features Coastal Federation

Our State magazine published a stunning photo essay in its April issue featuring some of the special coastal places the Coastal Federation worked with community members to protect, including Morris Landing in Holly Ridge, Hoop Pole Creek in Atlantic Beach and Durant's Point in Hatteras. Many thanks to Katie Saintsing, Emily Chaplin and Chris Council for their beautiful writing and photography. Members can get a discounted *Our State* magazine subscription. Go to nccoast.org/ourstate for details.



New book on Coastal Federation available online

Historian Glenn Blackburn published *Saving Great Places*, a historical account of the Coastal Federation's efforts to protect the coastal waters of North Carolina. It is available in full at nccoast.org/savinggreatplaces.

Meet our new development officer



Victoria Castor joined the Coastal Federation as a donor engagement specialist in April after relocating with her family from Chapel Hill to Hampstead. Victoria previously worked for the North Carolina Botanical Garden where she was responsible for fundraising events, corporate memberships and board engagement. Originally from the mountains of North Carolina, Victoria is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a Bachelor of Arts in political science. Victoria and her family are so excited to finally call their favorite place home, and she is thrilled to work with the Coastal Federation and its members to help protect and restore our beautiful coast.

MIKE GILES LEAVES LEGACY OF COASTAL PROTECTION

Mike Giles, a fierce and outspoken advocate for the southeast coastal region of the state, retired in March after 12 years with the Coastal Federation.

When Mike Giles started as a coastal advocate at the Coastal Federation in May 2006, he thought he'd be spending a lot of time out on the water. He grew up in Charlotte, but spent time each year at the coast fishing and exploring the beaches and marshes.

"Saltwater's in my blood," Giles said. "My friend told me about the job, and when I read the description, I said 'That's got my picture on it.'"

But Giles ended up spending a lot more time engaging with the public on land rather than out in the water — and that's not something he regrets. Tracy Skrabal, coastal scientist and manager at the Wrightsville Beach office, said Giles brought a lot of passion to the position.

"Mike embodied a true coastal advocate — passionate and knowledgeable about North Carolina's coast, but dedicated to civil and respectful discourse on issues that affect our waters and natural resources," she said. "For these reasons, Mike is widely respected by folks representing a wide range of opinions on these issues, and his kind and thoughtful approach to advocacy will surely be missed."

In his time at the Coastal Federation, Giles helped lead a successful fight against Titan America LLC (Titan), a company that wanted to build a coal-powered cement plant in Castle Hayne; organized folks against offshore oil drilling; advocated against the construction of terminal groins; coordinated the campaign for the Fred and Alice Stanback Coastal Education Center; and was the go-to person for questions about environmental threats to the coast.

"In my 12 years that I've been here, I've seen a sea change in how people look at the coast and how people look at development and how it can be done in a

compatible way," he said.

The fight against Titan dominated most of Giles' time with the Coastal Federation. The county's sudden announcement in May 2008 about the company "woke up New Hanover County overnight" to how easy it was for heavy industries to move forward with their plans.

"This was an issue and fight that took over my life, essentially," Giles said.

For eight years, Giles and the Coastal Federation led the way forward to prevent Titan from constructing its cement plant. Residents formed the Stop Titan coalition, and the Coastal Federation and other groups went to court against Titan. Thousands of people volunteered, attended rallies and spoke at meetings about the issue.

Finally, in March 2016, the company announced its abandonment of the plan, and New Hanover County celebrated. Giles ran out to get champagne for the office that day.

And yet, even while fighting against this major issue, Giles continued to tackle other environmental issues. The North Carolina

General Assembly approved legislation to allow the construction of up to six terminal groins. Giles is proud that during his time at the Coastal Federation, only one was constructed.

Giles also helped organize opposition to the 2017-22 draft offshore oil and gas exploration plan, and then again for the new 2019-24 draft plan proposed in 2017 by the current administration.

