

*We can do hard things.*

*-Sister Susan W. Tanner*

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### THANK YOU:

Resource Team members wish to express our sincere thanks for welcoming us into your community. The enthusiasm, talent, skills and resourcefulness that went into this unique approach to community revitalization will serve the community well as it moves ahead to implement the recommendations and projects in this economic growth and community well-being strategy.



# INTRODUCTION

## ***The Goal***

The purpose of the Resource Team visit to "Down East" Carteret County, North Carolina was to learn from residents and businesses about the area's identified strengths and assets and to hear about ideas and opportunities, concerns, and areas that need improvement in the Down East area's 13 unincorporated communities – Atlantic, Bettie, Cedar Island, Davis, Gloucester, Harkers Island, Marshallberg, Otway, Sea Level, Smyrna, Stacy, Straits and Williston. Recommended strategies emphasize job creation and retention; supplemental income generation; and small business development, such as commercial and recreational fishing, and nature-based and education tourism industries; while also advancing strategies (organization, design, promotion) that are key to strengthening communities. The goal of this report is to begin the process of delineating action strategies to maintain and to enhance a vibrant local economy that retains the heritage, character and quality of life Down East.

## ***The Team***

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## ***The Approach***

"Saltwater Connections" is a program of community revitalization work enabled through an Economic Innovation Grant from the NC Rural Center. The focus area of the grant is the unincorporated communities along the Outer Banks National Scenic Byway, which originates at Whalebone Junction (Nags Head) and stretches south to the North River in the community of Bettie in Carteret County. The Saltwater Connections Resource Team approach to growing durable communities is modeled after Handmade in America's Small Town Revitalization Program, an asset-based, economic development project in western North Carolina. The Handmade model is an adaptation of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Four-Point Approach®. The points of focus for the Main Street® program are: Organization, Design, Promotion and Economic Revitalization. The goal for this process is to leverage assets, whether natural, cultural, historic, built or human, in order to develop a comprehensive community revitalization approach.

Organization focuses on the social structure, functions and responsibilities of a community's leadership. The idea is that community organizations, such as civic associations and Chambers of Commerce, local leaders, and elected and appointed officials all work together in concert, with shared goals in mind, to add value to each others' efforts and to limit or eliminate duplication of effort and competition for services and resources. An organized community, focused on shared goals and striving for the same outcome, is generally a successful one.

Design shapes human interaction with the physical environment. The envisioning, three-dimensional layout, and engineering of roads, trails, buildings and other infrastructure determine which places are most and least accessible, to whom, and for what purposes. It shapes how we interact with the natural environment, and how we interact with one another as a society. It can make places more or less safe for human use. Design is partly about visual appearance. Effective design can create an inviting environment for visitors and residents. Streetscapes, signage, building facades and traffic patterns are examples of design aspects that help to create an inviting place. Appropriate design can help a community recognize and retain its sense of place, or its identity. Having a recognizable, place-based identity can unify a community, making it stronger economically, and improve the quality of life for residents. The recommendations reflect what kind of place the people we heard from wanted to live and work in, and how to mobilize local resources to establish priorities and make any changes.

Promotion of a community's strengths attracts visitors and investment to an area, as well as reinforcing community pride and strengthening local participation. A concerted effort already has been started, engaging local residents in mapping out their community's assets, including natural, historical, cultural and human. The analysis of these assets will help to identify the "sacred places" that are not promoted to outsiders but are reserved for community members, as well as attractions to highlight to draw in visitors and new residents and sectors where there may be room for growth through new business investment.

Economic Revitalization begins with an assessment of the current and potential economical drivers in a community, recognizing both strengths and challenges. The goal is to strengthen existing businesses and the current economic base, while diversifying and expanding the economy for a long-term future for these Down East Carteret County communities.

Over the past thirty years, the Main Street® movement has transformed the way community members think about the vitality and management of their neighborhoods, commercial districts and crossroads communities. It is the desire of this initiative to adapt those principles and proven successes to the unincorporated communities along the Outer Banks National Scenic Byway.

The Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center received an Economic Innovation Grant from the NC Rural Center in June of 2010. Referred to as the "Saltwater Connections" community development project, local volunteers began the process of community improvement by organizing interdisciplinary "Resource Team" visits to each of the four geographical areas: the northern Hatteras villages, southern Hatteras villages, Ocracoke and Down East Carteret County communities. The 21 unincorporated Byway communities in these geographical locations all have individual needs, ideas and available resources, but also, share a common culture and history; similar geography; and shared issues, challenges and strengths.

This report focuses only on the Jan. 24-26, 2012 Resource Team visit to Down East Carteret County; the communities of Atlantic, Bettie, Cedar Island, Davis, Gloucester, Harkers Island, Marshallberg, Otway, Sea Level, Smyrna, Stacy, Straits and Williston. The villages of Hatteras Island and Ocracoke Island already have been addressed in separate reports. The process is about more than Resource Team members listening to community members talk about challenges and opportunities; it is about providing a “road map” for the future and building long-term partnerships where residents do on-the-ground work to revitalize their economies and to preserve the unique character and sense of place that defines their communities.

The Resource Team toured Down East and interviewed local people, collecting data and information that would give the team knowledge of the local conditions needed to provide the community with revitalization recommendations. The draft strategy herein merely lays the foundation for local initiatives to revitalize the Down East communities by leveraging local assets. This document is a first step, serving as the community’s “road map” for the future. It will evolve as the community implements

projects and programs and as changing times require changes in priorities.

Moving into the future, some Resource Team members and Saltwater Connections volunteers will provide on-going assistance to community residents as recommendations are prioritized and implemented. Annual review, analysis and adjustment of this “road map” are critical to keep it current and relevant to times and conditions. This report and the work that come out of it are “living documents” that will change and grow as projects are implemented and improvements are made.

### “Down East” North Carolina

The region known as Down East, comprising the entire eastern half of Carteret County, NC, lies south of Ocracoke Island and just west of the protective barrier islands of Core and Shackleford Banks. Considered part of the mainland, Down East forms a wide peninsula extending northeast along vast expanses of marshland and creeks into the waters of Core and Pamlico Sound. Thirteen unincorporated communities “cling to the shoreline of Core Sound,” occupying small islands or peninsulas “separated by wide creek bays, crossed only by bridges” (Little 2012).



## The Place

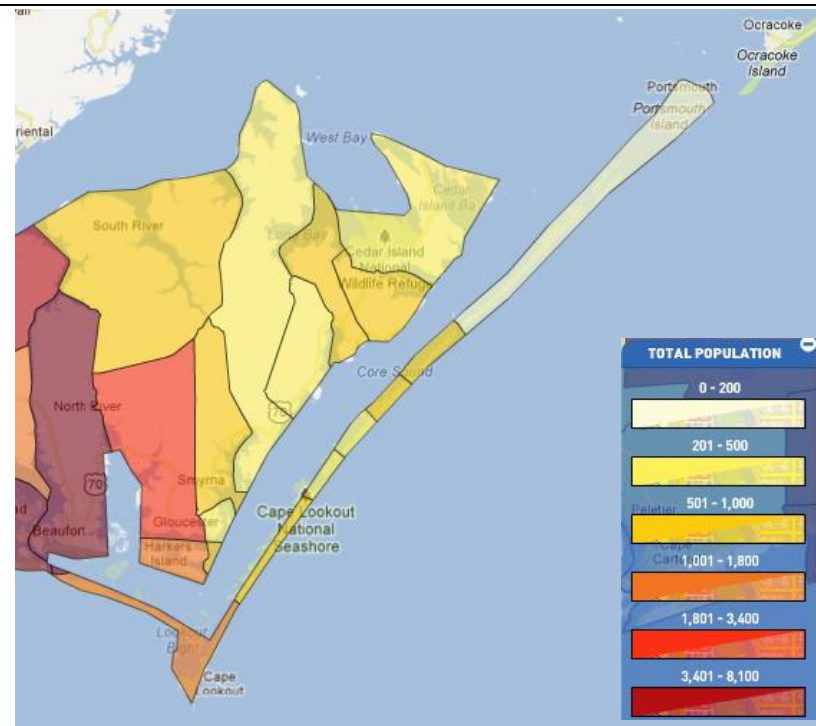
Down East Carteret County has an abundance of assets that make the area a unique spot along the North Carolina coast. It has a deep, storied culture with strong ties to the region, the land and the water. The group of 13 unincorporated communities of "Down East" North Carolina – Atlantic, Bettie, Cedar Island, Davis, Gloucester, Harkers Island, Marshallberg, Otway, Sea Level, Smyrna, Stacy, Straits and Williston – is bordered by the Cape Lookout National Seashore, formerly the home to

fishermen, whalers and stockmen who bore witness to shipwrecks and daring rescues. Many native residents of these communities feature a High Tider (Hoi Toider) accent, a dialect remnant of Elizabethan English that was once spoken in colonial Carolina. This dialect is indigenous to the lowland areas of North Carolina, distinct from the more familiar southern accent of the wider inland region. Down East has long been known for water-related occupations, including commercial fishing, boatbuilding, recreational charter services, and decoy carving.

All thirteen Down East communities are unincorporated, with Carteret County providing local government services. Three communities operate community clubs – Gloucester, Marshallberg and Cedar Island. Twenty nonprofit organizations are registered with the Internal Revenue Service, with eight of these representing volunteer fire departments for the communities of Atlantic, Cedar Island, Davis, Harkers Island, Marshallberg, Otway, Sea Level and Stacy. Six communities no longer have their own post offices - Bettie, Davis, Otway, Stacy, Straits and Williston, but are included in other postal service areas. Bettie, Otway and Straits are a route of Beaufort. Davis and Williston are now served by Smyrna, while Stacy is included with Sea Level.

### Down East Census Areas

The region known as "Down East" Carteret County is made up of nine Census-defined areas termed townships (image right, from West to East): Harkers Island, Straits, Smyrna, Marshallberg, Davis, Stacy, Sea Level, Atlantic and Cedar Island. Straits Township includes the communities of Straits, Bettie, Otway and Gloucester. Smyrna Township includes the communities of Smyrna and Williston. In unincorporated areas, designations are arbitrary, coinciding loosely with political lines. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), there are 7,472 permanent residents living within the townships in sum, making up a total of 3,266 households.



## ***History and Character***

The first English settlements Down East were located in the Straits, Gloucester and Smyrna areas, where families involved in tar, turpentine, timber and banks whaling established homes and pine plantations in the early 1700s. Marshallberg was a single plantation in the 1700s, as was Sea Level (Little 2012). Whaling camps at Cape Lookout and Shackleford Banks gave way to more permanent settlements in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as people from the “eastern areas of Carteret began to move onto the banks” for whaling and fishing opportunities (Stephens 1984:4). The largest of these settlements was Diamond City on the east end of Shackleford near the lighthouse. (Cape Lookout and Shackleford Banks were connected until Barden’s Inlet was cut by the 1933 storm.) Smaller settlements of Shackleford included Bell’s Island, Sam Windsor’s Lump and Wades Shore. A series of late 1890s hurricanes, most notably the San Ciriaco storm of 1899, devastated banks communities and caused an exodus to the mainland. Land sold for a dollar per acre on Harkers Island, and many banks families sailed their houses across the sound to start a new life there; others sailed to Marshallberg, the Promised Land of Morehead City, and Salter Path. Portsmouth Village on north Core Banks depopulated more slowly, with families relocating to Ocracoke, Cedar Island, Atlantic, Pamlico County and other points Down East through the 1970s. Many Down East families continued to keep livestock and camps on Core and Shackleford Banks until the National Park Service mandated otherwise following establishment of the Cape Lookout National Seashore in 1966.

An early description of Down East depicts a place where “shores are so frequently interrupted by bays, rivers and creeks... that wagons are almost wholly dispensed with, and the communication between different sections is carried on by means of boats... one can go in a boat to within a mile of any house in the county” (Earll 1880:485-486). The only transportation Down East was by sailboat or mailboat until the 1920s. Atlantic was the staging area for the Ocracoke ferry until the state ferry terminal was established in 1964 on Cedar Island.

The pre-World War II era ushered in paved roads, bridges and electricity. An ongoing process of community high school consolidation resulted in the establishment of Smyrna High School in 1949 and Atlantic High School in 1946. Further consolidation occurred in 1965 when all Down East students began attending East Carteret High in Beaufort. Elementary schools followed a similar consolidation process with currently only Atlantic, Smyrna and Harkers Island Elementary serving more than 500 Pre-K through eighth grade students from the Down East communities.

A recent historical survey of Down East notes an egalitarian ethos Down East. Although some families have greater status and wealth than others, and there have long been those with “steady government paychecks” versus the boom-or-bust world of commercial fishermen and boat builders, houses tend to be uniform in size and appearance and do not flaunt wealth differences. The Little report (2012) included a geographer’s observation: “While there are very few rich families, and no signs of a glorious antebellum countryside, one thing impresses visitors - the absence of squalor. The modest...house is likely to be well-built and maintained.” Architectural experts might also suggest that this “vernacular architecture” reflects long-time residents’ ability to design and build homes and other structures that can better withstand the wind and wave action of hurricanes, nor’easters and other types of storms that are a part of life in coastal North Carolina communities.

## Economy

Demographic trends indicate that the population of Carteret County is aging. The number of older and retirement-age residents

**Down East Townships Census Facts** - According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), of the 5,067 total housing units located amongst the Down East townships, approximately 81% are owner-occupied year-round. Of the 7,472 permanent residents, 6,024 reside in owner-occupied homes, while merely 1,293 reside in rental property. Seventy-two percent of the 1801 listed vacant properties are for seasonal, recreational or occasional use. The average household size is roughly 2.2 persons. The majority of the population is between the ages of 40 and 65 with the median age near 50 years. There are 3,709 males evenly compared to 3,763 females. A little over 16 percent of the population is under the age of 18 years.

HOUSING STATUS									
Total Housing	1,177	1,640	416	346	267	150	308	522	241
Occupied Housing	529	1,229	341	231	190	95	190	321	140
Owner-Occupied	428	1,018	295	184	158	75	122	259	120
- Population	974	2,350	665	387	345	174	282	560	287
Renter-Occupied	101	211	46	47	32	20	68	62	20
- Population	228	476	122	82	81	40	90	134	40
Vacant Housing	648	411	75	115	77	55	118	201	101
For Rent	25	28	2	1	1	0	38	16	3
For Sale	29	31	5	12	4	3	0	27	11
Occasional Use Housing	2	7	0	0	4	0	0	0	0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NC - Harkers Island township <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NC - Straits township <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NC - Smyrna township <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NC - Marshallberg township <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NC - Davis township <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NC - Stacy township <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NC - Sea Level township <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NC - Atlantic township <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NC - Cedar Island township									
AGE / SEX									
Male	599	1,384	382	246	197	114	262	359	166
Female	608	1,442	405	223	229	100	260	335	161
Under 18	152	523	123	66	74	38	54	110	76
18 and over	1,055	2,303	664	403	352	176	468	584	251
20-24	51	140	23	27	19	11	21	43	11
25-34	104	285	53	37	54	20	27	42	27
35-49	183	662	201	95	81	36	72	143	64
50-64	376	685	220	130	84	61	98	184	77
65 & over	319	459	150	111	106	46	247	158	70
Total Population	1,207	2,826	787	469	426	214	522	694	327
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NC - Harkers Island township <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NC - Straits township <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NC - Smyrna township <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NC - Marshallberg township <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NC - Davis township <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NC - Stacy township <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NC - Sea Level township <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NC - Atlantic township <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NC - Cedar Island township									

is increasing, while younger age groups are showing a significant decline. The lack of good paying jobs is thought to be a major reason for the reduced number of working-age adults, while the area's attractiveness as a retirement destination helps explain the increase in older age groups.

