



# South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative

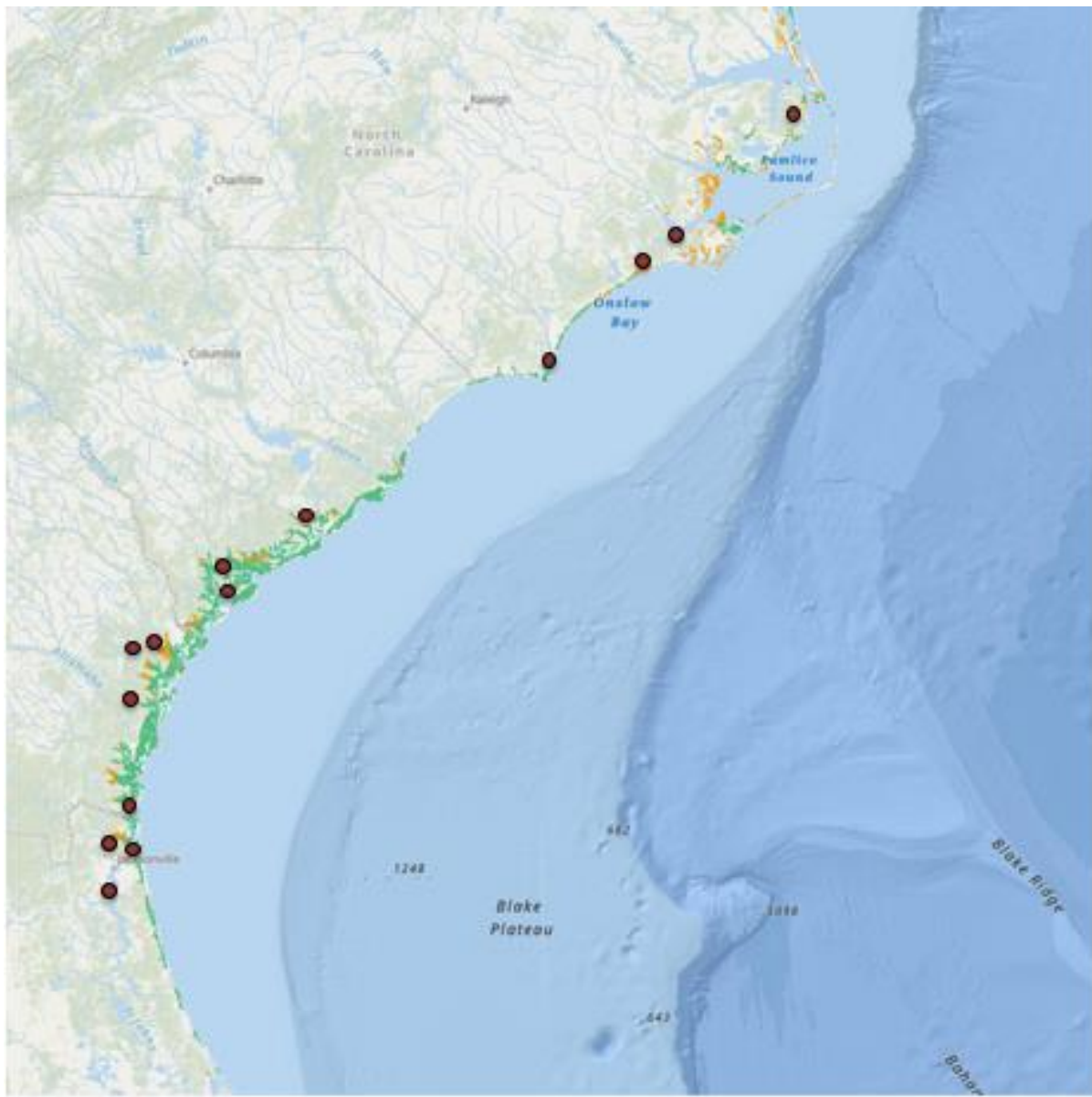
Leda Cunningham

The Pew Charitable Trusts

May 6, 2022

NC Beach Inlet and Waterway Association Spring Meeting





# Why is the Salt Marsh Important?

- Provides shoreline protection from erosion and storm surge, improves water quality
  - Absorb floods and wave energy, decreasing property damage by up to 20%
  - 1 acre can absorb up to 1.5 million gallons of floodwater
  - Average \$1.8million/km<sup>2</sup> in protective value