In one of Giles' last major rallying campaigns as coastal advocate, he helped organize buses for 200 coastal residents to attend the state's only public meeting on the offshore oil plan. And that, he said, was one of the most rewarding parts of his job — paving a way for people to make their voices heard.

"It's so important to get people the right information, giving them the tools to participate in the decision-making process," he said. "One thing I've really enjoyed is meeting with citizens and watching people's eyes light up or get angry or happy about what's happening on their coast."

Giles will continue to volunteer with the Coastal Federation and fight to protect the coast, but he'll be able to spend more time doing it from where he's happiest — out in the marsh.



SPEND YOUR SUMMER WITH THE COASTAL FEDERATION

The Coastal Federation is hosting a variety of events along the coast this summer. Whether you want to help build living shorelines, see marine critters up close or take in the beauty of the coast, there's something for everyone. Check out a region-by-region breakdown below. For dates and details, visit nccoast.org/events.



COASTWIDE

Volunteer to build more resilient shorelines

The Coastal Federation is hosting a variety of living shoreline events this summer along the entire coast. Help prevent erosion and create habitat by planting marsh grass or building an oyster reef using bags of recycled oyster shells. These workdays are popular, so sign up early.

WANCHESE

Green Teens Camp with Jennette's Pier

This camp from **July 9-13** is perfect for teens interested in outdoor adventures and the natural world. Campers will explore the Outer Banks and participate in activities involving living shorelines, marine debris and renewable energy.



Photo by Linda Sunderland

Make your voice heard at Lake Mattamuskeet

Join us **July 10** for a public meeting on the Lake Mattamuskeet Watershed Restoration Plan. Follow the plan development at nccoast.org/lakemattamuskeet.

Adopt-a-Highway cleanups

Groups interested in cleaning up the Coastal Federation's adopted stretch of N.C. 345 in Wanchese should contact Sara Hallas at sarajh@nccoast.org.



Open house for new dock

Join us in celebrating this exciting addition to the Wanchese office. The dock features a viewing platform and expands the Coastal Federation's education and restoration opportunities.

Paddleboard race to benefit Coastal Federation

The Southern Shores Paddleboard Race and Clinic, benefiting the Coastal Federation, is set up for all ages and abilities. **June 9.**

OCEAN

Work the soil at EarthWise Farm

Each summer, people plant and harvest fresh, local produce at this small community farm. Members of the Coastal Federation are invited to join us for these weekly workdays. **Every Wednesday at 6 p.m.**

Join us for a shoreline cleanup at Jones Island

At our shoreline cleanups, volunteers help keep special coastal places pristine and healthy. Volunteers will pick up litter and help keep track of the different types found. **June 5.**

Learn more about living shorelines

Are you a waterfront property owner interested in living shorelines? Register for an open house to hear from professionals and learn the steps you can take to build a living shoreline.

Cruise through the estuary to look for birds

Coastal waterways and marshes are home to many types of birds. On **June 10**, get an up-close look at the wildlife that calls the White Oak River and Bogue Sound home.



Photo by Alan Cradick

WRIGHTSVILLE BEACH

Volunteer as a Coastal Ambassador

Coastal Ambassadors help promote the work of the Coastal Federation and engage the public. Ambassadors are required to attend at least five trainings per year and represent the Coastal Federation at a minimum of three outreach events. **Trainings held monthly.**

See marine life up close at Touch Tank Tuesdays

Get your hands on crabs, urchins, fish, sea stars and other critters at Touch Tank Tuesday! The finds vary each week, so be sure to stop by every week to see something new. **Every Tuesday this summer beginning June 5.**



Clean Water Week at Carolina Beach State Park

Clean Water Week draws awareness to the one-year anniversary of the discovery of GenX in the Cape Fear River. Other organizations participating in the week of events include Cape Fear River Watch, Plastic Ocean Project, Surfrider and Sierra Club. **June 6.**

Attend a Turtle Talk

The Wrightsville Beach Sea Turtle Project hosts Turtle Talks **every Tuesday evening** at our office. Stop by and learn about these remarkable animals that nest on our beaches.