Military and associated civilian employment constitutes the largest employment sector in the County. Commercial fishing and wooden boatbuilding were the principal means of making a living Down East for much of the twentieth century, particularly in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. After the establishment of Camp LeJeune in Jacksonville and Cherry Point Naval Air Station in Havelock, many Down Easterns sought and obtained their first hourly-wage job after World War II and cut back to fishing on a part-time basis. Fishing remained key, however, until a sharp downturn in the late 1990s when domestic seafood markets were undercut by imported shrimp and crabmeat. Boatbuilding suffered as well, as builders and carpenters lost their commercial fishing base and the recreational boat market turned away from charter and sport fishing boats toward high-end luxury yachts. As part of this trend, "backyard" and small-shed wooden boatbuilding has given way to larger-scale fiberglass boat manufacturing companies, such as Jarrett Bay and Parker Enterprises, which serve recreational boaters and government agencies.

Carteret County was long the number one port in North Carolina for fishery landings, although this largely was due to the menhaden fishery operating out of Beaufort. Seafood landings were strong well after World War II with Down East families opening fish houses in Beaufort and Morehead City, as well as in Harkers Island, Davis, Stacy, Sea Level, Atlantic and Cedar Island. Wooden boat-building and repair facilities, diesel mechanics, net and crab-pot manufacturers and seafood transportation businesses all thrived Down East as support to commercial fishing.

The fishing economy has changed dramatically in the past twenty years. For example, Harkers Island no longer has an operating fish house. This is in stark contrast to the heyday years when five or six fish houses and half-a-dozen scallop houses worked around the clock, and fish trucks constantly traversed the island. In 2000, twelve fish houses operated in the entire Down East region, which then fell to seven in 2006. Only six remain since the closure of Clayton Fulcher Fish Company in Atlantic, some seemingly more active than others (Garrity-Blake and Nash 2012). Many fish companies report that they are struggling to keep their doors open.



The NC Division of Marine Fisheries 2010 license data indicates there are 475 standard commercial fishing license holders Down East, not counting those from Otway and Bettie. (These are lumped with Beaufort, because they share the same zip code). Harkers Island has the most license holders (111), followed by Atlantic (85), Cedar Island (71), Davis (58), Marshallberg (37), Gloucester (31), Sea Level (31), Smyrna (26), Stacy (19) and Williston (6).



**Table 1. Value of Seafood Landings (Ex-Vessel Value) in Selected Fishing Communities, Five-Year Increments** - The chart below shows dockside values of seafood for Down East, Ocracoke and Hatteras Island as estimated by the NC Division of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF). Whereas the value of seafood has fallen by almost two million dollars since 1995 for Hatteras, and about six million for Ocracoke (but is now showing an increase due to new management of the island fish house), seafood values are about a fifth of what they were in 1995 for Down East, falling by almost eight million dollars. (Source: NCDMF 2011).

	2010	2005	2000	1995
Hatteras Island	\$3,189,016	\$3,405,451	\$3,796,048	\$5,010,038
Ocracoke Island	\$758,965	\$461,044	\$827,301	\$1,366,300
Down East	\$2,373,105	\$2,790,846	\$6,570,904	\$10,040,607

**Individual Community Economies:**

**Atlantic**

Atlantic historically was called Old Hunting Grounds or Hunting Quarters because of plentiful wild game, such as deer, fowl and bear. The Pilentary Hunting Club was located across Core Sound from Atlantic until the storm of 1933. Franklin Delano Roosevelt hunted there while serving as US Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Atlantic is home to one of the first public high schools in Carteret County. In 1905, Atlantic became incorporated to raise tax money to pay for the school; though, it later lost its incorporation status. Today, the school is one of three Down East pre-kindergarten through eighth grade schools and is rated one of the best in the county and the state. The mailboat “Aleta” ran from Atlantic to Ocracoke until a ferry took its place. Atlantic is home to the only vehicle ferry service to north Core Banks. One fish house - Luther Smith and Son - and two clam houses currently operate in Atlantic. One of the area’s largest and oldest fish companies, Clayton Fulcher Seafood, closed in 2006. Today, Atlantic has the largest supermarket in the northern Down East area, a harbor with fishing boats of all types, and a boat ramp.

**Bettie**

Bettie, the first community east of Beaufort over the North River Bridge, is known as the “Gateway” to Down East. The original



name of the community was “Simpson.” The name “Bettie” comes from the postmaster at the time the community’s post office was established. The bridge was first built in the 1920s. Bettie, like Otway, was more of a farming community than a fishing community. Cabbage was one of the main cash crops. In the past, migrant workers were housed in Bettie as they worked in the fields at harvest time. Farming still takes place in Bettie, and it is known for the Simpson greenhouse and farm, which sells some of the county's best fresh local produce, such as strawberries, tomatoes, corn and other seasonal vegetables. A bakery and produce stand is located there that sells a variety of vegetables, strawberries, and homemade baked goods.

### Cedar Island

Cedar Island is home to the Cedar Island – Ocracoke ferry, run by the State of North Carolina. The ferry service, like Cherry Point Marine Air Station in Havelock, is an employer of many Down East people. The Driftwood Motel, Restaurant and Campground caters to ferry travelers, and is one of only two hotels Down East. Some Cedar Islanders continue to commercially fish for a living, and one of Down East’s few remaining fish houses is located there. Some also run fishing and hunting guide services, as there are many species of waterfowl that frequent Pamlico Sound and northern Core Sound near Cedar Island. Cedar Island is home to the Cedar Island National Wildlife Refuge, which includes the largest expanse of marshland Down East. Hog Island is located to the east of Cedar Island, which was once inhabited until the storm of 1933 destroyed the community. Cedar Island was home to the “boom truck parade,” an annual celebration of fishermen’s jury-rigged trucks used to lift nets out of boats.



### Davis



Davis, known locally as “Davis Shore,” was settled as early as 1752 according to old land grants. Traditional occupations were farming, fishing and fishing-related activities, such as net making. James Styron’s Fish Company is the last working fish house in Davis. At one time, Davis was home to the most hunting and fishing guides Down East. Babe Ruth and other notable people hunted with Davis Shore guides. There are several small stores in Davis, as well as a volunteer fire department. Today, the Davis Shore Provision Company is an up-and-coming Down East business that has recently expanded to include ice cream, a bakery and a hair salon. Located in what was formerly Johnny Davis’ store, it provides an important venue for community events such as the Davis Shore Christmas

Weekend, the Fourth of July parade and other community-oriented fund-raisers through the year. Davis was the birthplace of the “Crab Pot Christmas Tree,” a folk-art adaption of a working crab pot; though, this successful business has since been relocated to Smyrna to allow for increased production. Two ferry services operate out of Davis to south Core Banks. Cape Lookout National Seashore runs the camps, formerly known as Alger Willis Fishing Camps.

### **Gloucester**

Prior to the establishment of the post office in 1910, Gloucester was known as “Up Straits.” Schooner captain Joe Pigott named the community after his favorite port, Gloucester, Massachusetts. The community is primarily residential, with fishing, boatbuilding and boat repair still serving as traditional occupations. Gloucester was home to Nat Lee Smith’s boatyard, Carolina Boatworks, which built almost all of the boats for the NC Department of Conservation and Development, now the NC Division of Marine Fisheries, from the 1950s until the early 1970s. Gloucester is home to Straits Railways, one of the last marine railways left in North Carolina. Today, construction, recreation and saltwater activities are the primary businesses. Gloucester Community Club, established in 1954, is one of the oldest of its kind in the county and continues to hold summer chicken barbeques as a fundraiser that supports a scholarship fund and other community projects. The Club also is the site of Gloucester’s annual Mardi Gras celebration, which attracts hundreds of locals and visitors from all over the state. In 2009, NC State University constructed the six-acre Marine Aquaculture Research Center at the headwaters of Sleepy Creek, which leads into Marshallberg Harbor. To the east of this facility is another new business venture –Marshallberg Farm, growing on 275 acres (much of which is in Marshallberg, as well) a herd of grass-fed, Black Angus. On the western end of the farm, a 27,600 sq-ft, highly-advanced, recirculating aquaculture system for raising of Russian sturgeon for commercial production of meat and caviar.

### **Harkers Island**

Harkers Island is the largest Down East community, though a large percentage of residents are part-time. Harkers Island is known for its eight churches and sacred music traditions. Before the bridge was built in 1941, a ferry from Gloucester served the island on the north side. Because few people on the Island owned cars, the mailboat “Pet” connected Harkers Island with the county seat of Beaufort where doctors, groceries and services were available within walking distance. Many islanders trace their roots to Diamond City, a whaling community on Shackleford Banks that was destroyed by storms in the late 1800s. Harkers Island was long a center for commercial fishing and boatbuilding. A County Harbor (of Safe Refuge) is located on Harkers Island. In the 1960s, the National Park Service came to Harkers Island to



manage Cape Lookout National Seashore. Today, the Park partners with the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center in providing education and preservation of the cultural and natural resources of this region. Seashore visitors can stay at the Down East region's second hotel - Harkers Island Fishing Center. Although the island continues to be a place of commercial fishing and boatbuilding, the landscape has changed considerably in recent years with construction of many high-end subdivisions and second-homes. Increasing property values has made it cost-prohibitive for many native families to live on the island. Harkers Island Elementary has a large percentage of students from "off-island" communities, and residents expressed concern about the future of their community school.

### **Marshallberg**

Marshallberg traditionally has been a farming and fishing community. At the turn of the century, Marshallberg was a center for cooking and packing hard crabs, tomatoes and other food items. The name Marshallberg was chosen in honor of Matt Marshall, who for several years had been running the mailboat that served the community. Marshallberg Harbor was a former collard patch that was dredged by the US Army Corps of Engineers in the 1950s as a safe harbor for commercial fishermen. In 1997, the community reinvigorated their Community Club and morphed it into a private nonprofit to improve administration of the safe refuge harbor. Nonetheless, ownership of the harbor has been in dispute, and after much litigation, likely will become part of the County harbor system. Around 1910, a boatbuilding facility was established by Mildon Willis at the head of Sleepy Creek, later known as M.W. Willis and Sons, which closed in the 1990s. Today recreational boats are built, including small electric-powered lake boats, by Budsin Wood Craft. In the 1990s, Jarrett Bay Boat Works moved to Marshallberg. It provided a valuable employment base to the local economy, but the company made the business decision to leave Marshallberg, because an opportunity to relocate on Core Creek in a new, much larger facility presented itself. Marshallberg was home to the Graham Academy, a college preparatory boarding school in the late 1800s. Marshallberg is still known for its large number of school teachers, and the nonprofit Carteret County Retired School Personnel Inc. is registered there. Presently, the community has one small grocery store, a volunteer fire department and a beautiful picnic area overlooking the water from which Cape Lookout Lighthouse can be seen.

### **Otway**

Otway originally was settled in the 1700s, and was later named after one of Carteret County's most famous residents, Otway Burns, a ship captain and privateer around the time of the War of 1812. Historically a farm-based community, Otway is known for its farm produce of sweet potatoes and collards. Many residents also still make their living off the water and one can often see them clamming or oystering in Ward's Creek along Highway 70 East. Otway is an important crossroads community between routes to Harkers Island and Cedar Island. It has long served as the business center of Down East, today housing the region's only chain variety store; a hardware store; an auto



parts store; the Down East library; a fitness center; pharmacy; two tire and auto garages; a large bed and breakfast; a consignment shop; the Collard Shack greenhouse, bakery and produce stand; and a large campground for RVs, complete with a swimming pool. Otway also is home to the Crow Hill Hunting Preserve, a members-only hunt club.

### Sea Level

Sea Level aptly takes its name, being one of the lowest elevations in North Carolina. From the standpoint of water damage caused by hurricanes, it is estimated that on an average 75 percent of the community is covered by sea water, including sea water in homes. As the story goes, during one of the earliest hurricanes, probably in the 1870's, Sea Level was completely



covered by sea water. Sea Level is known for its cedar and canvas decoy makers. But more notable, tucked away in this small fishing community is the oldest retirement community in our nation – “Sailor’s Snug Harbor,” relocated from Manhattan, New York in the late 1970s. Snug Harbor was established by Alexander Hamilton after the Revolutionary War as a home for retired Merchant Marines. It is now an upscale assisted living facility open to the public. Adjacent is the former Sea Level Hospital, the first and only hospital ever built Down East, established in the 1950s. It was built by the Taylor Brothers of Sea Level, who were very successful with their shipping and salt companies. The hospital was purchased by Duke University in the 1980s and then sold to the county and converted to Taylor Extended care facility. A health clinic and pharmacy are still located on the site. T.A. Taylor and Sons is the main fish house left in Sea Level, and Mill Point Aquaculture is the State’s only privately held clam and oyster hatchery and nursery.

### Smyrna

Smyrna was settled around 1700 and had a number of names before becoming “Smyrna” in 1853. Smyrna was an epicenter of boatbuilding for Core Sound sharpies in the late 1800s to early 1900s. Sonny Williamson’s book, *Sailing with Grandpa*, lists 78 sailing vessels built in Smyrna between 1872 and 1907, with 28 boat builders listed in the Smyrna Township. To meet the boatbuilding need, a saw mill was located in Smyrna, as well as a marine railway. Smyrna housed the only drive-in theater Down East. Memories of local drive-in restaurants - The Red Rooster and Willis’ Drive-In - still are beloved by many local baby boomers. Today, the largest of the three Down East elementary schools is located in Smyrna. Smyrna also is home to Eastern Park, which provides recreational activities, such as baseball, tennis, and basketball, and also features a children’s play area. The community is home to the Masonic Crissie Wright Lodge and has a number of churches and businesses.

## Stacy

Stacy - once consisting of two communities known as Masontown and Piney Point - is bordered by Core Sound and Nelson Bay, as well as Open Grounds Farm on the north and west. Open Grounds Farm, comprised of 32,000 acres, is the largest farm east of the Mississippi, producing soybeans, cotton and corn. The area is known for its abundance of wildlife and one often can see geese and swans in the waters off of Highway 70 East in the Stacy area. Stacy was once home to more decoys carvers than any other community Down East. Mitchell Fulcher is the most well-known, and his decoys are the most valuable. Farming and fishing are traditional occupations. The soft crab fishery was brought to Stacy from Smith Island, Maryland in the late 1800s, and was probably the first shedding operation in North Carolina. Stacy is the smallest Down East community, with a population of about 200. In 2003, Hurricane Isabel damaged many homes in the community. Hurricane Irene inflicted further damage in 2011. The long-term effects of storms can be seen today with many of the homes having been elevated.

## Straits

Straits is one of the oldest communities Down East, settled in 1713, and also is primarily residential, with fishing and boatbuilding still serving as traditional occupations. Straits was an early center of boatbuilding in Carteret County. There were three grist mills located in Straits and Gloucester to meet the demands of the boatbuilding population. Sonny Williamson's book, *Sailing with Grandpa*, lists 30 sailing vessels built in Straits between 1865 and 1901, and seven boat builders in the Straits Township. Farming, particularly of potatoes, also was a major economy in the community, with shipments sent to many points north, including New York City. Straits was the home of a brickyard that produced a good number of the bricks used to build Fort Macon. The first Masonic Lodge in Carteret County was located in Straits, Old Jerusalem Lodge #35, instituted in 1798, and was paid for with English pounds. Straits was the home of Samuel Chadwick, who was a whaler from Massachusetts who had received a whaling license in 1726 from "ye Hon-ble ye Governor" Richard Rustull. Many descendents of Samuel Chadwick continue to live in the Straits and Gloucester communities. The Chadwick family has long-run a store at the site that is now the foot of Harkers Island bridge. Currently, Straits is home to many businesses, including canvas manufacturing, nature-based tourism, recreational fishing, boat and trailer repair, a dive shop, several constructional contractors, and furniture manufacturing, just to name a few.



