



North Carolina Coastal Federation | 3609 Hwy 24 (Ocean) | Newport, North Carolina 28570 | Web: <http://www.nccoast.org>

Press Release

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NCCF Celebrates 25 Years of Coastal Conservation

Ocean, NC - A small advocacy group that started 25 years ago on the back porch of its founder's house on Bogue Sound has in one generation become the most effective coastal conservation group in North Carolina.

"I have incredible confidence and satisfaction in the N.C. Coastal Federation," notes Marc Basnight of Manteo and president pro tempore of the N.C. Senate. "I think it's one of the best organizations I have ever worked with, not just on the coast but in the 20 plus years I've been in the legislature."

The Federation tells its story in its annual State of the Coast report, which will be released 10 a.m. Monday at the N.C. Aquarium in Pine Knoll Shores, just across the sound from where the group formed.

Twenty-two people, organizations, businesses and groups will also be honored at a luncheon for their work last year to protect the coastal environment. Among the Pelican Award winners is Derb S. Carter Jr. of Raleigh, who heads the state chapter of the Southern Environmental Law Center. He will receive NCCF's Lifetime Achievement Award. State Sen. Dan Clodfelter, D-Mecklenburg, will also receive an award for successfully championing tougher stormwater regulations in the N.C. General Assembly.

When asked to explain why he started the Federation in 1982, Todd Miller often trots out his self-deprecating joke about needing a job. He was just out of the University of North Carolina with a master's degree in city and regional planning. The world wasn't exactly beating down his door. It was either start a non-profit to battle unwise coastal development or go broke trying to be a commercial fisherman. Miller wisely chose the former.

The story is sure to bring a laugh every time. There is, of course, much more to it.

A coastal native who was becoming increasingly concerned about the changes rampaging development was having on the lands and waters of his childhood, Miller returned home to Carteret County with a simple idea: People are innately good and blessed with abundant common sense. They would rush to defend the natural heritage of their land if provided with factual information and an occasional guiding hand.

That has been NCCF's guiding principle ever since. In the early years, it marshaled the good sense of coastal natives to save Permuda Island in Stump Sound and to chase away strip

miners from the northeastern coast. Much of the land that was targeted by the peat miners is now preserved as wildlife refuges. NCCF did then what most advocacy groups do: It pointed fingers, filed lawsuits, challenged.

Over time, though, the group matured. It now has 8,000 members and 200 affiliated groups, a professional staff of 16 and an operating budget exceeding \$1 million. Bill Holman watched the transformation first as an environmental lobbyist, then as head of the state's main environmental agency. "Other groups at their core are just advocacy," said Holman, now a senior fellow at Duke University's Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions. "One thing I admire about the Federation is that is a full-service environmental group. It does education, it does service, it does policy, it preserves property and it does a good job of engaging its members."

Though it remains at its core an advocacy group that has been in the thick of every environmental policy fight on the coast over the past two decades, NCCF has increasingly come to rely less on lawsuits and mass meetings to push its agenda. It now partners with state agencies on topics as varied as protecting coastal habitats and promoting fisheries reforms. It works with coastal towns and counties on stormwater projects and land-use plans. NCCF even engages developers and large retailers like Wal-Mart to help them lessen the environmental effects of their shopping centers and subdivisions.

Its environmental education programs have touched thousands of coastal residents and visitors, and the group has preserved almost 10,000 acres of environmentally sensitive land and restored thousands of acres of degraded habitat. Its ongoing North River Farms project in Carteret County is largest wetlands restoration ever attempted in North Carolina. The Federation's lobbyists have become influential players in the state legislature. The bills that they and allies promoted and helped pass ban seawalls and other hardened structures along the oceanfront and inlets, led to largest increase in funding for oyster restoration in 30 years, increased fines for violating the Coastal Area Management Act and declared a one-year moratorium on new mega-landfills so that the state could study their environmental and social impacts.

To prepare it for the next 25 years, the Federation has embarked on a \$3 million capital campaign that will enable it to increase its staff and expand its programs in all coastal regions in the face of an expected boom that will increase the population of coastal counties by 43 percent by 2030.

"There are no silver bullets," Miller said of meeting the future's challenges. "It will take hard work by all of us. We have to get more people out there."

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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 only non-profit organization focused exclusively on protecting and restoring the coast of North Carolina through education, advocacy and habitat restoration and preservation. 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 NCCF also operates regional offices in Wilmington and Manteo. For more information call 252-393-8185 or check out NCCF's website at www.nccoast.org