VISIT ONE OF OUR MANY SPECIAL PROPERTIES

The Coastal Federation has helped preserve tens of thousands of acres of special coastal properties since 1982. More than 6,700 acres are still managed by the Coastal Federation and help support our goals of clean water, thriving oysters and productive wetlands. Learn more and plan a visit at nccoast.org/visit.



PROJECT UPDATES

On the following pages you'll find updates on the Coastal Federation's five priorities. The Coastal Federation has been busy in all three regions protecting water quality, picking up lost crab pots, opposing offshore oil, building living shorelines, expanding on a large-scale oyster restoration project and much more.

For more information about the Coastal Federation's five priorities, visit nccoast.org/ourpriorities.

GOAL: COASTAL WATER QUALITY THAT SUPPORTS FISHING, SWIMMING AND A VIBRANT COASTAL ECONOMY.

Large-scale restoration to begin this year

The Coastal Federation is gearing up to oversee the restoration of 8,000 acres of wetlands, a multi-year project that will create jobs and reduce billions of gallons of runoff a year.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Wetlands Reserve Program teamed up with the Coastal Federation for this \$5 million series of projects. The Coastal Federation is contracting with Larry Sneeden, engineer and president of Coastal Stormwater Services Inc., to manage the projects.

"The goal for these projects is to restore to the extent practicable the conservation easement sites to their natural states, and to re-establish the flora and fauna that were disturbed by ditching and draining for agriculture," Sneeden said.

In his management role, Sneeden will

oversee all aspects of survey, design and construction inspection.

Construction is set to begin this summer on a tract in Tyrrell County and two tracts at the North River Wetlands Preserve, the Coastal Federation's 6,000-acre restoration project in Down East Carteret County. Once construction begins, the Coastal Federation will provide inspection services, meaning someone will be on site at all times during construction to measure progress.

The North River Wetlands Preserve work will restore approximately 2,000 acres of wetlands, leading to a reduction in the volume of runoff flowing into downstream estuaries.

In addition to the construction work, five sites are currently in the survey and design stage: three in Hyde County, one in Bladen County and one in Halifax County. Four engineering firms were hired by the

Coastal Federation to perform the survey and design: AECOM, LDSI, Albemarle & Associates Ltd. and Bissell Professional Group. Three of the firms — LDSI, Albemarle & Associates Ltd. and Bissell Professional Group — are North Carolina companies. Both Albemarle & Associates Ltd. and Bissell Professional Group are based in the Outer Banks.

"We're pleased to be contracting with local engineering firms to perform some of these restoration projects, which is especially important for Hyde County, where knowledge of this unique area is critical," said Bree Charron, coastal specialist at the Ocean office, who is serving as project lead.

Sneeden said he is grateful to be part of this multi-year project.

"The wetland restoration projects are big projects with significant impacts for wildlife habitat, stormwater runoff and the Coastal Federation itself, and I am glad to be able to contribute to that effort," Sneeden said. "It is also a golden opportunity to get out and play in the mud."

Stay updated on this restoration work at nccoast.org/stormwater.

Walk the Loop website updated

The Coastal Federation recently revamped its online tour guide of projects in Wrightsville Beach that reduce the volume of stormwater runoff flowing into nearby waterways. Take the tour today at walktheloop.org.





GOAL: NATURAL AND PRODUCTIVE ESTUARINE SHORELINES.

Protecting working waterfronts

Working waterfronts are economic hubs for many coastal communities. In Down East Carteret County’s community of Atlantic, the harbor is the only place to dock boats, making its protection especially important.

In recent years, severe shoreline erosion has filled the Atlantic Harbor access channel with sand, making it increasingly difficult for boats to safely navigate the channel. It becomes especially difficult when boats are weighed down with the day’s catch.