## Williston

Williston was once known as Springfield until the US Post Office was established by John Williston. Like Smyrna, it was a prominent boatbuilding center in the late 1800s to early 1900s, and as such, was home to saw mills that supplied the boat yards.

Hi-Tide Boatworks was located in Williston during the 1950s to early 1970s. Operated by Julian Guthrie from Harkers Island, he built workboats, yachts and skiffs. Elmo Wade was a well-known builder of menhaden boats. Willis Brothers Seafood, owned and operated by Elmer “Clam King” Willis, opened during the 1920s and was one of the largest suppliers of clams to the Heinz Food Company. Elmer and his wife Pearl provided many jobs and helped local schools raise money via clam bakes. Today, Williston features a small commercial garden center, stained glass shop and small art gallery.

### ***The Recommendations***

The following recommendations are derived from what the public told the Resource Team during the visit in January 2012, combined with the Resource Team members’ knowledge and professional expertise. During the site visit, the Team asked individuals to describe economic revitalization and community well-being efforts that have been implemented to-date and the usefulness of these different activities, as well as challenges and opportunities Down East. The Team’s recommendations below are ordered according to themes and do not represent a priority ranking. It will be up to residents to rank their priorities for future economic and community improvements. These recommendations represent a starting point, designed to provide the communities with several achievable goals within the four areas of the Main Street® approach. We suggest a Down East organizational structure be created to direct labor towards the completion of these suggested projects, which can be added or removed as the Down East communities deem appropriate. This is a local effort and should reflect local needs and desires.



# ORGANIZATION

"It's no longer  
'I'm a Davis  
Shoreman,'  
or 'I'm a  
Cedar  
Islandman'  
like it used to  
be. Now it  
needs to be,  
'We  
Downeasters'  
working  
together if we  
ever want to  
get anything  
done."

-Anonymous,  
Down East  
native

Organization is a process that builds consensus and cooperation by creating partnerships among the various groups that have a stake in the success of Down East. The Resource Team heard that coordination of county, civic and nonprofit efforts would provide the most benefit. When all stakeholders work toward shared goals and share responsibility for accomplishments, the result is more effective management and advocacy for the communities. Active volunteers, working in collaboration with businesses, nonprofits and public sector partners representing a broad cross-section of the community, will ensure the inclusion of a balanced range of perspectives in these efforts.

Local volunteers organized tours, meetings and community dinners, and coordinated a seemingly impossible set of logistics to get people where they needed to be during the Resource Team site visit. It is clear the community already has begun mobilizing this asset - recruiting volunteers. Building community capacity is at the heart of any volunteer-led, asset-based approach, and assures that community residents, businesses and groups are at the heart of each project undertaken, doing the planning, implementing, evaluating and celebrating. The community is ahead of the game in respect to this.

Organization is the most critical component to move the community forward; it will define "who" will implement the recommendations in this report, and is the vehicle for formulating, funding and making the improvements a reality in the long term. Organization will require participation by a diverse group of community leaders who can fully represent and engage Down East residents for the long term.

## **Recommendation. Establish an organizational arrangement – a Down East Community Council**

The key to turning good ideas into reality and successfully growing a durable economic future will be the establishment of a broad-based community council to engage local partners and establish a solid framework for implementation of the recommended projects. Local partners might include representatives from each community (or group of communities), Down East organizations, Down East schools and relevant local, state and federal agencies) The Council should be inclusive, rather than exclusive, and must establish a strong governing board to ensure that the community is informed about the status of on-the-ground projects, how decisions are made, resources generated to implement the strategy, and short-term successes of work groups, as well as to garner community help in shaping and implementing long-term approaches. The Down East Community Council should be formed to oversee and to guide progress on report implementation. Examples of activities the Council may take on include, but are not limited to,



- Helping community clubs and other partners build capacity and raise funds to implement priority projects;
- Providing support to work groups in reviewing, funding, implementing, updating and evaluating their tactics;
- Serving as a communication link between Down East and other organizations and agencies;
- Learning more about the plans/documents that impact Down East; and,
- Following the establishment of action priorities, conducting a review of all proposals submitted for Saltwater Connections Community Project Funds.

A Down East Community Council should have representatives from each community to provide a complete voice for Down East. The Council would serve to improve communication between communities and to provide input to county government regarding issues specific to Down East. The Saltwater Connections project would provide support for regional initiatives where shared needs, issues and opportunities are best addressed through a regional approach. Similar Councils will be developed for Ocracoke and Hatteras Island villages, and partnering on projects should occur that help meet identified community needs within the 21 unincorporated communities across the region to maximize resources and ideas generated through the Resource Team visits; and to leverage funding and benefits from the Outer Banks National Scenic Byway designation.



***Recommendation. Develop a vision statement, program of work and implementation approach***

The Down East Community Council should first develop a simple vision statement and a 2-3 year line-up of projects, some funded through the Saltwater Connections Community Project Funds, and other projects funded by sources to be identified. This will help the group stay focused and give volunteers a sense of accomplishment. In order for your efforts as a group to be successful, the Community Council will need to focus on implementing an agreed upon list of projects. The council’s plan of work will capture the goals and aspirations of the community and will encourage proactive strategizing with a common purpose and shared vision. Projects should be prioritized and a work plan that includes short-term and long-term goals and objectives should be developed. Just as any successful business begins with a business plan, community development and enhancement projects require a guiding “road map,” as well as the steps that will lead to successful implementation. Community development is an ongoing process, which sometimes requires flexibility in amending approaches as local conditions change. As such, this report will need to be viewed as a “living” document.

***Recommendation. Establish focus-area work groups (Design, Promotion, Economic Revitalization) to implement community revitalization efforts***

Focus-area work groups are important to the overall success of the revitalization effort to ensure that all areas of community development are attended to and coordinated. The work groups should be made up of volunteers who are willing to actively

participate and work toward the completion of goals identified in this community revitalization approach, as well as future endeavors. Volunteers on the work groups should have an interest, and possibly some experience, in the area of focus. For example, local artisans would be a good fit for the Design work group, and business owners are good to include on the Economic Revitalization work group. Whether these work groups are formed at a local community level (e.g., Atlantic) or representatives from groups of communities (e.g., Cedar Island, Atlantic, Sea Level, and Stacy) should be decided on by community members at-large.

The Down East Community Council should include representatives from each of these work groups. The Economic Revitalization work group will work closely with existing businesses, and with county, regional and state economic development agencies to strengthen and diversify the economic base. The Design work group will work on a broad range of issues, from working waterfront and waterfront access to walking tours, kayak trails and public spaces. The Promotion work group will work closely with local and regional tourism agencies and local businesses to protect and to promote a Down East sense of place which can be of tremendous benefit to local artisans and businesses, and to develop and promote festivals, events and other community activities.

***Recommendation. Seek out and secure funding to implement priority projects***

Once the program of work has been developed, the Down East Community Council should, with assistance from Resource Team members and other resources, develop a funding/financing plan for priority projects, including projected cost estimates and potential funding sources. The Council and/or focus-area work group members should meet with potential funding partners, share the projects, and begin establishing the relationships needed to implement the projects. Potential funding partners may include Carteret County Tourism Development Authority for tourism-related projects and programs; U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development community facilities program or the NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund for a community center; or the National Park Foundation for priority projects that are aligned with National Park Service priorities like the Visitor Center located on the eastern end of Harkers Island. Community foundations typically have donor-advised funds that target specific interests, so it is recommended to meet with the community foundation representatives to share the revitalization strategies and proposed initiatives to identify potential links to donors' interests. The Saltwater Connections project has some funds available to help fund starter projects.

Fundraising is about relationships and “delivering” on proposed activities and accomplishments. Existing funding sources could be used to leverage future funding by carrying out the funding obligations, reporting promptly, inviting funders to visit the projects during and on completion of the activities, and publicizing the supporters that made the project possible. The Outer Banks National Scenic Byway Work group has made a great start with securing funding for a logo and a wayfinding system for the entire Byway. A Byway grant is now under consideration for interpretive signage for the Byway. There will continue to be future funding opportunities connected to the Scenic Byway designation.

The funding plan should be reviewed and updated annually, along with the program of work, and all funding received – whether from public agencies, family or corporate foundations, individual donors or school groups – should be widely publicized, celebrated and thanked.

**Recommendation. Involve and strengthen the existing community clubs**

The three Down East community clubs have worked for years to identify priorities, to raise local funds, and to make things happen. They will remain as the key “connections” to what is important to Down East communities. The Down East Community Council should work to aggregate the priorities and to add value to club efforts (while ensuring that communities not represented by clubs are also being served). It will be important to have the community clubs represented on the focus-area work groups and to incorporate their priority efforts into the overall program of work. One very important way the Down East Community Council might add value is by helping the community clubs meet their missions and secure funding to implement projects and programs.

**Recommendation. Increase volunteerism throughout Down East**

There are no municipalities Down East, which means a lot rests on community leaders and volunteers. Community efforts, such as this one, require an increased amount of human resources, particularly in the current economic environment that makes grants hard to come by. There is an incredible range of skills and talents to be found among Down East residents. A community-wide effort should begin to identify and recruit volunteers, and invite them to participate in the new council and its standing work groups. While county, state and federal agency staff can provide guidance, the day-to-day work should be done by community members. Everyone living and working Down East has a stake in this region’s future, and this project offers an opportunity for folks to help shape that future. Specific training sessions, capacity-building experiences, and small workshops could help community members learn facilitation skills, establish effective communication mechanisms, and inventory existing experiences and skills that could better utilize volunteer investment. Building of a core of quality volunteers in community projects would encourage others, increase productivity and contribute to community pride. Engaging existing organizations, such as churches and youth groups, in the revitalization efforts will help add value to the efforts, and ensure that the full resources of Down East are brought to the table.



The volunteer support that makes it possible to complete projects should be tracked, documented and shared widely with project partners, the media and funders. Few, if any, funders want to be the sole investor in the project. They want to know that projects are community priorities and community-driven. Think of it in terms of how you like to invest your own money – few of us would be willing to invest in a business if the business owner refuses to invest their own money. Tracking the value of the “sweat equity” community members invest in community projects and sharing that information with funders demonstrates the community’s commitment to the project and places a dollar value on that commitment. A few examples of these “in-kind” contributions include:

- The market value of food and lodging that was provided for the Resource Team members was a significant in-kind community contribution to developing this community revitalization approach;
- If a local landscaping company donates labor to install entryway signage to the gateway Down East communities, the market value of the contribution of labor should be counted;

- If an attorney donates his or her time to help incorporate a nonprofit organization, their time could be calculated at regular billing rates and included in the tally of in-kind contributions; and,
- If volunteers perform general labor to prepare for and operate a community festival, their time could be calculated at the federally approved hourly rate for that time period, which currently is \$18.80 per hour.

It is easy to see how the numbers will add up to significant contributions that demonstrate strong commitment by community members to help themselves. It also is important to share the numbers with the volunteers – it makes it easier for people to continue their volunteer activities when they see the collective results and know that their time and energy are helping to raise the dollars needed to move the larger efforts forward. There are many strong volunteers already working Down East, as evidenced by the strong participation in events and programs at churches, schools, the Down East Library and the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center. In order to avoid “volunteer burnout” it will be vitally important to spread the workload, help individuals build their skills, and acknowledge volunteers’ contributions of their valuable time and energy. If skills-building workshops are offered at the facilities where volunteers already serve, it will help strengthen the entire community.

***Recommendation. Improve communication Down East***

There is a need for increased communication Down East, starting with a Down East website or calendar that lists all events and an up-to-date list of opportunities for volunteer service on the island. The Resource Team heard from residents that a centralized “electronic kiosk” for information relevant to Down East, such as a Down East website, would help residents and businesses alike communicate needs and services. These needs could be coordinated with the current e-newsletter “Down East Community News.” The success of this information tool will depend on local communication with the online editor to keep all the activities, meetings and events posted.

***Recommendation. Develop a Down East Leaders Program similar to Maine’s Island Institute***

Effective local leadership is the single most distinguishing feature of vibrant rural communities, but the high demand on volunteers within these small communities often leads to burnout. A series of training sessions or seminars would help to strengthen the skills needed to develop, fund and implement community programs and projects. The community should identify the skills that could help the community prosper, and then identify volunteers interested in developing those skills. Those skills should include, at a minimum, board member training, grant-writing, grassroots or major donor fundraising, event planning, project planning, meeting facilitation and conflict resolution. The (Maine) Island Institute’s training takes place through a combination of in-person and virtual sessions to build and practice new skills while making connections with leaders throughout Maine’s island communities. Leadership training programs, such as those at the NC Rural Economic Development Center or the Resourceful Communities Program of The Conservation Fund, also would offer volunteers the opportunity to learn new ideas and build relationships and networks with regional mentors and resource groups.

***Recommendation. Strengthen capacity for grassroots participation in governmental decision processes***

Some community members expressed frustration with decisions and processes associated with governmental entities, including concern or confusion about land use and fishing regulations. Opportunities for public participation in governmental decision processes are often limited and challenging, but they do exist once people understand how the processes work and develop some basic skills. These areas of knowledge and skill are rarely taught in formal educational settings. Some communities elsewhere have developed experiential learning programs for this purpose – to show citizens how government decision processes work, and how they can participate effectively. As a result, citizens are more able to advance their interests and offer uniquely valuable policy solutions based in local knowledge and practical experience. Local communities might consider hosting or developing a program of this sort to build stronger local involvement in government decision-making like the policy roundtable as formed by Maine commercial fishermen (Penobscot Community Fisheries Action Roundtable).

Existing, yet dormant, community organizations and boards should be revived as another strategy. For example, reinvigoration of the Marine Fisheries Advisory Board to the Carteret County Commissioners would help to convey water-related business concerns throughout a wide geographic area of the County. The last appointments were in the winter of 2010, and the aquaculture and recreation/sportfishing seats have long-remained vacant.

As indicated by the recently formed Meals on Wheels program, senior services are urgently needed Down East. The Carteret County Aging Planning Board (referred to as the County's Home and Community Care Block Grant Committee), coordinates with the NC Division of Aging to promote and to improve the well-being of senior citizens in Carteret County. But, not one of the 18 members is a resident of Down East. Often this lack of representation on county boards is because Down East residents are unaware of open positions, schedules of appointments, or other opportunities for representatives from the Down East region to become involved at the county level. Several terms expire in June 2012 and represent an opportunity for board diversity. The Resource Team feels that with further investigation and more willingness from Down East residents to participate, more avenues for Down East to be involved in the governmental decision-making process would be identified.

***Recommendation. Create a Down East Carteret County Community Center***

A 1992 nationwide study on use of parks and recreation programs conducted at Pennsylvania State University found that participants in the study could be divided into two groups: users of local recreation and park services and non-users, with 71% of non-users still saying they received some benefit from their communities' parks and recreational services. Local parks and recreation opportunities are associated with a sense of community. Community-level benefits are considered more important than individual or household-level benefits. Interestingly, the study also found 75% of respondents said that, "...local recreation and park services are worth \$45 or more per member of their household..." per year.

During the Resource Team visit, a recurring theme heard was the need for a year-round, multi-generational facility that will provide resources, programs and activities that will enhance the lives of Down East residents. There is strong interest among Down East residents in having a place to go, for residents of all ages, that provides recreation and exercise programs. Besides the more traditional benefits of giving young people a place to go and recreate, a community center offering exercise and fitness, learning and education, and social opportunities for all ages is something needed in all 13 communities. A good example of a newly established facility is the Dare County Center located in Manteo. The amenities include a fitness room, arts and crafts room, lounge/media room, activity room, dining room, kitchen, multi-purpose room and two classrooms. The Meals on Wheels and senior meals programs now have enhanced operations out of this kitchen facility.

There is expansion potential on the south side of newer section of Eastern Park, the largest park serving the eastern portion of Carteret County. Realizing building of a new facility is a huge undertaking in these fiscal times, a first step would be to explore passive recreational activities, such as a walking trail, and low-impact activities, such as a senior fitness course, in existing open space areas.

