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## Press Release

### For Immediate Release

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## New Cape Fear Coastkeeper® Climbs Aboard

**Wilmington** – Coastal native and long time environmental steward Mike Giles took over as the new Cape Fear COASTKEEPER® on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Giles replaces Ted Wilgis who is now working part-time as an educator and habitat restoration specialist with the North Carolina Coastal Federation while he pursues a master's degree in marine sciences at UNCW.

"Mike will now be our point person along the south coast to watch out to make sure that environmental laws are understood and respected," said the federation's executive director Todd Miller. "He'll be keeping a close eye on how coastal resources are being protected just as Ted Wilgis has so effectively done for us over the past four years."

As a COASTKEEPER®, Giles' main job is to monitor land and water uses along the southern coast, and to work with citizens and agencies to promote responsible environmental stewardship. He will be a voice for protecting the coastal environment, patrolling the coast by land, water and air and working to make the public aware of environmental concerns. His territory covers the tidal creeks, sounds, barrier islands and near shore waters from the New River Inlet near Jacksonville to the Little River Inlet near Calabash, a total of 100 miles of ocean and 1,000 miles of estuarine shoreline. Two other COASTKEEPERS® patrol the central and northern coastal regions.

"I just about grew up on the coast and the changes I've seen in the last five years made me realize that I needed to get involved now to ensure that those changes do not further damage our fragile coastal resources," said Giles.

A native North Carolinian, Mike brings an extensive natural resource protection background to the Federation. In his most recent position, he served as the Open Space Land Manager for Durham County, working to acquire and protect farmland and open space. This familiarity with land use planning, open space protection, and stewardship make him a valuable community resource in his role as COASTKEEPER®.

Other former positions were with the National Park Service, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and with local governments in both North Carolina and Georgia working as a Park Ranger, Wildlife Biologist, Law Enforcement Specialist and Environmental Educator.

Mike is also familiar with law enforcement roles and procedures. In Charlotte he was the Chief Park Ranger for Mecklenburg County and supervised 20 Rangers whose duties ran the gamut from environmental education to law enforcement.

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Cape Fear Coastkeeper, continued

He majored in Wildlife Biology at NC State University with emphasis on Coastal Ecology and Ornithology. While at State he was involved in research on shore bird populations at Pea Island and trapped alligators in the Southport area and in the Everglades. He grew up camping, fishing, duck hunting and exploring the outer and inner banks and has continued those pursuits as an adult.

"I'm already getting reports of environmental problems and calls for help from folks concerned about pollution problems," said Giles. His existing knowledge of state and local government is helping these concerned citizens navigate their way through the complex federal, state and local agency bureaucracy.

One of the ways Mike will fulfill his watchdog role is to recruit volunteers who will help monitor projects in his territory.

"I am thrilled to have this opportunity to advocate for the health of the coast, said Giles. "And I'm looking forward to working with the public, getting people who love the coast involved in the wise stewardship of the resources belonging to us all."

Citizens of the southern coast are encouraged to call Giles when they observe an environmental problem or infraction, or if they are interested in serving as a volunteer. The office number is 910-790-3275 and the Pollution Hotline is 866-NCWATER. Pollution problems can also be reported on the Coastal Federation's website at [www.nccoast.org](http://www.nccoast.org).

The North Carolina Coastal Federation's mission is advocating for the coastal environment, encouraging enforcement of environmental laws, educating citizens, students and community leaders, and preserving and restoring habitat and water quality.

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***About the North Carolina Coastal Federation:  
"Citizens Working Together for a Healthy Coast"***

The North Carolina Coastal Federation (NCCF) is the state's largest nonprofit organization working to restore and protect the coast. NCCF headquarters are located at 3609 Highway 24 in Ocean between Morehead City and Swansboro and are open Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 5 pm.

The headquarters include NCCF's main offices, the Cape Lookout Coastkeeper office, a gift shop, Nature Library, Weber Seashell Exhibit, Learning Center, and adjoining nature trail.

The NCCF also operates field offices in Wilmington and Manteo. For more information call 252-393-8185 or check out NCCF's website at [www.nccoast.org](http://www.nccoast.org)