# Why is the Salt Marsh Important?

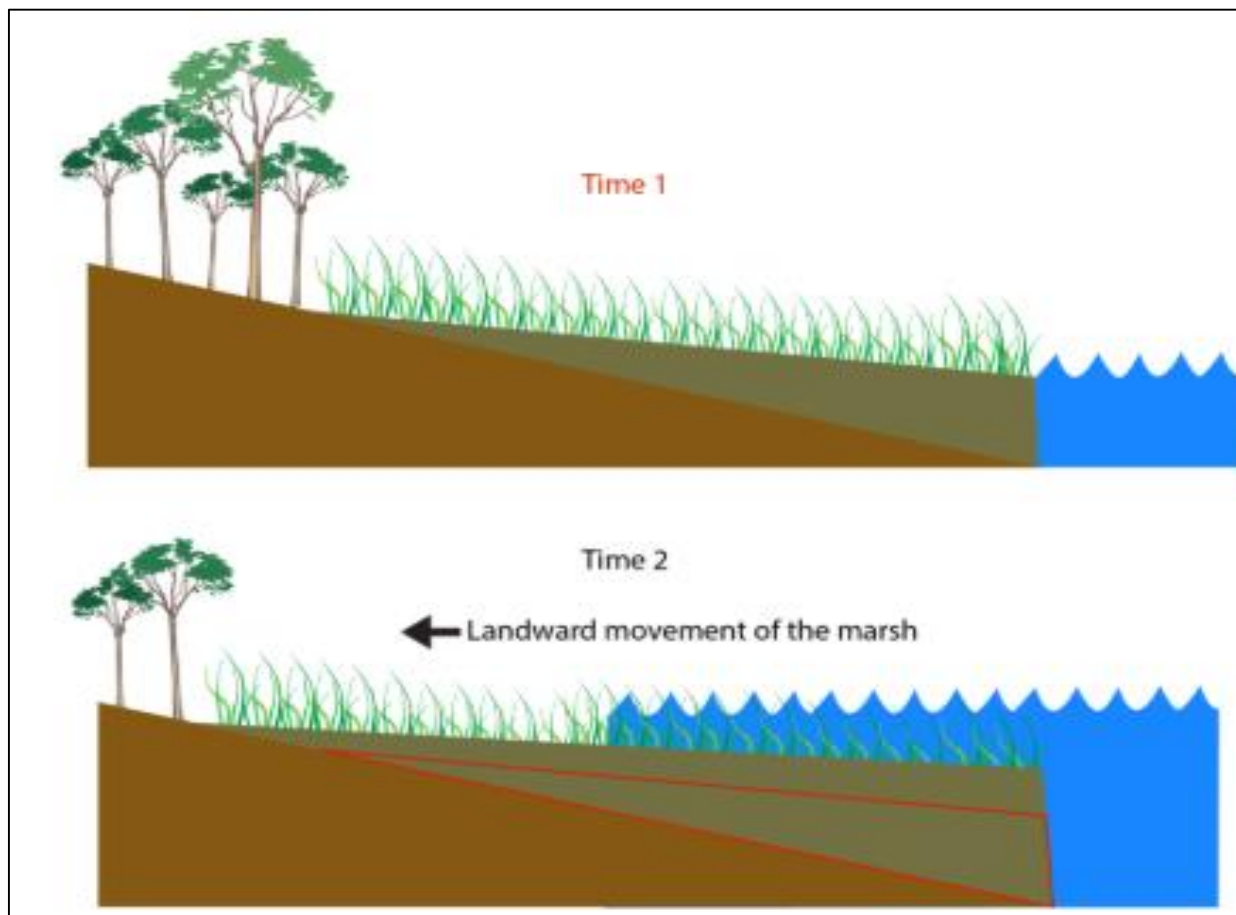


Photo credit: Shutterstock-Judson Patterson



Photo credit: Audubon

# Why are Protections Needed?



NC Sea Grant

# Vision

*The region's salt marshes and their migration corridors are conserved and protected into the future to the benefit of wildlife, coastal communities, and military through a collaborative, voluntary partnership.*

# Goal

*Maintain, at a minimum, the current level of productivity and extent of the approximate one million acres of salt marsh within the South Atlantic states.*

# Guiding Principles

---

- Partnerships and Collaboration
- Involvement by Public and Private Sectors
- Strategic, Science-based Approach
- Conservation Plan as a Framework and Catalyst