The Dare County Center has a community advisory board to help advise and to promote goals and policies to enhance Dare County Center operations and relevant community outreach. An advisory board for the Down East Community Center also would be a prudent initial step towards a community center. This board should 1) share this report and recommendation with the Carteret County Parks and Recreation Department; 2) explore the potential for including a community recreation center in the County's plans; and 3) work to collaboratively develop designs for, and figure out how to fund, a community center in one or more of the Down East communities. Some momentum already exists in that the 2009 Carteret County update of the 1999 Shoreline Access/Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan specified a goal to develop a multi-year plan, including timelines, to expand public access throughout its jurisdiction. There was talk years ago about a senior center at Davis, but it died from both lack of leadership and county monetary support. The efforts of the Down East library bear witness that community leadership now is strong and could take on this undertaking. Good ex-officio partners would be the Carteret County Health Department, and even, Carteret Community College instructors and students in the nursing and health science curriculums.

***Recommendation. Develop dedicated funding source(s) for the BRIDGE youth center***

The BRIDGE (Down East) is a youth center geared toward providing a vitally needed safe and fun place for teens to meet, hang out and be mentored by respected adults. The most feasible way to sustain youth activities is to increase outreach and expand programming so the center becomes more of a community project. Possible options would be to create programming and partnerships around activities like summer camps, afterschool programs (since there is no afterschool programming Down East) and/or youth entrepreneurship programs. Possible ideas might include the youth opening up a small summer business there, such as a coffee shop or selling locally made arts and crafts to tourists. The BRIDGE center is in a prime location to attract visitors to Cape Lookout National Seashore.



A farmers market would do well there in the summer on weekends and would tap into the growing local foods movement, in addition to supporting presently operating Down East agribusinesses (e.g., Simpson greenhouse and farm; Collard Shack greenhouse, produce stand and bakery). With 17 percent of County children under the age of five considered obese, this would be a way not only to tie in teaching of entrepreneurship skills, but also, to expand nutrition education. Great partners for this would be the Carteret County Partnership for Children and NC Cooperative Extension (Carteret County Center). More information on developing a farmers market follows later in this report within the “Economic Revitalization” section. Expanding into programming services and the involvement of the entire community can bring relevant grant resources to the project.

***Recommendation. Secure pilot-program funding to be involved with the United Way’s 2-1-1 phone number and nc211.org***

In an area as vast as Down East North Carolina, and with limited government and nonprofit presence, it is hard for community residents to be aware of the services and programs available to them. The first step in finding help is knowing who to call; 9-1-1 is for emergencies, 4-1-1 is for directory assistance, and now in North Carolina, 2-1-1 is for finding community health and human service resources. An individual can call 2-1-1 any time 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to link to vital services in their community. This service is free and multilingual. But, a county has to establish a working relationship with United Way so that a nonprofit group, organization or a government agency that services the Down East community can be added to the 2-1-1 database. The 2-1-1 assistance only will be as good as the information included.

The 2-1-1 phone number and nc211.org is now available to anyone in Dare County as of April 1, 2012. Residents are able to access local human services information. This is thanks to pilot-program funding from the Outer Banks Relief Foundation and the Outer Banks Community Foundation. A dialogue should be started with the Carteret Community Foundation to see if they would support a pilot program in Down East.

# DESIGN

“It is hard to remember that the rest of the world doesn’t see places like this every day.”

-Anonymous, Down East resident

The character that historically defined the Down East communities has changed dramatically in recent years with increased development, especially on Harkers Island; yet, there are vestiges of the heritage and the culture that remain in the historic homes, in the working fish houses, in the community grocery stores, and in the mom-and-pop businesses that serve residents and visitors year-round. These places are helping to retain the “sense of place” and cultural integrity that was key to the successful designation of the Outer Banks National Scenic Byway. The Design work group has an important opportunity to work at identifying and protecting the places, buildings and other design components that can ensure Down East does not lose its “sense of place” forever. These assets include, but are not limited to,

- A strong predominance of locally owned, small businesses and an impressive lack of fast food restaurants and other franchises that tend to erode community character;
- A natural landscape that is dominated by coastal lands and water that are part of the Cape Lookout National Seashore, Cedar Island Wildlife Refuge and Open Ground Farms that have kept much of Down East relatively intact; and,
- An incredible history and culture that have been kept alive in the stories and historic structures passed on by long-time residents to create a true living heritage.

In “old times,” the community had gathering places like the fish houses, barber shops and community stores that even today remain honored community places. Resource Team members heard from community residents the importance of preserving historic architecture and working waterfronts to help maintain the sense of heritage found Down East.

## **Recommendation. Install “Welcome to Down East North Carolina” entrance signs**

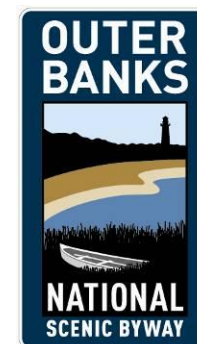
One of the keys to creating and retaining a sense of place is making sure that visitors know when they have arrived at your “place.” Just as homeowners want the door/entryway to their home to be inviting and to tell a little about who they are, entrance signs are an important way to welcome residents and visitors alike and say a little about the community – in this case, the 13 Down East communities – and show pride in place and people.

## **Recommendation. Design and install wayfinding signage for community assets**

“Wayfinding” is a series of signs and/or kiosks strategically located throughout a community or, in this case, a region, to help visitors identify and find local points of interest. Some of the more common examples of wayfinding



can be found in historical areas or districts. The signs are usually uniform in design (similar size, shape and color) and placed or located in a visible location, so sites can be found easily and enjoyed. Wayfinding is another area where the talent of local artists can be utilized for design ideas, while also helping visitors find galleries, stores, and service businesses. As always, the public should have a say in which community assets are promoted through the signage. The Outer Banks National Scenic Byway has federal funding to design, fabricate and install wayfinding signage for the entire Byway. Community input will be critical, with the hope that each community will build on the wayfinding system within its community to help facilitate each community's most popular sites to be well-accessed. On the flip side, signage can keep people from wandering aimlessly, stumbling into places residents would rather not have them. Those "sacred places" where visitors are not desired can remain unmarked.



***Recommendation. Provide a series of kiosks to showcase Down East attractions***

A series of kiosks should be placed at attractions along NC-12 and Hwy-70. These kiosks could provide a map, noting the current location, as well as locations of other Down East attractions. In addition to local artists, carpenters could be utilized in the construction and design of the kiosks. The kiosks should also incorporate all available travel technologies, for example, apps for smart-phones, QR codes, GPS mapping and mobile websites, for educating the travelers before they visit Down East to maximize their appreciation and understanding of the natural and cultural landscape while they are here, and following their visit, to encourage return visits and ongoing interest in Down East. A grant application is under review by the national office for the Outer Banks National Scenic Byway to assist with planning, designing, fabricating and installing interpretive signage throughout the Byway. A decision on this application is expected mid-2012. Public restrooms would be a great addition to a kiosk area located in the central part of Down East.

***Recommendation. Work with Carteret County Planning Department to explore design principles for the area***

Property and business owners expressed strong resistance to design-related planning, because they have concerns that they will lose control over the unique characteristics of their building or property. In 2006, Carteret County commissioners created an overlay ordinance, the Down East Conservation Ordinance (DECO) that was to "protect the sensitive environmental areas located in the 'Down East' area of Carteret County." At the heart of the ordinance are provisions, such as a buffer requirement that goes 20 feet beyond state regulations and limits building within 50 feet of the water to structures, such as docks. This is intended to reduce asphalt, rooftops and other impervious surfaces that contribute to polluted stormwater running into nearby waterways. However, rather than mandating what a property owner may or may not do with their building, design principles typically focus on standards for improvements that reinforce the unique character and pedestrian orientation of an area. These standards may address design features for sidewalks, paving, curbing, street trees, vehicular parking areas, bicycle parking, signage, awnings, overhead utilities, streetlights and other elements of a streetscape.

Through pursuit of public art funds that may be available through the NC Arts Council, or National Endowment for the Arts Our Town grant program, for example, the Design work group may be able to help facilitate local artists' creating bike racks, outdoor seating and signage in front of public buildings in the communities. Additionally, local art could be hung inside public buildings and cooperating businesses, or used to create a community focal point as the community of Davis has done at the main intersection. This would build on the community welcome signs already in place in most Down East communities that include icons of the culture, like boats, pilings and corks, and native vegetation.

***Recommendation.* Increase funding and other resources to protect, promote and restore historic structures Down East**

Ruth Little of Longleaf Historic Resources, a Raleigh-based private firm, just completed work for the NC State Historic Preservation Office to identify historic buildings and neighborhoods of rural Carteret County, including Down East. Over the past year, Ms. Little has identified numerous structures in the Down East area with significant history and architectural features. A report of this survey and recommendations for protecting and building on these important assets could be an important resource for Down East. For example, if the building owners are willing to participate, a driving tour might be developed to share the history – and stories – of these important cultural features. It is vitally important to ensure that information is shared only with the knowledge and permission of the owners. The report will be made available through the Saltwater Connections project.

The Carteret County Historical Society, a 501(c)(3) organization, recognizes historic homes and buildings through its plaquing program. Homes or buildings that are at least 75 years old or have significance to the county's history are eligible for a plaque. Down East residents should consider this opportunity to get their houses documented and plaqued. The Resource Team wants to emphasize that plaquing does not limit what a homeowner can do with their structure. It merely is formal recognition of historic value. Conversations with the Historical Society might further lead to a special Down East designation, from which a Down East homes tour could be designed. Further, the Historical Society publishes a history journal, *The Researcher*, twice a year, and a bi-monthly newsletter, *The History Place Newsletter*. One issue of either or both of these publications could be devoted to just Down East.

***Recommendation.* Explore potential benefits of historic district designation**

Historic districts attract tourism and related small businesses. In the recently completed historic architecture report, historian Ruth Little specifically noted that Atlantic has strong potential for development of an historic district. This could be something that community might want to explore and consider. More generally, owners of historic homes located Down East should be provided with information if they are interested in exploring historic preservation covenants and tax incentives. A workshop with invited speakers from Preservation NC or the State Historic Preservation Office of the NC Department of Cultural Resources could explain options to the community at-large.

**Recommendation. Maintain working waterfront areas and seafood landing areas**

The value of maintaining working waterfronts, fish houses, and boat repair facilities cannot be overstated. Vessel berths, landing facilities, and shoreside services are severely limited in the Down East area. When working waterfronts convert to recreational and residential uses, the longer term monetary value to the wider community is reduced, in terms of tax revenue and jobs. A seafood dealer creates a direct economic impact by selling seafood that he/she buys from local fishermen. A portion of the sales goes toward paying fishermen, as well as the dealer's overhead and employee wages. An economic ripple effect, a multiplier, occurs as fishing dollars are reinvested in the business or in goods and services such as fuel, groceries, insurance and boat repairs. The impact on the local economy is significant, as well. Because fishing families live locally, fishing income is distributed locally - spent on homes, food, clothing, supplies and services. Local benefits are reaped



repeatedly as money is spent and re-circulated in the local economy.



Down East is fortunate to have working fish houses and a haul-out facility. The low-lying, marshy nature of the environment has made dense development scarce, and therefore, boats are not lacking dockage to the extent of other areas in North Carolina. The County operates three county harbors (of safe refuge) at Cedar Island, Atlantic and Harkers Island. Marshallberg Harbor is community-owned but under litigation. The Resource Team heard that it could become part of the county harbor system, but official steps towards that have not happened. The three refuge harbors are valuable working waterfront areas serving both residents and visitors in the Down East area. The County has funding for repairs to the bulkhead to ensure its structural integrity, as well as monies for dredging the channel to an adequate depth to accommodate commercial fishing boats. There has

been, however, controversy surrounding commercial access to two of the Down East harbors, and the mouth of Atlantic harbor was shoaled and impassable until recently. These issues of harbor access are not likely to go away and the community actively should work with the County to design lease policies to make Harbor Refuges sustained commercial fishing ports.

Residents should seek state legislation that authorizes voluntary working waterfront conservation easements, similar to those authorized for farm and forestry land in NC, creating a NC Seafood Development and Working Waterfront Preservation Trust Fund

structured similarly to that for farmlands in GS 106-744. The NC Waterfront Access Study recommended this action in its 2007 report to the General Assembly. This legislation would position the region and the state to benefit should federal working waterfront protection legislation be enacted. Waterfront ownership and management options also exist for public, nonprofit, or cooperative entities. One way to diversify the fish house business model would be to develop a substantial retail front. Working waterfronts also present opportunities for heritage or occupational tourism, as noted earlier in this report. Some relief from property / estate taxes maybe be through use of a homestead exemption and/or a working waterfront property tax deferral.

The Design work group should encourage the state to revive the Waterfront Access and Marine Industry (WAMI) initiative/fund and approach the county's Public Access Advisory Board to help explore ways to purchase key properties Down East for public use, such as the clam house in Williston, Luther Lewis and Son in Davis, and the Clayton Fulcher fish house in Atlantic. Depending on the future uses of these buildings, there are several funding sources that may be explored to support building reuse. If a business purchases the building and creates jobs, the County might explore Building Reuse and Restoration funds from the NC Rural Center to cover some of the expenses. The NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund or USDA Rural Development Community Facilities programs might be a fit if the building is re-used for recreation activities or community services. Once potential future uses of the buildings have been determined, the design work group should explore appropriate funding sources.

***Recommendation. Repair or construct new Davis Boy Scout Hut and expand activities***

The local Boy Scout Troop #252 has long been an active and strong organization that engages Down East youth and unites kids from the various communities. Resource Team members heard that the Scout Hut in Davis located by the fire department has fallen into disrepair. The Scout Hut is the centerpiece of Scouting activities, and without a new facility, these efforts would be severely hampered. The Resource Team recommends seeking financial resources to assist in the repair or construction of a new Scout Hut and expand the activities that they participate in. The USDA Rural Development Community Facilities program may be a source of grant or low-cost loan dollars and a grassroots fundraising effort that targets donations from former Scouts living Down East or elsewhere are two potential funding options.

## P R O M O T I O N

“This is my favorite place I love to be, on Core Sound, that’s where you will find me. My family and I live on a creek, the egrets stand guard in the marsh with their long necks and beaks. ”

-Excerpt, *Core Sound Child*,  
by Gay Mason  
& Lena Ennis

This report recommends two broad promotion strategies for the communities of Down East - the first, a local promotion campaign designed to promote Down East to its own residents and businesses and mainland Carteret County; and the second, a campaign to promote Down East to the “outside world.” Related efforts to develop tourism “products,” such as trails and educational tour packages, are described in both the Promotion and Economic Revitalization recommendations in this report.

The Down East local (or internal) promotion campaign is important to help long-time residents and newcomers alike learn about, and from, each other; to lay the foundation for promotion efforts outside Down East; and to begin growing the connections and “regional pride” that were shared with the Resource Team. It is easy to overlook or under-appreciate the good things (or assets) in our communities, especially when we see them every day. It also is vitally important for communities developing tourism strategies to ensure that what is promoted to visitors is consistent with the overall goals for the future. The Resource Team heard clearly that Down East residents want stronger business and job opportunities but do not want to be “on display” or overrun with visitors who do not appreciate the unique character of Down East. The local promotion campaign will help build on the asset mapping process and help community leaders appreciate what they have now and want to keep for the long term.

Building on the popularity of coastal North Carolina as a destination, Down East would benefit from a community-led tourism development and promotion program. Down East Carteret County has a rich history like Ocracoke and Hatteras Islands, but one that is less widely recognized. It offers spectacular sound fishing and waterfowl hunting. Its tenacious commercial fishing industry is a remarkable example of how small, diversified, locally based businesses can adapt to environmental change – a lesson often lost on urban and suburban visitors.

