

Spring 2026 Newsletter

Hello from APNEP! You may notice our newsletter looks a tad different now. We recently migrated to a new system and hope the transition for our readers is seamless. New look, same APNEP.

Things have been busy for the Partnership lately with Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan ([CCMP](#)) progress in full swing. The Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) [Engagement and Stewardship Grant](#) launched earlier this month, and staff have been participating in many events in the region. Read on to see what we've been up to and more!

In this Issue:

- Engagement and Stewardship Grant
- Targeted Protection and Restoration Team Workshop
- Project Highlight: Scuppernong Regional Water Management Study
- Dr. Hans Paerl Receives Order of the Longleaf Pine
- Out and About



Engagement and Stewardship Grant

APNEP is [accepting proposals](#) for projects in the Albemarle-Pamlico region that support the Engagement section of the [CCMP](#) on **engagement, stewardship, and education**. Focus areas include:

- Water quality
- Wetlands
- Submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV)
- Oyster habitats
- Community resilience



Applications are due by **April 30, 2026**, and awards may range up to **\$100,000**. See the full [press release](#) for more information!

Interested in joining APNEP's Citizen Advisory Committee or have someone you'd like to nominate? [Complete this form today!](#) Membership is currently open.

Targeted Protection and Restoration Focus Team Workshop

Despite a pesky ice storm, APNEP with the help of project management partners at UNC Chapel Hill convened a two-day Targeted Protection and Restoration (TPR) team meeting to discuss various CCMP actions. Team members are a subset of the STAC along with external experts and by June 2026 will have assisted project managers in developing near-term implementation plans for multiple CCMP actions by sharing their relevant knowledge and expertise. The unofficial slogan during the workshop was "Go, Dog. Go!" meaning, let's get to implementation!



The TPR team consists of current STAC members along with external experts from across the region.

Project Highlight: Scuppernong Regional Water Management Study

APNEP continues to serve as a neutral, science-based convenor of a diverse group of stakeholders and local communities to lead development of the Scuppernong Regional Water Management Study,

funded through a NC-DWR Water Resources Development Grant awarded to the Albemarle Commission Regional Council of Government (ACOG). The Study was conducted to address flooding and water management issues on the northern Albemarle-Pamlico peninsula surrounding Pettigrew State Park (Lake Phelps), Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, and Buckridge Coastal Reserve. The Study was completed in 2025, and the project team has earned additional funding through a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grant along with APNEP and partner investments and is headed towards implementation. The grant will support local the local Washington and Tyrrell Soil and Water Conservation Districts through project prioritization, advanced design and engineering, and continued community engagement. Read more about the project [here](#)!



Map of Scuppernong project area.

Dr. Hans Paerl Receives Order of the Longleaf Pine



Dr. Hans Paerl received the distinguished **Order of the Long Leaf Pine** award earlier this year, which is awarded to individuals for exemplary service to the State of North Carolina. Dr. Paerl served on the APNEP Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) from 2004-2007 and 2013-present and has been involved in many projects related to harmful algal blooms (HABs) in eastern North Carolina including [ModMon](#) and [FerryMon](#). Read more about Dr. Paerl in our new [blog post](#)!

Photo: UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health

Out and About

Mary Kate Rinderle [was announced](#) as the **2025 NC Sea Grant-APNEP Graduate Fellow** in Estuarine Research. A Ph.D. candidate in marine ecology at UNC Chapel Hill, Rinderle's work will study how some cyanobacteria use atmospheric N_2 gas as an alternative nitrogen source and the resulting ecological effects.



Photo: NC Sea Grant

APNEP's **Tim Ellis**, Quantitative Ecologist, joined the **Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) Steering Committee**. The ACFHP is a partnership of fish habitat resource managers, scientists, and communications professionals from 38 different state, federal, tribal and non-governmental agencies. APNEP has been engaged with ACFHP since its inception in 2009. Check out the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's annual [Habitat Hotline](#) publication for more information on the Partnership!



APNEP's STEM Policy Fellow, **Riley Ragain**, and Partnership Coordinator, **Natalie Ivey**, attended **SciREN Coast** at the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum in Harkers Island, NC. The event hosted 26 researchers offering education materials and 45 educators from across the region. Read more about SciREN Coast and view their lesson plan repository [here](#)!

This March, **Giancarlo Richardson** of APNEP's Tribal Coastal Resilience Connections Team ([TCRC](#)), presented at a panel on Indigenous Climate Resilience at the **Southeast Native Studies Conference** in UNC Pembroke along with TCRC team members Jocelyn Painter, Kullen Bell, and Kurt Naquin (Pictured). The panel highlighted their personal connections to southeastern landscapes as Indigenous people, the ecological threats these landscapes face, and the various ways community members are addressing these challenges, including Giancarlo's historical mapping work.



In addition to the Southeast Native Studies conference, APNEP's Policy and Engagement Manager, **Stacey Feken**, and **Giancarlo Richardson** attended the **United Tribes of North Carolina Unity Conference** in Raleigh, NC to engage in outreach with Tribal community members on resilience issues. Stacey and Giancarlo were joined by TCRC team members Ryan Emanuel and Kullen Bell (Pictured).

The **Southeastern Estuarine Research Society (SEERS)** and **Atlantic Estuarine Research Society (AERS)** hosted a joint meeting in Morehead City, NC. The event brought together students, scientists, managers, and educators to discuss estuarine and coastal environmental issues and policies. APNEP helped sponsor the event and hosted a table. Staff members attended many sessions and made connections with others working on estuarine



monitoring and restoration.



APNEP's Director, **Bill Crowell**, participated in the annual **National Estuary Program** meeting in Washington, DC along with many other members of the nation's 28 NEPs. The two-day event allowed NEP directors and staff to interface with EPA leads, discuss issues facing America's estuaries, and collaborate on ways to better serve their coastal communities.

APNEP partner **Rebecca Ward** led a session at the **NC Water Resources Research Institute (WRII)** conference titled, **From Blooms to Solutions: Connecting Science, Communities, and Policy to Fight Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) in Eastern North Carolina and Beyond**. Additional contributors to the session included Green Saves Green (GSG), UNC Institute of Marine Sciences (UNC-IMS), NC State University (NCSU), Chowan Edenton Environmental Group (CEEG), Perquimans County Waterway Watch (PCWW), Duke University, and the State Resilience Office.



Photo: Colleen Carl (CEEG) presenting at WRII (by Holly White).



Stacey Feken gave an update regarding APNEP's new partnership with the Albemarle Resource Conservation and Development Council (ARCD) at their annual meeting March 30. The ARCD will continue to coordinate HAB research and support citizen science efforts to fill in water quality data gaps from the small coastal plain streams that flow into the Chowan River and other tributaries to the Albemarle Sound. This project builds on almost a decade of work by partners including CEEG, GSG, PCWW, UNC-IMS, and NCSU.

Stay Connected with APNEP:



SUBSCRIBER SERVICES:

[Manage Subscriptions](#) | [Unsubscribe All](#) | [Help](#)