# What is needed to save this habitat?

Categories of protections:

1. Provide space for marsh to migrate
2. Remove/modify physical barriers that would prevent natural transition
3. Protect and restore salt marsh where it currently exists

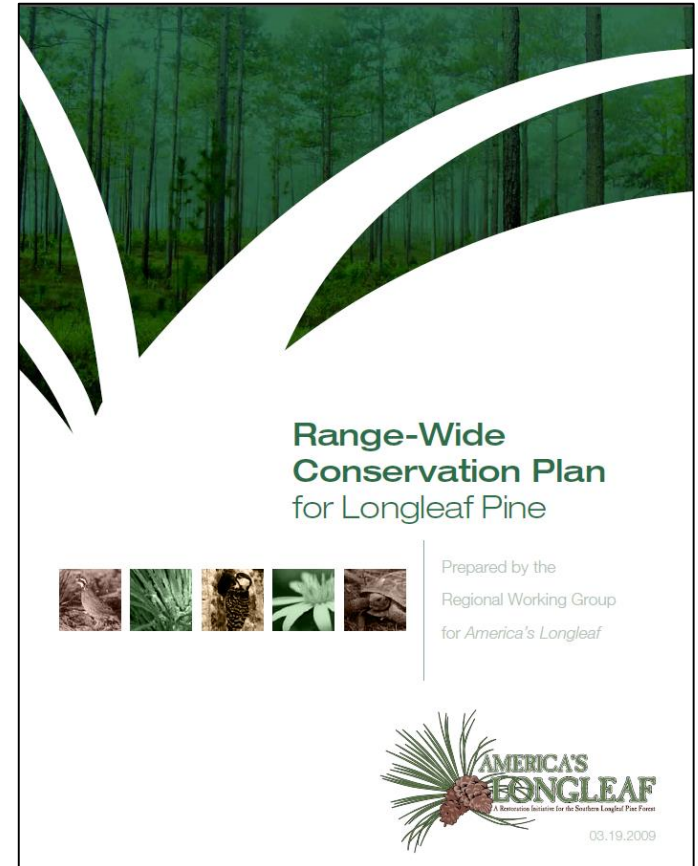


Guana Tolomato Matanzas NERR



# Model: America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative

- Successful landscape scale conservation effort to protect 5 million acres from Virginia to Texas in 15 years
- Partnership between DoD, state and federal resource agencies, and many NGOs
- Plan development was led by partners, including the Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability (SERPPAS)



# SASMI Structure

- Working Group
- Steering Committee
- Salt Marsh Coalition



# Milestones and Next Steps

---

- ✓ SERPPAS Principals Meeting – May 2021 – Approved
- ✓ Staffing – Hired
- ✓ Steering Committee and Working Group – kicked off Summer 2021
- ✓ Topic Teams Kickoff – Fall 2021
- ✓ Regional workshop – March 28-April 1, 2022
- Draft Conservation Plan – Summer 2022
- Final Conservation Plan – Spring 2023
- Implementation Plan – Summer/Fall 2023



# SASMI Workshop

---

- Virtual meeting
- Foundation of the Conservation Plan
- Explore key coastal salt marsh issues, elements, and strategies vital to regional conservation plan
  - Workshop Topics

# Workshop Topics

---

## Foundational Strategies

- Marsh Migration
- Conservation and Restoration
- Cultural and Community Connectivity
- Infrastructure and Sustainable Development
- Policy

## Supporting Tools

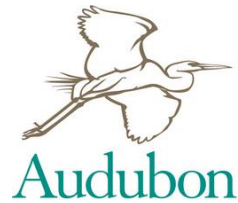
- Mapping
- Education and Outreach
- Funding Mechanisms

# NC Marsh CAP (Conservation Action Plan)

- State-based SASMI implementation
- Working group formation (Spring-Summer 2022)
- Spatial prioritization and mapping (Summer-Fall 2022)
- CAP completion and integration with regional Conservation Plan (Fall 2022-Spring 2023)
- NC as model for other 3 states to implement SASMI
- Leverage and enhance existing state, local, private, NGO, military efforts



# Partners to Date





# Marsh Forward!

*For more information, please contact*

[lcunningham@pewtrusts.org](mailto:lcunningham@pewtrusts.org)

[mallory.eastland@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:mallory.eastland@ag.tamu.edu) (SASMI coordinator)