Much could be done to support and promote these assets. When visitors begin to grasp the challenges and joys of living Down East, they appreciate the resilience of Core Sounders in the face of an unpredictable environment. They become aware of how deeply people here rely on one another, and how thoroughly life here is shaped by natural cycles – including those of seasons, storms, and living creatures. These are profound experiences that can inspire one-time vacationers to come back again and again, supporting local businesses and nonprofits, or to making longer term community investments.

For these reasons, the “external” promotion efforts should focus on working with tourism agencies, local businesses, and other public and nonprofit partners to develop and promote more small community-based festivals, events, and other Down East activities. The visitors, who will treat these communities well and will be

happy spending their money here, are those who feel some sense of connection to the local community, even if only for a few days. They are people who appreciate and respect the uniqueness of the place and its people.

The Resource Team heard clearly that the cost of living is high, and activities and amenities for nurturing seniors or striving singles and youth are limited. Young people who are growing up Down East acknowledge the challenges – low wages in seasonal jobs and lack of affordable housing – but most are clear they want to live, work and raise their families here. The Down East communities are home to incredibly resourceful and resilient residents who care deeply about and have worked hard to preserve the quality of life that distinguishes these communities. Quality of life is one of the most important aspects businesses look at when considering expansion or re-location. Businesses want their employees to be happy and productive. Nothing helps create that environment like a sense of place and belonging to a community.

***Recommendation. Promote Down East to Down Easters and mainland Carteret County***

The Resource Team experience provided a snapshot of the assets that make Down East so distinctive: the people and places, the history and culture, and the work ethic and self-sufficiency that define the communities. This was an important opportunity for the businesses, residents and programs that were visited to showcase their work and accomplishments and should be repeated for Down East neighbors. A first step for the Promotion work group would be to work with the communities to build on the Resource Team itinerary and host a series of visits that help leaders from neighboring communities learn more about each other. It also will be important to continue the outreach to, and connections with, county agencies and officials that has been a part of the Saltwater Connections process, and to invite, for example, county staff and elected officials to participate in the visits, to keep them informed and to strengthen the relationship with the County.

***Recommendation. Build on the asset mapping process to create tourism products and identify places to be promoted and “sacred places” for the communities***

Down East residents and business owners have been involved in mapping over 600 natural, cultural, historic, human and other assets of the 13 communities and the region. These assets include places, such as Cape Lookout National Seashore; historic places, such as the Hunting Quarters Primitive Baptist Church; businesses that are the lifeblood of Down East, providing groceries, fresh produce and seafood, gas, health care, and boat building; businesses that provide visitor experiences, such as fishing charters, kayak tours, fresh produce and seafood, overnight lodging, birdwatching, and crafts; and agencies and organizations that provide education, community services, youth development, and faith / worship services.

In contrast to other approaches to tourism development, community-led tourism builds on existing assets and strengths; creates tourism “products” that showcase those strengths; focuses on local ownership of tourism businesses; requires cooperation, rather than competition, across a region as multiple communities provide experiences for visitors; and ensures that the “sacred places” that are important to the communities are not shared with visitors. These “sacred places” may be family or community cemeteries,

churches or special fishing spots; and not promoting them to outside visitors will help the Down East communities retain their character and sense of place. Identifying and protecting sacred places will also ensure that residents experience tourism as hosts, rather than “attractions on display;” inviting visitors into the community much as you might invite visitors into your home.

Tourism product development that builds on identified assets might include: “pocket parks” or nature viewing areas that allow travelers to pull off the road and take photographs or birdwatch; working waterfront tours that enable visitors to learn about commercial fishing operations and build awareness about the benefits of local seafood; or historic tours that share the rich heritage of isolated coastal fishing communities. It also will be important to develop and/or strengthen tourism products that help meet the needs and improve the quality of life of local residents, such as walking trails, roadside produce or seafood stands, and more.

***Recommendation. Begin conversations with Carteret County Commissioners to establish a tourism development position specific for Down East on the Tourism Development Authority***

The Down East region would benefit from a community-based tourism development professional working specifically with Down East businesses and organizations to develop events, promotions, training, websites and other services to promote nature-based and cultural heritage tourism. Potential partners include the East Carolina University’s Center for Sustainable Tourism; NC State University’s Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism; North Carolina’s Eastern Regional Economic Development Commission; the NC Arts Council and the NC Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development. Successful models for carefully planned community-based tourism initiatives can be found around the country where small communities have built upon their natural landscape and living traditions to create destinations for heritage and nature travelers seeking off-the-beaten path experiences. More information can be found on Saltwater Connections website.

***Recommendation. Partner with the Outer Banks National Scenic Byway***

The Outer Banks National Scenic Byway will be creating a community-based marketing plan to promote all 21 unincorporated Byway communities. Down East has a tremendous opportunity to participate in the marketing effort and promote itself as the southern gateway to the Scenic Byway, collaborating with Hatteras Island villages that make up the northern gateway. Similar to the Handmade in America strategy that focused on small communities working together to provide a regional visitor experience rather than competing against each other, a shared marketing strategy will provide the foundation for stronger economies and regional collaboration between the communities that lie along the Byway. The Saltwater Connections project’s goals are to foster this sort of regional collaboration and to help communities leverage their common assets to collectively address challenges. Finding the unique niche that would attract visitors to the Byway communities will require input from marketing professionals.

***Recommendation. Feature true Down East experiences in all tourism promotion***

Tourism currently is a growing economic engine in Carteret County, with many resources devoted to destination marketing – a

visitor-centered approach to the economic and cultural development of the communities. Once primarily featured as a natural attraction (camping at the banks, surf fishing and Shackelford ponies), future promotion should diversify to highlight more of a unique and “homegrown” destination, which are typically small and localized destinations that capitalize on the authentic experiences of that location. A theme for Down East might be something like “Living at the Water’s Edge.” The idea should be driven by local residents rather than the Tourism Development Authority (TDA), but should be TDA-supported as coming from the community, and tapping the expertise of marketing professionals. The TDA is a key partner in the promotion of Down East as a tourist destination and should be represented on the Promotion work group. The work group should work closely with the TDA to identify funding resources for branding and marketing the Down East communities.

Recognizing there are fewer room-tax revenues currently being collected Down East (Driftwood Motel at Cedar Island, the Fishing Center at Harkers Island, beds-and-breakfasts and several rental properties), tourism efforts should, nonetheless, recognize that the Down East region contributes greatly to the county’s overall tourism appeal. Cape Lookout Lighthouse, the Shackelford horses, Cape Lookout National Seashore, Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center and the link to Ocracoke Island and the Outer Banks via the Cedar Island ferry are all located within Down East communities and contribute significantly to the tourism economy of Carteret County. The designation of Down East as part of the Outer Banks National Scenic Byway (one of only 150 in the U.S.) also is an important opportunity for County tourism officials to promote and help support at the local community level.

***Recommendation. Create historic community walking/driving tours to showcase historic buildings and graveyards***

As noted previously, Ruth Little of Longleaf Historic Resources recently completed an architectural survey of Down East. Her work was presented to the community on March 19, 2012 at the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center. It would be of the most benefit for local residents to come together and decide what impact that can have on their communities and the preservation of historical structures. There are also possibilities in economic terms. These historic properties present a wonderful opportunity for historical and educational based tourism. A summary of buildings could be used to develop a walking or driving tour. In addition to showcasing historic homes and structures, all Down East communities have significant numbers of family gravesites that the families may or may not want to share with visitors. Guided and self-guided tours could be developed for such sites should families/property owners be willing participants. Eighty percent of travel preparation is now done via the web/online, so tours should be uploaded to a website as a long-term goal. Staff from the NC Office of Archives and History can assist with this.





**Recommendation. Promote local heritage**



There are many stories to be told by long-time residents of Down East communities. These stories should be recorded, so that future generations can have an understanding of what life Down East was like in past generations. These stories present opportunities for books, plays and film, as well as tourism opportunities. The Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center (CSWM&HC) is doing most all of this through community nights, community exhibits, community day, the quilt project and publications; and has gotten much of this material filmed. The Promotions work group can build upon what the CSWM&HC has done how to package materials into products that people can buy. A directory should be created to help people find local carvers and boat builders. The Core Sound Decoy Carvers Guild would be an excellent partner for this. The Guild also organizes annually in December the Decoy Festival. Other similar community events could be created around CSWM&HC archived material. More importantly, the Promotions work group is positioned to develop ideas to promote and enhance existing events, such as Davis' Christmas celebration. For tourism business, Christmas is a huge opportunity. The Boom Truck Parade at Cedar

Island was a great event for community pride but no longer takes place, and the Promotions work group should research possible funding mechanisms to reinstate it. Organizations that may be able to help are Handmade in America, which offers resources for crafters, artists, apprentices and schoolteachers and promotes handcrafts by facilitating market connections and the North Carolina Folklife Institute, which supports programs and projects that recognize, document, and present traditional culture, including oral histories. The Institute sometimes offers training in documentary filmmaking.

**Recommendation. Diversify the tourism economy by creating tourism “products” that include educational and experiential activities, such as commercial fishing, sky-watching and bird-watching**

Down East is the premier location for participating in water-related activities. But, there is more available. A growing market in tourism is “Immersion Travel” or “Cultural Immersion Travel.” Down East communities should tap into this market trend by providing educational-based tourism centered on life as a waterman, for example. Visitors interested in the local culture and the occupation of commercial fishing could participate in a fishing trip, speak with members of commercial fishing families about the challenges they face, and learn about the ecology of the area through the eyes of watermen. The historical aspect of the industry could be



featured, as well. Other immersion activities might include boatbuilding and clam raking. Navigation would tie into astronomy, as the small, rural communities with limited street lights and vast stretches of National Park Service and National Wildlife Refuge lands allow for some of the most spectacular views of the night sky for stargazing and astronomy enthusiasts. Local cooking and foods unique to Down East is another potential “immersion” topic, teaching visitors to cook local dishes, including recipes passed down from generation to generation.

**Partnerships** will be key in developing programs and tours, as much of the information needed to develop these experiences has already been completed by local organizations and agencies. Church cookbooks, for example, have already compiled the Down East recipes and food traditions that might be turned into cooking classes. The Core Sound Decoy Carvers Guild and Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center have documented the decoy carving and painting traditions; and, the Museum also is showcasing the quilting, net-making, and boat-building traditions that will be of great interest to crafters. It is recommended that the Promotion work group identify the experiences to be shared through immersion tourism, and then, work with local businesses and organizations to develop a comprehensive strategy for implementing and marketing these programs and experiences. The TDA will be an important partner in the marketing; and other entities, including the community college should be involved in attracting new visitors. Local educators should also be involved in developing and providing these experiences, which can help generate supplemental or seasonal income for the educators while also providing high-quality education for a broad range of audiences.



Hunting and fishing guide services have been a mainstay of the Down East economy for generations and, in recent years, have adhered to standards that are the foundation of education tourism. While visiting hunters and fishers in the early 1900s were often focused on quantity – getting large numbers of fish or waterfowl – the guide service businesses that the Resource Team met with, talked about how they include local information, stories, and values in providing the services. This is an important shift that already is helping to retain and grow these businesses, while also, providing ready-made experiences that can be incorporated into the product development and marketing strategies.

The Tourism Development Authority will be an important resource partner in promoting the outdoor adventure activities and opportunities that exist, and that can be developed in Down East Carteret County. One strategy that is often used in the tourism industry to promote certain destinations is to host a “familiarization” (“fam”) tour, which is a free or reduced-rate trip offered to travel professionals to acquaint them with what a destination, attraction or supplier has to offer. Fam tour participants typically include tour and travel companies, meeting and event planners, and writers and journalists, such as the Travel Writers Association. One of these target audiences, ElderHostel, Inc., is a national organization that is dedicated to lifelong learning. Their subsidiary, Road Scholar, offers more than 7,000 educational tours in all 50 states and 150 countries. The Promotion Work group should work closely with the Visitors Bureau to develop and implement strategies that promote Down East to target audiences and to cultivate these new relationships that will help to diversify the

economy. The goal is to proactively influence the types of tourists who come, rather than passively receive anyone and all, particularly visitors who may be oblivious to how local people live, or that there are people who live Down East year-round.

***Recommendation. Promote Down East's quality of life to entice private company relocation***

One of the key strategies of the Economic Revitalization recommendations is working to diversify the economy to ensure that there are more than seasonal jobs available. In the internet age, there are many small businesses that are sole proprietorships or have less than ten employees that can do their work remotely. These businesses often choose where they want to be located based on lifestyle and quality of life considerations (as long as high-speed internet access is available). It will be important to get the Carteret County Chamber of Commerce working with the Carteret County Economic Development Council and other economic development agencies to promote Down East and its quality of life as an ideal location for small businesses. One strategy might be to host corporate gatherings during the shoulder season or off-season to raise awareness about the amenities and lifestyles. Another idea might be to have Down East represented at trade shows for technology-related businesses.



# ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION

"...a  
Downeaster...  
the people like  
wooden boats  
and build them  
in back yards  
beneath big live  
oak trees...  
Downeasters  
are the hard-  
working people  
who make up  
the backbone of  
the land,  
independent,  
strong, and  
proud, the salt  
of the earth  
...you may, by  
watching  
closely, find a  
land of dreams  
that is no  
fantasy land, but  
DOWNEAST."

-Bob Simpson,  
*When the  
Water Smokes*

The Economic Revitalization work group should focus on two broad areas: 1) strengthening existing businesses; and 2) cultivating, supporting and recruiting new businesses that help to strengthen and diversify the economy of the Down East region. Given the extraordinary natural resources and coastal environment, the work group should focus on creation of responsible businesses that provide higher-quality jobs with livable wages and benefits, build on the strengths and skills of the people and communities, and protect and promote the natural, cultural and historic resources that define the region.

The work group will want to work with the Carteret County Chamber of Commerce, the Carteret County Tourism Development Authority, the Carteret County Economic Development Commission, Carteret Catch, Carteret Community College Small Business Center, North Carolina's Eastern (Economic Development) Region, the NC Department of Commerce and other related economic development agencies and programs.

## **STRENGTHEN EXISTING BUSINESSES**

North Carolina is a state of small businesses, with over two-thirds of the jobs in the state provided by businesses with fewer than 100 employees and 17% of all jobs occurring in sole proprietorships or businesses with no employees. Almost 27% of the businesses in North Carolina are family-owned. Strengthening existing businesses is a sound economic development strategy for a variety of reasons, especially because it is easier to help existing businesses expand and create new jobs, than it is to recruit new industries. More importantly, residents universally expressed a strong desire to keep "mom-and-pop" businesses part of the Down East economy, which is itself an economic and marketing asset.

### **Recommendation. Develop a Down East business support network**

While small businesses are the mainstay of our state's economy, most face significant challenges in starting up, operating effectively, and expanding. One of the biggest challenges is for small operations, with only one or two employees, to carry out the range of activities needed to run any business: developing or manufacturing products and services, marketing those products and services, and managing the back-office operations, such as accounting and paperwork. Other challenges include: access to capital for start-up and expansion, access to technical assistance to improve products and services, identifying and accessing new markets, and more. Farming and fishing carry significant challenges related to complying with environmental regulations; and, value-added food production – while it generates more income for the owner – has significant health-related regulations

that must be complied with. All of this takes energy and skills, and often means that time is wasted and profits are reduced as business owners juggle many responsibilities to get the work done.

While small business owners tend to excel at operating in isolation, the distribution of Down East businesses across many miles may be hampering growth opportunities. The Resource Team heard from some businesses that they would like to see increased advertising and development of new markets; others reported an interest in being involved in county economic growth matters. Some stated a strong interest in knowing more about the Outer Banks National Scenic Byway, and how they might be more involved in the increased attention and visitation to Down East. In order to turn these interests into action, it will help if the business owners are able to work together to ensure that these messages are getting to the individuals, agencies and organizations that can help.

