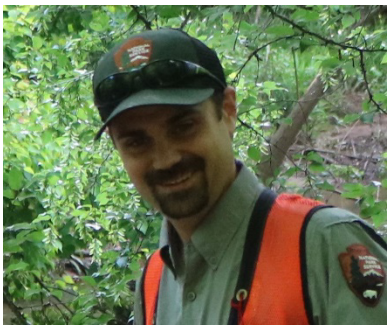
Southeast Coast Network News February 2022

https://www.nps.gov/im/secn/index.htm



Eric Starkey, SECN Aquatic Ecologist

Starkey to Temporarily Lead the Southeast Coast Network

Program Manager Brian Gregory will start a temporary 120-day detail as I&M Division Chief while current Chief, Brian Mitchell, details as CESU coordinator in the Northeast Region. Eric Starkey, SECN aquatic ecologist, will assume the reigns of the Southeast Coast Network. Physical relocations will not be a part of these temporary details. It will be an opportunity for Eric and the Brians (Mitchell and Gregory) to gain experience and some additional perspective with minimal disruptions to their respective programs and personal lives. Details are scheduled to officially begin February 13.

Monitoring and ARDs at Cumberland Island National Seashore

Program manager Brian Gregory got his feet wet in the field (literally!) for the first time in 2022 by volunteering to assist Bird and Anuran protocol lead Michael Parrish and CESU intern Lily Martin at Cumberland Island National Seashore. Assisting with field operations is sometimes the only way a program manager can escape the desk and get reconnected with wilderness areas and park staff. “More field work please!” says Brian.

Left, Ches Vervaeke uses the surveyor's compass to collect backsight azimuth during total station setup. Right, Daniel McCay secures the connection for the RTK base station. NPS photos / Mark Hynds

Survey Training for SECN

Dr. Jacob M. Bateman McDonald of the University of North Georgia's (UNG) Institute for Environmental and Spatial Analysis presented Surveying Techniques Training, a three-day training course at the SECN office in Athens, Georgia in December. The course trained SECN staff in the use of global positioning systems (GPS), global navigation satellite systems (GNSS), real-time kinematic positioning (RTK), total station surveying, and integrated surveying techniques. Dr. Bateman-McDonald is a former post-doctoral researcher at the network, so he was able to tailor the course to the specific needs of each SECN monitoring protocol.

Dr. Jacob Bateman-McDonald (behind the tripod) prepares the class preparing to set up 2 RTK units to conduct a static survey of benchmark locations using 2 Trible R10 RTK receivers. The SECN staff includes from left, Stephen Cooper, Eric Starkey, Claire Schmidt, Ches Vervaeke, and Daniel McCay. NPS photo / Mark Hynds

Coastal Ecologist William “Ches” Vervaeke and Coastal Technician Claire Schmidt learned best practices to establish accurate benchmark locations, crucial to saltmarsh elevation and coastal shoreline change monitoring. SECN Aquatic Ecologist Eric Starkey and Hydrologic Technician Daniel McCay learned the values of GNSS base station and RTK static surveying to improve water level data at each datasonde deployment location. Stephen Cooper concentrated on total station surveying and integrated techniques in support of wadeable stream habitat monitoring.
The Southeast Coast Network would like to thank Dr. Bateman McDonald for taking the time to design a course specific to the SECN’s needs and for the time he spent both in the classroom and in the field over the three days. The training will improve the quality of geographic data collected by the network in future monitoring cycles.

SECN Supports Winter Shorebird Count

The Southeast Coast Network provided support in early January with the 2022 Mid-Winter Shorebird Count on Cumberland Island National Seashore. The annual survey occurs across many of Georgia's beaches and provides the park and the state an estimate of species presence, including those with elevated conservation status such as piping plover, red knot, and American oystercatcher. SECN Botanist Forbes Boyle assisted Pat and Doris Leary during the survey.

Mid-Winter Shorebird Count participants, Pat and Doris Leary, tally the numbers of individual shorebirds between Christmas Creek and the beach on Cumberland Island's north end. NPS photo / M. Forbes Boyle

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New Employee Orientation to OBX Parks

The Southeast Coast Network's new coastal monitoring team, Ches Vervaeke and Claire Schmidt, were accompanied by SECN program manager, Brian Gregory, to Cape Lookout National Seashore and Cape Hatteras National Seashore January 17-21 to get the network's newest staff members acquainted with the park resources, key staff members and logistical concerns at these parks. Ches was able to take SET readings at stations that had been neglected during the pandemic and Claire worked with CAHA staff members so she can hit the ground running during spring surveys scheduled for March.

