



# NCSCP

## NORTH CAROLINA SANDHILLS CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP

### CONSERVING, ENHANCING, AND PROTECTING YOUR SANDHILLS

**T**he North Carolina Sandhills Conservation Partnership (NCSCP) is a coalition of eight organizations that share the important goal of sustaining and caring for the Sandhills ecosystem. Although diverse in makeup and emphasis, NCSCP works in ways that are good for the people, the land, and the wildlife of the region.

The Sandhills is a recognized biogeographical region lying within North and South Carolina. In North Carolina, this region includes the following counties: Cumberland, Lee, Harnett, Hoke, Montgomery, Moore, Richmond, and Scotland. Scientists originally thought that the area had been part of a large inland dune system because of its rolling hills and sandy soil, hence, the name Sandhills. Present thinking, however, is that the area was actually carved out of an ancient delta plain. Nonetheless, its importance lies not in how it was created, but how rich it is in vegetation and wildlife.



The Sandhills region is one of the last areas in the Southeastern United States where longleaf pine trees still dominate the landscape. The longleaf pine and its unique ecosystem previously covered 92 million acres from Virginia to Texas. Today, less than three percent remains. It is an ecosystem that thrives on fire. Longleaf pine and

wiregrass will not survive and grow without the presence of low-intensity fires. Proper fire management of longleaf pine and wiregrass by NCSCP supports these species and numerous others that have disappeared in similar areas that do not have prescribed burns.



There are more than 150 state and federally listed species that call the Sandhills home. In the Sandhills region, the red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) is the best known of these species and is a good indicator of the health of the longleaf ecosystem. This small woodpecker, one of eight species of woodpeckers that reside in N.C., is the only one that excavates a cavity in living longleaf pine trees.

The Partnership was created in April 2000 with a mission to protect this unique environment. Guided by a comprehensive conservation plan, NCSCP partners share information and work together to implement strategies to achieve mutual goals that will benefit both the natural resources and the people of the region.

The primary stakeholders in the partnership are:

- North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation (NCPARKS)
- North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC)\*
- Sandhills Area Land Trust (SALT)
- Sandhills Ecological Institute (SEI)\*
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC)\*
- U.S. Army Fort Bragg (Fort Bragg)\*
- The U.S. Army Environmental Command (USAEC)\*
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)\*

\* Denotes founding member



Even though each participating organization has a different set of objectives, members understand that working together is the best solution to protect the Sandhills environment. Much has been gained through the formation of this partnership. For example, biologists have a regional database to catalogue this unique environment; partners can protect important conservation lands through purchases and conservation easements; and the people of the region benefit by having a partnership that unites these groups through common goals.

The following is a brief explanation of each organization and its goals.



**NCPARKS** preserves and protects representative examples of the natural beauty, ecological features and recreational resources of statewide significance; provides outdoor recreational opportunities in a safe and healthy environment; and provides environmental education opportunities that promote stewardship of the state's natural heritage.

<http://www.ncsparks.net>



**WRC** manages, restores, develops, cultivates, conserves, protects, and regulates North Carolina wildlife resources.

<http://www.ncwildlife.org>



**SALT**, founded in 1991 as a non-profit conservation organization, preserves land, water, open space, and historic farmlands in order to sustain the natural character of the landscape and quality of life for the people of the Sandhills region.

<http://www.sandhillslandtrust.org/>



**SEI** conducts research involving the longleaf pine and related ecosystems in the Carolinas; promotes and engages in scientific study and education regarding the longleaf pine ecosystem; and continues the study of the RCW and its habitat.

<http://www.sandhillsecological.org>



**TNC** preserves the plants, animals, and natural communities that represent the diversity of the Sandhills of North Carolina by protecting the land and the water they need to survive. TNC has worked to conserve the natural heritage of the Sandhills for more than 20 years.

<http://nature.org/northcarolina>



**Fort Bragg's** mission is to maintain the XVIII Airborne Corps as a strategic crisis response force. Military training on the land comprising Fort Bragg is essential in meeting the Army's training needs. The Fort Bragg Endangered Species Branch mission is to support military training by managing five federally endangered species through ecosystem management.

<http://www.bragg.army.mil>



**USAEC** implements the Army's environmental program. It works with other NCSCP partners to ensure that the Army's environmental goals are being met in the Sandhills area.

<http://aec.army.mil/usaec/>



**USFWS** oversees and promotes the recovery of all endangered, threatened, and federal species of concern that live in this region.

<http://nc-es.fws.gov/>

A list of additional stakeholders includes:

N.C. Department of Agriculture, N.C. Natural Heritage Program, N.C. Department of Commerce, N.C. Division of Forest Resources, N.C. Department of Transportation, Fayetteville Public Works Commission, Fayetteville Parks and Recreation, and representatives of North Carolina landowners, foresters, pine needle harvesters, and the real estate industry.

*The N.C. Sandhills Conservation Partnership conserves, protects and enhances the unique ecosystems of the Sandhills. This partnership of state, federal agencies and conservation groups is as diverse as the Sandhills itself.*