Down East businesses would be best served by coming together to identify critical needs, and then, identifying strategies and partners to help address those needs. The Economic Revitalization work group should convene the Down East businesses, identify the types of support that would most benefit the businesses, and then, develop a strategy or strategies to meet those needs. Some needs might be met by improving relationships with existing agencies or organizations, such as the county Tourism Development Authority or Economic Development Commission. Other needs might require a new entity, such as a small business incubator. Still further, some needs might be addressed simply through regular meetings of business owners and service providers to explore ideas, such as joint advertising and improve coordination of activities across businesses.

The Down East Business Association of Carteret County, a 501(c)(6), should be considered as an existing organization that could be shaped to meet the needs of existing businesses. The Down East Business Association, with assistance from the Carteret Community College Small Business Center, held monthly meetings and breakfasts to bring together Down East businesses. This sort of organization can provide a platform for existing small businesses and entrepreneurs to come together and network and to discuss issues of common need. Recognizing that time is valuable, business owners might also explore using Skype, webinars, conference calls or other “virtual” means of meeting to reduce travel time.

***Recommendation. Expand the Down East Business Directory***

Over the past year, Saltwater Connections has facilitated compiling of a Down East Business Directory, currently available in hard copy and online on the Down East Community News website. Specifically, the directory should be expanded and re-organized by community, not just by industry/sector, and be a searchable database of some kind. Again, 80 percent of travel preparation is now done via the web/online, so continuing to be online is important. The work group should focus attention on how to keep information current and up-to-date. This is paramount. A possible strategy is to form an online directory editorial board so the workload could be shared amongst several persons and so all areas of Down East could adequately be represented. A word of caution is that if the directory is a pay-to-be-listed situation, smaller mom-and-pop businesses will be disadvantaged. The Economic Revitalization work group should research ways all to include all businesses so everyone can benefit.

***Recommendation. Conduct a market analysis to identify existing small business opportunities and needs***

One of the distinctive features of the Down East economy is the predominance of small and family-owned businesses, and the lack of fast food restaurants and other franchises. While this is a strength that should be marketed as part of the branding and marketing campaign, it also has inherent challenges, given the seasonal nature of the tourism economy and the difficulties that are generally faced by small businesses. As noted above, some of the issues heard by Resource Team members included: need for increased access to capital, need for coordinated marketing, need to increase use of social media in marketing, and the need for expanding customer bases through internet sales, to name just a few.

The Economic Revitalization work group should work with the Carteret County Chamber of Commerce, the Small Business Center at Carteret Community College, and other economic development entities to survey business owners Down East, to identify their needs related to financing, marketing, management, and etc. Once the data have been compiled, the next step would be to identify the types of support needed to determine: 1) training needs for business owners; 2) services that might be provided to multiple businesses by existing nonprofits or programs such as Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE); and 3) services that might provide new business development opportunities, such as accounting services, website development and maintenance, and etc.

***CULTIVATE ECONOMIC GROWTH***

The Resource Team heard clearly that the Down East communities desire economic growth to be small-scale and to work with the current landscape. It will be important to work with the range of agencies and other community and economic development entities to identify, recruit and/or support businesses that will help to strengthen and to diversify the economy in the region. In keeping with asset-based approaches to economic development, it will be important to ensure that efforts to attract new businesses focus on the types of businesses that will provide quality jobs and decent wages, be good corporate neighbors, and work to retain the community character and protect the natural and working landscapes that define Down East. It will be equally important to intentionally focus efforts on “home-grown” businesses – helping create an economic environment that supports potential entrepreneurs (of all ages and interests) in accessing resources and starting new businesses that are good for “profit, people and the planet.” The Resource Team heard strong interest from young people who live Down East, and want to make a living and raise their families Down East; this can be a reality if the resources are made available to help those young people own and operate their own small businesses.

From a business recruitment perspective, the quality of life is a large part of the decision-making process that draws business into an area, but available infrastructure, institutional support and consumer base is what keeps it there. An interesting example is the Little Cities of Black Diamonds region in Appalachian Ohio, where the extractive industries of coal, oil, clay and iron ore have significantly impacted the way of life since the late 1800s. Community leaders launched an initiative, called “Regional Flavor,” which helps communities use their distinctive qualities to add more value to their economy. Like a delightful homemade soup, Regional Flavor encourages local economic developers and residents to uncover their region’s unique assets—places to visit, restaurants, artisan businesses, history and heritage, recreational activities, music, festivals, foods or other aspects—and package these assets into

experiences that attract more people to live in or visit their community and help stimulate local economy. Tourism, artisan, food, recreation, and heritage organizations work together on a continual stream of region-building projects. In the process, these projects enhance the uniqueness and quality of area businesses, encourage many local and regional consumers to develop long-term buying relationships with those entrepreneurs and the region, and train local organizations to work together effectively. Ideally, an advisory group of business owners could help identify new businesses and organize community business strategy support groups.

***Recommendation. Conduct a local market analysis to identify small business opportunities***

The Economic Revitalization work group should connect with the Chamber of Commerce, North Carolina's Eastern Region Economic Development Commission and the NC Department of Commerce to identify any studies or market analyses that may have already been completed. If none have been undertaken recently, work group members should explore partnership opportunities with these agencies, a community college Small Business Center, or the Business School at East Carolina University, to conduct a market analysis.

***Recommendation. Explore establishment of a small business incubator Down East***

The National Business Incubation Association states that, "Business incubators help emerging growth companies survive and grow during the start-up period when they are most vulnerable." Some of the day-to-day activities involved in running a small business can be carried out more effectively through the services provided by a small business incubator. There are many different forms of business incubators: some provide low-cost office space for start-up businesses; some provide shared access to equipment (copiers, printers, fax machines) and services (administrative or accounting support); and still others serve as a "virtual" incubator, providing joint advertising support or handling communications and reservations for businesses that do not operate in an office. Once the Down East businesses have identified their shared needs, the work group should explore the potential for establishing a small business incubator to strengthen existing and emerging businesses' operations.

***Recommendation. Increase access to capital as needed for small business start-ups and expansions***

One of the strengths of the Down East business community is the availability of capital for business start-ups: a number of the small business owners interviewed in Down East had financed their businesses themselves, or with help from family members. It is also an incredible tribute to the resourcefulness and work ethic of the entrepreneurs that businesses are thriving with relatively small outlays of capital. There are many resources currently available, through the community college, for example, to help new entrepreneurs develop business plans or access micro-loans to start their businesses. There are also other resources (noted at the end of this report) available to provide access to loan capital and technical assistance for entrepreneurs. These and others should be shared with small business owners as needed.

**Recommendation. Explore HUBZone designation for Down East Census Tracts**

The Historically Underutilized Business Zones (HUBZone) program helps small businesses in urban and rural communities gain preferential access to federal procurement opportunities. A HUB Zone (Historically Underutilized Business Zone) is any census tract in the United States or territories where the average income of the persons living in that census tract is less than 80% of the state or territory's average wage, or the personnel in that census tract have an average unemployment rate of 140% or greater than the unemployment rate of the state or territory. Federal contractors sometime give preferences to small businesses that obtain HUBZone certification.

To qualify for the certification, a business must meet the following criteria:

- It must be a small business by SBA size standards;
- Its principal office must be located within a HUBZone, which includes lands on federally recognized Indian reservations;
- It must be owned and controlled by one or more U.S. citizens (N.B.-this means any level of ownership in an applicant small business by another company would result in a decline). Approved ownership can also be by a Community Development Corporation or Indian tribe; and
- At least 35% of its employees must reside in a HUBZone.

Down East would benefit greatly by being designated a HUB Zone. Down East businesses would receive preference in federal government contracting. Existing businesses such as Hancock & Grandson would benefit from construction contracts and the proximity to military installations, such as Camp Lejuene and Cherry Point, would make the area attractive to business relocation. The Small Business Administration oversees the HUBZone program (<http://www.sba.gov/hubzone>).

**Recommendation. Invest in growing youth entrepreneurship Down East**

The Resource Team heard strong interest from young people in business ownership as a means of being able to continue living, working, raising a family and worshipping in Down East. It is recommended that partnerships be created with the high school, youth groups, the community college and other groups, as appropriate, to provide programming and resources to grow young Down Easters' entrepreneurial skills. Some of this is already happening, through heritage-related programs such as the boat-building course at the high school and the heritage entrepreneurship summer camp experience offered by the community college and CSWM&HC. A Future Farmers of America club might be started at East Carteret High School to help students interested in farming or value-added food production as a livelihood; and the Crystal Coast Beekeepers might consider offering a special program targeted to young entrepreneurs that would combine beekeeping skills with entrepreneurship skills training.





***Recommendation. Develop a source of local philanthropy for community-based projects and initiatives***

Down East is in a less populated rural area that has pockets of poverty. There is the feeling that because of its isolation both literally and figuratively, that Down East does not get the attention or resources from local government. While it is necessary for Down East to continue working to improve the relationship with the county; it is equally important to organize some platform for local philanthropy that will allow the community to address important needs for itself, and not rely on outside funding sources. The creation of a Down East Community Foundation would be a step in the right direction. A non-profit community foundation could hold fundraisers, accept donations, and apply for grants in order to fund a wide range of community projects. The North Carolina Community Foundation is a statewide philanthropic organization which has a Carteret County affiliate. A group focused on the underserved Down East Communities would help build community capacity and help lessen the burden on individual residents. Other Saltwater Connection Communities have similar philanthropic organizations such as the Hatteras Foundation and the Ocracoke Foundation. This group could create a specialized fundraising initiative for second home owners and visitors who have a strong commitment to the area and a desire to help improve the overall community.

***Recommendation. Explore other sectors to create jobs, grow small businesses and diversify the economy***

The Center for Green Research and Evaluation at Elizabeth City State University is working to complete a “regional green economy plan” for northeastern North Carolina that has identified seven economic development sectors with high potential for “green job” creation, including:

- Energy-efficient construction
- Nature-based and heritage tourism
- Sustainable agriculture
- Renewable energy production
- Recycling industry and green manufacturing
- Stormwater management and low-impact development
- Green education and training

While Carteret County is not in the target region, the Down East region shares many of the conditions, and challenges found in the northeastern coastal communities. It is well-known that the types of industries being recruited can affect future economic development opportunities; for example, one small community in western NC worked hard to recruit a landfill because of the promise of jobs, and that one business attracted other businesses that degraded the landscape, and reduced the quality of life. “Green industries” are gaining in acceptance, and actively recruiting these types of businesses can help demonstrate the community commitment to job creation that is consistent with protection of the quality of life and rich natural resources. It is important to coordinate this market analysis with the “existing business needs” survey to ensure that new businesses will add value to the existing businesses, while “rounding out” the economic activities Down East.

Sectors that may provide improved opportunities for economic growth are described below, including recommendations for specific actions that may be considered by the Economic Revitalization work group, businesses, agencies, organizations, and individuals who care about the future economic vitality of Down East.

## **Food-Based Businesses**

### ***Recommendation. Retain and support working farms and working waterfronts***

Working lands – farms, forests and waterfronts – are a vitally important component of the economic and community vitality Down East. The County Harbor system was established to support commercial fishing and should be retained and strengthened, as noted previously in this report. Funding for working farm easements may be available through the US Department of Agriculture and the NC Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund; these are a valuable tool if the land owner wants to keep their land in farming.

### ***Recommendation. Explore new markets, such as the military, for seafood and farm products***

As an outgrowth of the personnel increases at Camp LeJeune and Fort Bragg, the US Department of Defense is exploring development of programs designed to increase purchasing of food products from North Carolina businesses. In the past, one of the major barriers to small producers providing these goods has been the quantity of products needed to be supplied in order to enter into a supply contract. The Economic Revitalization work group should explore the status of these developing programs, and work with the appropriate personnel to identify opportunities, and advocate for participation by interested Down East farming and fishing families.

### ***Recommendation. Strengthen existing roadside stands and develop new local “Farmers Market”***

Farmers markets continue to rise in popularity, mostly due to the growing consumer interest in obtaining fresh products directly from farmers. As of mid-2011, there were 7,175 farmers markets operating in the U.S.; this is a 17 percent increase from 2010. In a Project for Public Spaces study, 60 percent of customers at farmers markets said they had or planned to visit other stores in the area. Markets also have been identified as good social gathering places that help build community.

In general, farmers markets are great “low-hanging fruit” that the Down East communities might pursue individually or as a group. They are popular with government agencies, connect local farmers to visitors and locals, and have an entrepreneurship angle with funding/grant-writing, and offer health and nutrition learning opportunities. It will be important to bring together the existing roadside stands and market owners, to identify any needs they may have to strengthen their existing operations. The Collard Shack in Otway

has been around for over three years and has a little bit of everything from produce, preserves, seafood and fresh baked goods. Simpson greenhouse and farm in Bettie sells fresh local produce, such as strawberries, tomatoes, corn and other seasonal vegetables, as well as baked goods. Marshallberg Farms is producing certified organic, grass-fed Black Angus beef. Commercial fishermen should sell their products at farmers markets. It will be important to get input from these and other business owners, to find out if they would benefit from being able to sell their products at another location; or if they have received requests for specialty foods that they might offer at their stands. How can these operations be strengthened?

If there is enough market demand for an additional Down East farmer's market, one potential location might be the BRIDGE youth center on Harkers Island. It is recommended that youth entrepreneurship training be offered to help the young people learn how to operate a business and grow their skills and their incomes; the youth should also be encouraged to coordinate their efforts with other markets and stands throughout Down East, to add value to all the operations. In the current U.S. economy, incorporating the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) payment option would be a must. Social Services issues qualifying recipients an "EBT Card" similar to a bank ATM or debit card to receive and use their food stamp and/or cash benefits. The Leaflight organization helps to allow farmers markets the ability to accept EBT payments. More information can be found by visiting: [www.leaflight.org/21st/21st-Century-Farmers-Markets-info.htm](http://www.leaflight.org/21st/21st-Century-Farmers-Markets-info.htm)

**Recommendation. Expand capacity for local/organic foods including seafood**

While the North Carolina seafood industry is stressed and the number of fish houses and fishermen are declining, the "local foods" movement has gained momentum in the United States. Fishermen have an opportunity to target discriminating consumers and get a better value for their product by associating themselves with the local foods movement. Key to this effort is the seafood education and branding campaign being carried out under the auspices of an umbrella group called North Carolina Catch, and carried out locally by four regional groups (Carteret Catch, Outer Banks Catch, Brunswick Catch, and Ocracoke Fresh). These "catch" groups are working to educate consumers about the availability and quality of local seafood. Down East fishermen, seafood dealers and restaurants benefit from this program and should continue to support it. Down East fishermen/women should explore other ways local seafood can be promoted and enjoyed, including partnering seafood industry participants with proponents of the farmers market and community gardens locally and around the region.



Underground Farms, on Marshallberg Farms property, is launching a new CSA. The Carteret Local Food Network brings growers and consumers together and promotes the CSA model and community gardens throughout the county. A concerted effort to have local foods cooked and served at Island schools, to the elderly, or at festivals and events could benefit the fishing industry and the residents of Down East.

**Recommendation. Explore new market channels and marketing arrangements for local farm and seafood products**

The Resource Team heard much about the complex challenges of maintaining the seafood industry. This recommendation endeavors to get the industry to add value to their seafood products via branding (a brand can either command higher price or better margins), direct marketing arrangements (whether it be sales through retail, e-commerce, or buying clubs like a Community Supported Fishery), or processing (e.g., take a container of lump crab meat which would sell for \$8 and make four crab cakes with it at \$3 ea.) “Value-added” is the process of changing or transforming a product from its original state to a more valuable state. For example, wheat that has been processed into flour, or figs that have been canned and then turned into fig cake will generate higher income for the farmer, or producer.