Shoreline Position and Water-Quality Data Available

All shoreline position data is being published in geodatabase format on the IRMA (NPS Integrated Resource Management Application) portal. To date, files from 2018-2021 have been uploaded for Canaveral National Seashore, Cumberland Island National Seashore, and Fort Matanzas National Monument. The geodatabases are available at https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2287235. For more information, contact Wendy Wright (Data Manager) or Claire Schmidt (Coastal Technician).
All water-quality discrete nutrient data from fixed-station sites for the years 2005-2020 has been published to EQuIS. For an electronic data deliverable of this data, contact Eric Starkey (Aquatic Ecologist) or Wendy Wright (Data Manager). Data is also available at https://www.waterqualitydata.us/.

Field Work Updates

The FY2022 field work season is underway for the Southeast Coast Network. All data collected for each SECN monitoring program last season is being processed with reports coming out soon.

Coastal Wetlands

Surface Elevation Table (SET) sites will be surveyed at Canaveral National Seashore, Fort Matanzas National Monument, Cumberland Island National Seashore, Fort Frederica National Monument , Fort Pulaski National Monument , Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve, Cape Hatteras National Seashore and Cape Lookout National Seashore in FY22. Installed last year, the new sites are more accessible from both a safety and operations perspective and allow for two readings per year and after any events such as hurricanes or floods. Two additional SET sites are planned to be installed at Cape Lookout National Seashore and Cape Hatteras National Seashore later this in FY22 and a revised protocol is currently in review with publication expected later this year.

Landbird and Anuran Communities

Automated recording device (ARD) deployments started in January with the assistance of a detail by Amorita Brackett, a field crew leader with the Southeast Coast Invasive Plant Management Team. She will deploy ARDs at Fort Frederica National Monument, Moores Creek National Battlefield, Congaree National Park and Canaveral National Seashore. Lily Martin, an SECN intern, will deploy ARDs at Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park. A scientific review of both landbird and anuran monitoring efforts is also scheduled for FY22.

Shorelines

Shoreline position data will be collected by SECN staff at Canaveral National Seashore, Cumberland Island National Seashore, Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve and Fort Matanzas National Monument in spring 2022. Park staff will assist with collection efforts at Cape Lookout National Seashore and Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

Vegetation Communities

Travel plans are being finalized for this season's monitoring at Cape Lookout National Seashore, Moores Creek National Battlefield, Horseshoe Bend National Military Park and Canaveral National Seashore. Data continues to be processed from last summer's field work at Congaree National Park, Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park, Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area and Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park.

Wadeable Streams

Preparations for wadeable stream monitoring surveys at Congaree National Park in May continue. The team will travel to the park in April to confirm permanent benchmark locations. A summary report from last year's data collection at Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area is nearing completion.

Water Quality

A water-quality data collection trip was completed last month for Congaree National Park, Fort Pulaski National Monument , Cumberland Island National Seashore. Canaveral National Seashore, Fort Matanzas National Monument, and Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve. Monthly visits will continue throughout FY2022. Fixed-station time-series data collection continues with assistance from park staff and partners at Cape Hatteras National Seashore, and Cape Lookout National Seashore. Park-wide water-quality assessments will be conducted at Cumberland Island National Seashore and Fort Matanzas National Monument in July 2022.

Recent Publications

The Southeast Coast Network recently published the following reports:

- Terrestrial Vegetation Monitoring at Fort Pulaski National Monument: 2019 Data Summary. Available at: DataStore - Published Report - (Code: 2288716) (nps.gov)

- Terrestrial Vegetation Monitoring at Cape Hatteras National Seashore: 2019 Data Summary. Available at: DataStore - Published Report - (Code: 2290019) (nps.gov)
- Shoreline Change at Fort Matanzas National Monument: 2020-2021 Data Summary. Available at: DataStore - Published Report - (Code: 2290193) (nps.gov)

For More About the SECN: https://www.nps.gov/im/secn/index.htm