Currently, the shoreline surrounding the harbor is protected by sandbags, but these sandbags have been damaged over the years and are no longer doing their job. Rather than armoring the shoreline with hardened structures that destroy estuarine habitat, the Coastal Federation will build an 850-linear-foot living shoreline along the harbor using a recently awarded \$170,000 grant from the N.C. Department of Justice’s Environmental Enhancement Grant program.

Not only will this large shoreline project protect the harbor from erosion and serve

as a storm buffer, it will also enhance the productivity of the estuary for fish and wildlife by creating a half-acre of new salt marsh habitat.

The Coastal Federation will work with Carteret County and the community of Atlantic for this project. Because of the high wave energy of the area, a stone sill will be necessary in addition to salt marsh plants.

Construction on this shoreline is set to begin late 2018 or early 2019.

Stay updated with the latest living shoreline news at nccoast.org/livingshorelines.

National Workshop coming to North Carolina in 2019

Tracy Skrabal, coastal scientist at the Wrightsville Beach office, was a keynote speaker and steering committee member at the National Living Shorelines Technology Transfer Workshop in Oakland, California. The February workshop, hosted by Restore America’s Estuaries, allowed experts to exchange current information about living shorelines. Next year’s technology transfer will be on the North Carolina coast.

“North Carolina is ripe for this because we have so many stakeholders working on living shorelines,” Skrabal said. “It’s a huge opportunity for us to get our living shoreline message out on a national scope.”

Stay tuned at nccoast.org/events.

Current living shoreline projects

The Coastal Federation is working on more than 20 living shorelines in the upcoming months. Check out this map for locations.

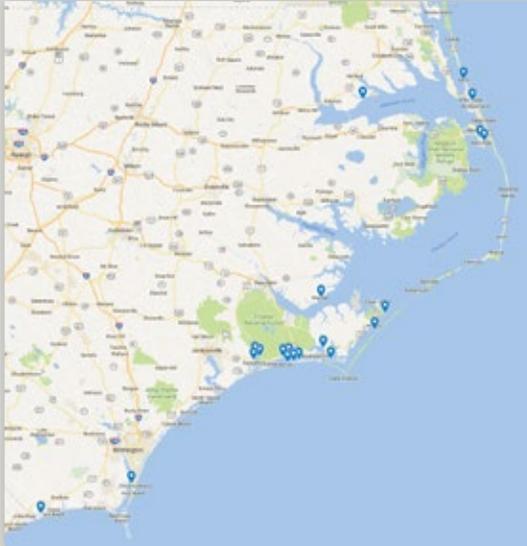




Photo by Mark Hibbs

GOAL: OYSTERS THAT THRIVE AND SUPPORT VIBRANT FISHERIES AND HABITAT, GOOD WATER QUALITY AND A STRONG COASTAL ECONOMY.

Second phase of Swan Island Oyster Sanctuary beginning

The Swan Island Oyster Sanctuary is one of the Coastal Federation’s largest oyster restoration projects in recent years, with 15 acres completed in 2017 and 10 more slated for 2018.

In March truckers began delivering granite for the second phase of the Swan Island Oyster Sanctuary to the port in Morehead City. From there, it was then barged to the project site in Pamlico Sound, near the mouth of the Neuse River, and placed in the water. Reef construction began in early May.

This phase of the oyster sanctuary is being built with pieces of granite purchased from a North Carolina-based facility. For

large-scale oyster restoration projects the contractor builds ridges of granite, approximately 4 feet high and 6-to-8 feet wide, at the reef site. These ridges provide a base for oyster larvae — or spat — to attach to and grow on. The construction of the project itself has created jobs for scientists, barge operators, truck drivers and construction workers. Benefits of the project continue for years after construction, as oysters improve water quality and fish habitat, both of which are important for North Carolina’s coastal economy.

Several entities have financially contributed to the construction of the sanctuary. Their support demonstrates the growing acknowledgement that habitat restoration

is an effective economic tool for coastal communities. The General Assembly and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration both provided funding for the project, as did Grady-White Boats and individual donors.