Value-added seafood products present an opportunity to increase profit margins. Examples might include a filleting and processing facility that could tap into the increased demand for local seafood, and a production facility where specialty foods, such as canned seafood chowders and stews or frozen fish cakes, could be produced, packed, stored and shipped. Down East has significant inroads in this area, from the former Willis Brothers Seafood, which was the largest suppliers of clams to the Heinz Food Company in the 1920s, to Luther Lewis & Son Crab Company, which in 1989 began making gourmet crab cakes. Under pressure from seafood imports, distribution channels are drying up.

The Economic Revitalization work group should research other coastal, fishing communities for ideas, uses or niche markets that currently are not being tapped Down East. There is a definite need to work together with State agencies and others to help promote wild caught seafood and to educate consumers about the benefits of this commodity. This enters into conversations about quality, food security, jobs and the local economy. This part of the State has the finest water quality for specific products of anywhere in the world and that message needs to get out loud and clear. The local “Catch” effort can have a significant impact in making this happen. Carteret Catch, along with other Catch groups, should actively engage in conversations with food distributors to make inroads for Down East seafood processing businesses.

*“The old [economic] models, you just need to blow them up. Nothing is as it used to be. Community supported fisheries make fishery supported communities.”*

*Anonymous,  
Down East commercial fishermen*

Walking Fish, a cooperative of a dozen fishermen, as well as the husband-and-wife run Core Sound Seafood seem to be making progress here, as well. Both business models are based on the community-supported agriculture (CSA) model and are community supported fishery (CSF) programs that connect local fishermen to an out-of-area market where they can get premium prices (retail versus wholesale, which usually represents a 30 percent increase). The CSF members pre-pay for a “season” of fresh, locally caught seafood, and in turn, fishermen provide a weekly share of the highest quality fish or shellfish. The CSFs reconnect members with their food system and build relationships between fishermen and community members. There is a real need to make Down East commercial fishermen “real people” in the eyes of those consuming their products.

Exploring special delivery service to renters during the summer tourist season on Bogue Banks and other tourism destinations would be an opportunity for local seafood markets/CSF's to explore. Promoting local seafood, local restaurants serving fresh caught and "know your fisherman / farmer" campaigns need to be included in local tourism marketing campaigns to capitalize on the growing "locavore" movement would be especially helpful to local farmers and fishermen especially Down East.

***Recommendation. Investigate the feasibility and economic potential of expanded shellfish mariculture and new aquaculture businesses***

Culture of seafood (termed mariculture for marine organisms and aquaculture for freshwater) is the fastest-growing form of food production in the world and will likely continue. Meeting consumption demands of seafood globally necessitates growing some seafood to supplement wild harvest. In tandem with this, fishing restrictions and closures have had a severe impact on the commercial fishing operations of Down East, particularly a series of measures pertaining to the Endangered Species Act. These restrictions, combined with high operating costs and a market depressed by a flood of imported products have eroded the vitality of the commercial fishing industry. Emerging programs and business models, such as direct marketing, community supported fisheries, and local seafood branding efforts, are designed to help offset the negative trend.

A handful of entrepreneurs in North Carolina are experiencing some success growing oysters in suspended cages for the lucrative "half shell" market, which is a multi-million dollar industry in Virginia but is in its infancy in North Carolina. Small-scale clam operations, particularly in grow-out beds, are a viable supplemental income for a good number of North Carolina commercial fishermen. By no means is it a get rich quick scheme. Oysters can take upwards of three years to reach market size; hard clams, two to four. Yet; an enhanced shellfish mariculture program should be explored for Down East as the ecology of the area is ideal for growing oysters and clams, and the Carteret Community College Aquaculture Technology Program and North Carolina Sea Grant Extension Program already are studying mariculture possibilities, that may serve as an opportunity for Down East residents wishing to explore this option.

Down East Carteret County is ideally situated to be a center for aquaculture not only for the county, but also, for North Carolina. Key assets include the strong fishing tradition of local people who have generations of experience in the commercial fishing industry, and the NC State Marine Aquaculture Research Center located in Gloucester, whose staff could help the workforce acquire some specialized training to make the transition to aquaculture. Developing the aquaculture economy of Down East would complement, not replace, the existing commercial fishing industry. Opportunities for co-marketing, branding and additional collaboration would help to grow the fishing industry in Down East as a whole. A possible example is Marshallberg Farms, who with assistance from NC State University represent more than a two million dollars investment in NC agribusiness. When fully operational, the facility hopes to create at least six full and part-time jobs.

**Recommendation. Support and encourage young commercial fishermen**

Down East seafood dealers regret that young people are not entering the industry in sufficient numbers, and the industry therefore faces labor shortages with the dwindling number of commercial fishermen. Down Easters might look into establishing a junior fisherman apprenticeship program at East Carteret High School, whereby students acquire a commercial fishing license by fishing with a licensed sponsor and showing income (any amount) from the sale of fish for three years. This could be combined with units in boating safety/navigation, mariculture and other marine-related studies. This would address an immediate labor need of seafood dealers and create jobs. The state now has some 1,500 licenses available. If the applicant is the child/grandchild of a Standard Commercial Fishing License holder, the three-year income requirement is waived.



Supporting local fishermen is also of interest on Ocracoke and Hatteras. The Resource Team recommends exploring options for bringing together the young fishermen /potential leaders for possible collaboration in learning about new markets, the potential for CSF's and other opportunities for local seafood. Models for building capacity within the fishing industry can be found in New England and local fishermen wanting to create a future in commercial fishing should be encouraged to learn more about ways other regions are addressing the needs, challenges and opportunities.

## Community-Led Tourism

**Recommendation. Coordinate and increase promotion of businesses providing overnight lodging**

It is a well-known principle of the tourism industry that attractions and programs that increase the length of time a visitor spends in a community or region will, likewise, increase the amount of money a visitor will spend in that region or community. There are currently two motels and a handful of rental properties and bed-and-breakfasts in the Down East region; yet, the Resource Team heard that most advertising for lodging showcases businesses in Beaufort and Morehead City. It will be important for the work group to connect with the TDA and begin developing strategies for promoting those businesses. As visitor nights increase, there will be increased demand for food and evening programs for visitors, so improved communications between businesses and organizations will also be important.

**Recommendation. Develop tourism “products” that showcase Down East’s assets**

As noted in the Promotion section, it will be important to begin immediately to develop tourism “products” that provide opportunities for residents and visitors alike to learn about and enjoy Down East’s heritage, culture, landscapes, waterscapes, and people. These products may be relatively easy, such as the development of walking trails; or may be more complex, such as multiple businesses coordinating their services to develop tour packages that last two to seven days. It will be important to develop a broad range of products to meet the varied interests of visitors; and to build on – and connect – existing assets to develop these products most effectively. The work group should build on the efforts of existing venues, such as the Down East Library and Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center; and should explore thematic “products” such as historic home tours, kayak tours, or charter fishing tours; as well as specialized programs – such as nature education programs for children and quilting classes for moms while dads go fishing for a day.



Tourism “products” may also include specialized events, such as festivals, parades, and programs; and may build on existing events, such as the Waterfowl Weekend that attracts thousands of visitors every December. Hatteras Island hosts a special “Day at the Docks” event that might be replicated as an economic development opportunity that also provides opportunities to educate visitors



about the importance of the seafood industry to Down East, the coastal region, North Carolina and the nation. It will be vitally important to engage Down East businesses in the development of these “products” to ensure that they participate fully in the economic growth. Heritage tourism is the fastest growing segment of the overall tourism industry, and existing venues – Cape Lookout National Seashore, Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center, and Core Sound Decoy Carvers Guild – can play a critical role in helping to develop programs and events that will attract visitors who will then help grow the businesses. The Outer Banks National Scenic Byway will also help to attract visitors who are interested in learning more about the history, culture and landscape of Down East; and will spend their tourism dollars at businesses throughout the region.

## Craft-Based Businesses

### **Recommendation. Sustain the area's unique boatbuilding skills and knowledge**

Familiarity with wooden boatbuilding techniques has become rare in the U.S. The Down East area is fortunate to have experienced and enthusiastic builders of wooden craft. This knowledge might be sustained and shared in various ways. Boatbuilding in Down East faces several obstacles to expansion and growth. One important one is the lack of awareness and current marketing of Down East built boats. This is due to the fact that these are small, often one-man operations that operate out of a garage or backyard. The boat builders do not have the experience or the time to devote to marketing their products. A marketing and branding campaign would help promote, build awareness and increase sales of the Down East wooden boatbuilding industry.

These boatbuilding operations could benefit from coordinated advertising or marketing efforts, as noted earlier in this section. Down East boat builders might also consider creating an organization comprised of boat builders and enthusiasts that would share information, collaborate on projects, and examine common opportunities would help solidify the industry. This trade group could be modeled after another local organization, such as the decoy carver's guild. This group could work with the Carteret County Economic Development Commission and other state resources to promote and expand local operations and develop a marketing program for Down East built boats. This group could organize the festival and oversee the apprenticeship program.



Another way to help celebrate this traditional industry would be to hold a wooden boat festival or race event that would draw visitors and attention to this important aspect of the local economy. This could be held in conjunction with the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center where the newly restored "Jean Dale" is on display, an example of the distinctive Harkers Island flared bow design.

There are also significant fiberglass boat manufacturing businesses Down East, so one idea might be to develop experiential or immersion tourism programs around a maritime or hand-built craft theme, which might include, for example, a two-week long boat-building workshop for woodworking enthusiasts. Another is to support and to expand existing training opportunities for children and adults, through



summer or weekend workshops. Local wooden boat races, even of small skiffs, sailcraft and toy-size boats made by children, will increase local pride in the local boatbuilding craft and attract broader attention from prospective customers or supporters. A membership association or e-mail newsletter for admirers, owners and builders of locally built wooden boats would help foster new partnerships and ideas.

This report suggests in the Promotion section one large target audience - ElderHostel, Inc. A thought is that tour group participants could pre-arrange to watch the boat builders, then build a small craft, that they race at the end of the workshop. Or, tourists might be provided with a written narrative, with a local tour guide to host a visit to local boatbuilding operations; this would be interesting to the visitors and could provide potential customers for locally built boats.

There also is a wonderful opportunity to tap into this resource through the school system. High schools are beginning to align some curriculum around career pathways realizing the need to connect students with businesses, nonprofits, institutions and local government for internships, apprenticeships and part-time jobs. Over the past several years both Harkers Island School and Smyrna School has hosted a boatbuilding project for their students. This first step has great potential for building interest and skills among younger potential boatbuilders and should be explored at the high school level. The Economic Revitalization work group should identify sponsorships and make arrangements any for sales of the boats built, which would be funneled back into the school program. The work group also should investigate the possibility of other collaboration with the local boat manufacturing program at Carteret Community College.



## Health Care

### ***Recommendation.* Explore opportunities to expand the health care industry**

A general economic trend in rural North Carolina is the growth of the health care industry, and associated jobs in nursing, medical care, physical and occupational therapy, dentistry, and more. As noted previously, the population Down East is aging, which is already creating new job opportunities in the health care industry. It is recommended that the Economic Revitalization work group partner with health-related agencies in Carteret County, and with economic development agencies, and the community college to explore health care opportunities. It is also recommended to explore opportunities to partner with medical schools, especially those that are increasingly providing “tele-medicine” services to remote rural places.

## Manufacturing Businesses

### ***Recommendation. Assist expansion efforts of Down East manufacturing operations***

Down East is home to a handful of manufacturing operations, which need assistance to overcome barriers to growth. Resource Team members met with several small manufacturing businesses during the Down East visit. Both of the manufacturing industries are related to marine trades and associated with boating. Coastal Canvas Manufacturing began in 1985 and has seen many ups and downs related to the marine industry, at one time employing 12 full time employees with benefits. The husband and wife owner has positioned their company to be an Original Equipment Manufacturer and wholesale marine canvas products for boat manufacturers, dealers and distributors. Their small manufacturing operation located in Straits, makes covers, cushions and tops for boat manufacturers such as Jones Brothers, and Parker Boats.

The team also visited Hancock & Grandsons Marine and Architectural. The family run business creates welded aluminum products for boats such as t-tops and platforms and railings and stairs for homes. Both of these companies expressed the desire to expand but were experiencing obstacles associated with the slow economy. Down East manufacturers need assistance on marketing, access to capital, business to business sales, product patenting, and supplier purchasing agreements. Resources are available locally to get pertinent business advice, such as the Carteret Community College Small Business Center and the Carteret County chapter of the Service Corps of Retired Executives (S.C.O.R.E.) The success of these small manufacturers would have a huge impact on the Down East region by creating jobs for local residents, increasing the tax base, and creating local wealth.

One successful manufacturer grew out of one of Down East's traditional industries associated with commercial fishing. When the demand for crab pots began to diminish, Nicky Harvey, a longtime net and crab pot maker, began to experiment with other designs. Mr. Harvey mastered a design and technique for making crab pot wire material into decorative Christmas Trees. After getting some assistance in patenting his design he began to manufacture and sell his Crab Pot Christmas Trees to local residents. As demand grew his business expanded, and has nearly replaced his original net and crab pot business. He is now partnering with another company to manufacture and distribute Crab Pot Christmas Trees across the country. The Crab Pot Christmas Tree business is a perfect example of what local ingenuity can bring to a region struggling with the loss of traditional industry. Mr. Harvey's shop has moved down the road to a larger facility in Smyrna. He proudly reassures visitors to the production facility that his trees are made in Down East North Carolina.



Effort should also be given to recruit manufacturers to locate Down East. Down East has several advantages over similar coastal communities due to its proximity to water, abundant space for development and affordable land, and relative proximity to transportation networks such as highways and the Port at Morehead City.



Attracting or developing manufacturing businesses would benefit the local community by providing jobs for residents, increasing the customer flow at existing businesses, and increasing the community tax base. Down East residents and property owners should work with the existing economic development network to promote industrial recruitment. Carteret County Economic Development Commission is headed up by Myles Stempin locally, and his work is augmented by a regional organization NC East, and state Department of Commerce regional developer Donna Phillips.

# RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

The following recommendations are derived from what the public told the Resource Team during the visit in January 2012, combined with the Resource Team members' knowledge and professional expertise. During the site visit, the Team asked individuals to describe economic revitalization and community well-being efforts that have been implemented to-date, and the usefulness of these different activities, as well as challenges and opportunities Down East. The Team's recommendations below are ordered according to themes and do not represent a priority ranking. It will be up to residents to rank their priorities for future economic and community improvements. These recommendations represent a starting point, designed to provide the communities with several achievable goals within the four areas of the Main Street® approach. We suggest a Down East organizational structure be created to direct labor towards the completion of these suggested projects, which can be added or removed as the Down East communities deem appropriate. This is a local effort and should reflect local needs and desires.