The Swan Island Oyster Sanctuary is part of the 50 Million Oyster Initiative, which aims to restore 50 acres of oyster habitat by 2020. With each acre supporting approximately one million oysters, there will be 50 million oysters in the water, filtering 2.5 billion gallons of water each day.

To support this initiative, go to nccoast.org/50million.

Recycle your oyster shells

The Coastal Federation’s Ocean office is now a shell recycling site thanks to a partnership with the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries.



Recycling oyster shells is an easy way to help improve water quality and fish habitat. When these shells are placed back in the water, they provide a base for oyster larvae to attach to and grow on.

These shells will be used for living shoreline and oyster restoration projects in the central region. Michelle Clower, coastal specialist at the Wanchese office, also created a program to pick up recycled shells from restaurants. Several volunteers pick up shells from a few local restaurants. To learn more, contact Michelle at michellec@nccoast.org.

A complete list of shell recycling sites is available through nccoast.org/oysters. Shell

recycling sites are not restricted to the coast — there are locations in Orange and Wake counties, as well as other inland counties.

Subscribe to *On the Half Shell*

For all the latest news on North Carolina oysters, subscribe to *On the Half Shell*. This quarterly email newsletter contains information on the latest oyster research, updates on oyster restoration projects and profiles on oyster growers. Subscribe at ncoysters.org.

GOAL: EFFECTIVE COASTAL MANAGEMENT THAT PROTECTS AND RESTORES THE NORTH CAROLINA COAST.

Coastal Federation joins litigation against federal suspension of clean water protections

The Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) is representing the Coastal Federation and eight other conservation groups in federal court to challenge the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' suspension of clean water protections under the Clean Water Act.

SELC filed the challenge in the U.S. District Court for the District of South Carolina in February, shortly after the EPA announced a two-year suspension of the Clean Water Rule, which is also known as the Waters of the United States (WOTUS). This rule, which was finalized in 2015, clarified federal protections for small creeks and streams as well as pocosins and Carolina bays.

"We depend on clean water to live, work

and play here along the North Carolina coast," said Todd Miller. "With this action, we hope to defend reasonable and prudent regulatory safeguards that are vital to our healthy coastal economy and environment."

Everyone relies on clean water for drinking, and on the coast, clean, healthy waters are critical to thriving tourism and fishing industries. North Carolina's commercial fishing industry is valued at \$95 million, and coastal tourism is a \$3.4 billion industry. A threat to clean water is also a threat to these industries, which is why it is important these protections remain in place.

More details about this issue will be forthcoming. A comment period is expected to begin at the end of the summer. Follow along with the hashtag **#ProtectCleanWater**.



Photo courtesy of NOAA

Stay updated on this litigation and on the Coastal Federation's advocacy work at nccoast.org/advocacy.

GOAL: A COAST THAT IS FREE OF MARINE DEBRIS.

Crab pot project completes fifth year

In January, 76 watermen along the coast set out into the sounds to pick up 3,496 lost crab pots as part of the Coastal Federation's fifth annual Lost Fishing Gear Recovery Project.

The project lasted from Jan. 17-27, with boats working anywhere from two to six days, depending on the Marine Patrol district. This statewide project was once again made possible with \$100,000 in state funding from the General Assembly. The Coastal Federation will continue to seek funding for this project from the General Assembly this summer. Learn more at nccoast.org/crabpotproject.



To stay updated on the Coastal Federation's marine debris goal, visit nccoast.org/marinedebris.



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Photo by Sam Bland

Hop on board — it's all hands on deck to protect the coast.

To join or renew your annual membership, visit nccoast.org/membership.

You can also renew by mailing a check to 3609 N.C. 24 (Ocean), Newport, NC 28570.

Your membership helps keep our coastal waters clean and safe for boating, fishing and swimming.

Questions? Call us at 252-393-8185 or send us an email at nccf@nccoast.org.



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VOLUNTEER

Volunteers make the Coastal Federation's work possible. Visit nccoast.org/volunteer to complete a volunteer interest form and learn about the many ways to get involved.



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