Recommendation	Time Frame	Partners
<b>Organization</b>		
Establish an organizational arrangement – a Down East Community Council		
Develop a vision statement, program of work and implementation approach		
Establish focus-area work groups (Design, Promotion, Economic Revitalization) to implement community revitalization efforts		
Seek out and secure funding to implement priority projects		
Involve and strengthen the existing community clubs		
Increase volunteerism throughout Down East		
Improve communication Down East		
Develop a Down East Leaders Program similar to Maine's Island Institute		
Strengthen capacity for grassroots participation in governmental decision processes		
Create a Down East Carteret County Community Center		
Develop dedicated funding source(s) for the Bridge youth center		
Secure pilot-program funding to be involved with United Way's 2-1-1 phone number and nc211.org		
<b>Design</b>		
Install "Welcome to Down East North Carolina" entrance signs		
Design and install wayfinding signage for community assets		

Provide a series of kiosks to showcase Down East attractions	Time Frame	Partners
Work with Carteret County Planning Department to explore design principles for the area		
Increase funding and other resources to protect, promote and restore historic structures Down East		
Explore potential benefits of historic designation		
Maintain working waterfront areas and seafood landing areas		
Repair or construct new Davis Boy Scout and expand activities		
<b>Promotion</b>		
Promote Down East to Down Easters and mainland Carteret County		
Build on the asset mapping process to create tourism products and identify places to be promoted and “sacred” places for the communities		
Begin conversations with Carteret County Commissioners to establish a tourism development position specific for Down East on the Tourism Development Authority		
Partner with the Outer Banks National Scenic Byway		
Feature true Down East experiences in all tourism promotion		
Create historic community walking/driving tours to showcase historic buildings and graveyards		
Promote local heritage		
Diversify the tourism economy by creating tourism “products” that include educational and experiential activities, such as commercial fishing, sky-watching and bird-watching		
Promote Down East’s quality of life to entice private company relocation		
<b>Economic Revitalization</b>		
Develop a Down East business support network		
Expand the Down East Business Directory		
Conduct a market analysis to identify existing small business opportunities and needs		
Conduct a local market analysis to identify small business opportunities and needs		

Explore establishment of a small business incubator Down East	Time Frame	Partners
Increase access to capital as needed for small business start-ups and expansions		
Explore HUBZone designation for Down East Census Tracts		
Invest in growing youth entrepreneurship Down East		
Develop a source of local philanthropy for community-based projects and initiatives		
Explore other sectors to create jobs, grow small businesses and diversify the economy		
Retain and support working farms and working waterfronts		
Explore new markets, such as military, for seafood and farm products		
Strengthen existing roadside stands and develop new local "Farmers Market"		
Expand capacity for local/organic foods including seafood		
Explore new market channels and marketing arrangements for local farm and seafood products		
Investigate the feasibility and economic potential of expanded shellfish mariculture and new aquaculture businesses		
Support and encourage young commercial fishermen		
Coordinate and increase promotion of businesses providing overnight lodging		
Develop tourism "products" that showcase Down East's assets		
Sustain the area's unique boatbuilding skills and knowledge		
Explore opportunities to expand the health care industry		
Assist expansion efforts of Down East manufacturing operations		

# GETTING STARTED

Coastal residents understand fully that “all things are connected” – for example, tourism development, a vibrant local economy, strong businesses, and water access are all inextricably linked. In addition to the four focus areas of the Main Street® Approach, eight principles will guide proposed economic growth and community well-being efforts to foster the best chance for success. These include –

*Comprehensive* – Progress should be made in all four areas.

*Incremental* – Start with small and easier projects and work up to the more challenging.

*Self-help* – Maintain community involvement and commitment in each on-the-ground activity.

*Partnerships* – Each group has a role to play and working together brings each other’s strengths to play. Capitalize on existing assets.

*Quality* – It is not necessarily about the number of community improvements but about the effect of each activity in creating positive imagery amongst residents and visitors alike.

*Change* – Carefully determine your initial projects to have successes early on that will help shift public perceptions and practices in support of change.

*Implementation* – It is better to see a few projects all the way through than to start with many and not finish due to resource limitations as these projects pave the way for larger ones.

Changes in the organization, business, promotion and built environment Down East should balance resources with potential environmental and social impacts. Some will take place before others based on interest, funds and when opportunities present themselves. As a guide, specific projects on the Island should be:

**DOABLE:** Projects should be undertaken with a clear understanding of the resources and capacity to complete them. Focus limited resources on small-scale projects with big impact. Choose some projects that allow community members to contribute their skills and expertise.

**VISIBLE:** Projects should be visible and in prominent locations, where it is evident that things are happening. It is especially important that this happens sometime soon after recommendations are made. For example, projects along Highway 12 would immediately be noticeable.

**AFFORDABLE:** Projects should respect the limited resources of the communities. The selection and design of projects should balance the costs with the potential impacts.

**FLEXIBLE:** Instead of projects focusing on supporting one type of activity, they should be designed to be flexible enough to support a range of activities, which are both planned and unplanned.

**INCLUSIVE:** Projects should be designed in a way that will be children-friendly. Additionally, the design and construction of projects should actively engage members of the community as well as visitors to build ownership into the process.

**APPROPRIATE:** Projects should respond to the feedback received from community members, stakeholders and the professionals that worked together to generate this report.

**SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICALLY RESPONSIBLE:** Projects should respond to the natural environment. Local materials and contractors should be used wherever possible, to ensure that the economic impact of the projects remain, for the most part, in the local community.

Some basic things to keep in mind as you move forward:

### **Attitudes**

- Be authentic – remember who you are, and what’s important to the community
- Build on your assets
- Address your weaknesses
- Be patient
- Listen to the community, and to each other
- Find win-win solutions
- Cultivate your funders and partners

### **Actions**

- Work hard
- Work together
- Plan and organize well
- Work the economic revitalization proposal, but remember that the strategy is a living document
- Get the whole community involved, even the naysayers
- Feed the volunteers – people who eat together work together better

### **Communications and Manners**

- Tell your story – in newsletters, newspapers, and in person
- Thank your volunteers, funders, and investors – many times and many ways



- Keep the community informed

### **Celebrate your successes**

- Continue to cultivate your funders and partners
- Evaluation
- Evaluate quantitatively – and qualitatively
- Learn from your mistakes, and your successes
- Take pictures – before, during, and after
- Take stock of what you have accomplished – write it down
- Let the community know what you have accomplished
- Remember you can accomplish anything if you don't mind who gets the credit
- Ask the community what they think

### ***Human Capacity –***

#### **AmeriCorps**

Part of any community development effort is cultivating human resources in addition to monetary. More than \$3.4 million in federal grants are available for North Carolina non-profits and government agencies to recruit AmeriCorps members. AmeriCorps volunteers assist non-profits and government agencies with providing tutoring, mentoring, disaster services, environmental stewardship, education on healthy futures, and job training and placement. The NC Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service coordinates the grants. Grant applications are due to the NC Volunteer Commission by noon on Friday, March 16, 2012. Application forms are available on the NC Volunteer Commission's website at: [www.volunteernc.org](http://www.volunteernc.org), or by calling 919-715-3470 or 1-800-820-4483.

#### **Volunteers for Peace**

Bringing outside volunteers can help attract new energy to a project, and can bring the fresh perspective of seeing one's own community through the eyes of others. The non-profit organization Volunteers for Peace facilitates the placement of international and national volunteers for this purpose. Most are college-aged and unskilled, but they bring high energy and enthusiasm. In the past they have assisted projects such as festivals and fundraising events; construction and renovation; historic preservation; environmental conservation and education; and working with children, elderly, disabled, or disadvantaged groups. More information is at: <http://vfp.org/join-us/host-a-project>

#### **East Carolina University**

ECU has experts in relevant areas such as regional planning, hazards response, sustainable tourism, the development of natural resource economies, and social services. Many resources can be accessed by developing collaborative research and outreach

relationships with appropriate faculty. Finding the right folks, however, can be harder. First stops for hazards response expertise might include the ECU Geography Department, Renaissance Computing Institute, and Center for Natural Hazards Research. General planning expertise is also based in the Urban and Regional Planning Program, housed within the Geography Department. The Geography Department also has expertise in natural resource economies and sustainable tourism. The Center for Sustainable Tourism and School of Social Work might also offer helpful resources. <http://www.ecu.edu/cs-cas/geog/index.cfm>, <http://www.ecu.edu/cs-cas/plan/>, <http://www.ecu.edu/renci/>, <http://www.ecu.edu/hazards/>, <http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/sustainabletourism/>, <http://www.ecu.edu/che/socw/>

### **Island Institute Leadership Training and Fellows Program**

The Island Leaders Program serves those currently in leadership positions – as well as island residents who want to make a greater commitment to their communities – with skill-building and networking opportunities, linking leaders across Maine’s archipelago to discuss and address island issues. The Island Institute also runs an Island Fellows Program, which since 1999 has placed over 50 recent college and master’s-degree graduates in coastal and year-round island communities for one to two-year assignments addressing community-identified projects.

### **NC State University Institute for Nonprofits**

The Institute for Nonprofit Research, Education and Engagement is a multidisciplinary center devoted to strengthening the capacity of nonprofit organizations and nonprofit leadership through research, education and engagement. Staff focus on North Carolina and beyond as a laboratory for research, and serve as a convener and connector for the sharing of campus and community resources to facilitate research-informed policies and practices. <http://nonprofit.chass.ncsu.edu>

### **N. C. Center for Nonprofits**

The Center serves as an information center on effective practices in nonprofit organizations, a statewide network for nonprofit board and staff members, and an advocate for the nonprofit sector as a whole. The Center’s goals are to: assist nonprofits to achieve their vital missions through an array of services to help them be ethical, results-oriented, collaborative, adaptive, sustainable, and in legal compliance; advocate on public policy issues that affect the ability of all nonprofits to address their communities’ needs; and educate the public on the impact and value of the nonprofit sector for the people of North Carolina. [www.ncnonprofits.org](http://www.ncnonprofits.org)

### **UNC School of Government Community Economic Development Program**

Provides public officials with training, research, and assistance that support local efforts to create jobs and wealth, expand the tax base, and maintain vibrant communities. [www.sog.unc.edu/programs/cednc](http://www.sog.unc.edu/programs/cednc)

## **Financial Capacity –**

### **A. J. Fletcher Foundation**

There are some foundations that provide capacity-building support, including this Foundation. Unfortunately, it is not making any grants in 2012. Looking to the future, this is a program that could help hire staff for community efforts. In the meantime, one thing community leaders should definitely do is keep track of the cash and in-kind contributions of volunteers' time and any other support received from lawyers, real estate agents, etc. The dollar amount of those in-kind contributions will demonstrate strong community support for the project, which will give a competitive advantage over groups that do not have strong community support. [www.ajf.org](http://www.ajf.org)

### **Habitat for Humanity**

Around the country, Habitat has helped tens of thousands of partner families (through sweat equity) move into simple, decent, affordable houses. To help even more, part of Habitat's responsibility includes advocacy and public awareness with local and state elected officials. Habitat supports a national Affordable Housing Trust Fund. The HTF would be a new source of revenue to assist in the production of new affordable housing and the rehabilitation of existing housing. As a bonus, Habitat offers a disaster response, which is bonus to an island highly prone to hurricane impacts. [www.habitat.com](http://www.habitat.com)

### **The Duke Endowment ~ Rural Church Program**

Over the years, the United Methodist Church has played a pivotal role in dozens of North Carolina's rural districts, where the local church is the center of weekly worship, baptisms, weddings, funerals and community events, as well as home to food pantries and centers for child and elder care. Through our grants for rural churches, the Endowment seeks to help build facilities that support community service, and help churches explore sustainable building practices that can meet spiritual needs and economic realities. [www.dukeendowment.org/grants/grants-overview](http://www.dukeendowment.org/grants/grants-overview)

### **Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation**

The Foundation provides grants for environmental, community development and pre-collegiate education projects and organizations. Hawley Truax is the environmental program officer and Tracey Greene-Dorsett is the community development program officer. Their next deadline is February 1, 2012. The first step is to contact the program officer and request a meeting; it is good to bring a one- or two-page description of the project and what problems it is designed to address. [www.zsr.org](http://www.zsr.org)

### **National Endowment for the Arts' Our Town Grant Program**

Through the Our Town program, the Endowment provides a limited number of grants, ranging from \$25,000 to \$150,000, for creative "placemaking" projects that contribute toward the livability of communities and help transform them into lively, beautiful and sustainable places with the arts at their core. Applications are due on March 1, 2012. [www.nea.gov/grants/apply/ourtown/index.html](http://www.nea.gov/grants/apply/ourtown/index.html)

### **Self-Help Credit Union**

This community development financial institution provides loans for business and economic development purposes, particularly to borrowers that are higher-risk or not understood by traditional lenders. [www.self-help.org](http://www.self-help.org)

### **The Conservation Fund's Natural Capital Investment Fund**

This investment fund is a community development financial institution that provides loans and technical assistance to natural resource-based businesses, which often have a hard time getting loans from traditional lenders. The loan range typically is from \$50,000 to \$250,000 and Rick Larson (rlarson@conservationfund.org) heads up the NC lending. [www.ncifund.org](http://www.ncifund.org)

### **The Conservation Fund's ShadeFund**

This web-based, micro-loan program for natural resource-based businesses subsidiary of The Conservation Fund also is spearheaded by Rick Larson, but the loans typically range from \$5,000 to \$35,000. A resource-based organization can contact Enrique Perez (eperez@conservationfund.org) to see about being a field partner, which does not cost anything. The entity merely agrees to refer natural resource-based small businesses to them, and then the organization is listed as a partner on their website. [www.shadefund.org](http://www.shadefund.org)

### **Golden LEAF Foundation**

Golden LEAF's mission is to promote the social welfare of North Carolina's citizens and to receive and distribute funds for economic impact assistance to economically affected or tobacco-dependent regions of North Carolina. <http://goldenleaf.org/>

### **NOAA's Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Phase I 2012**

The U. S. Department of Commerce (DOC), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) plans to seek proposals from small business firms for participation in Phase I of the Fiscal Year 2012 NOAA Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Program. The purpose of Phase I of the SBIR program is for firms to conduct research and development which will allow the Government to determine the scientific or technical merit and feasibility of concepts, ideas and quality of performance as a prerequisite for further Government support which may follow in Phase II of the program. The following are the NOAA, Research and Development (R&D) topics available for Phase I: Climate Adaption and Mitigation, Weather-Ready Nation, Healthy Oceans, Resilient Coastal Communities and Economies. The proposal deadline is February 1, 2012 at 4:00 PM Central Time.

[https://www.fbo.gov/index?s=opportunity&mode=form&tab=core&id=fada14ff631c75636708234c986f3c3b&\\_cvview=0](https://www.fbo.gov/index?s=opportunity&mode=form&tab=core&id=fada14ff631c75636708234c986f3c3b&_cvview=0)

### **U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Program**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has a wide range of grant and loan programs, including the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant program that is administered by the electric membership cooperatives and provides (some) grant dollars and (more) low-interest loan dollars for buildings and other capital improvements. They also have funding for community economic development, small business loans and loan guarantees, housing, job creation, and also, a small business innovation

research grant program. To find out more about these programs, contact the local electric co-op or the regional USDA RD person. [www.rurdev.usda.gov/nc/](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/nc/)

### **U.S. Economic Development Administration**

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) provides federal funds on a dollar-for-dollar match basis for buildings and other bricks-and-mortar improvements that will create jobs. These are very competitive, and it would probably be good to talk with the County economic developer about these programs, as it would strengthen a proposal to do it in partnership with the County and/or the Council of Governments. They even have a Global Climate Change Mitigation Incentive Fund program that provides funding if your building is LEED certified, uses alternative energy, etc. The EDA requires letters documenting that jobs will be created; the contact person is Robin Cooley, the program officer for North Carolina and South Carolina, and her office is in Columbia, SC. Her email address is [rcoley@eda.doc.gov](mailto:rcoley@eda.doc.gov). For general information visit: [www.eda.gov/InvestmentsGrants/Programs.xml](http://www.eda.gov/InvestmentsGrants/Programs.xml)

### **U.S. Economic Development Administration Supplemental Disaster Relief**

The EDA intends to award investments in regions experiencing severe economic distress as a result of severe storms and flooding that occurred between March and May 2010. Under this announcement, EDA solicits applications for Economic Adjustment Assistance investments under the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965, as amended ("PWEDA"). Through the Economic Adjustment Assistance program (CFDA No. 11.307), winning applicants will utilize EDA's flexible set of program tools to develop and implement on a regional basis long-term economic redevelopment strategies for certain disaster-impacted regions in the U.S. The deadline appears to be on a rolling term until March 9, 2014.

[www.grants.gov/search/search.do;jsessionid=cjtRTkTG4p1gTDLSknLn3YLyW7F8TzRkB06vY0b0Sn8SVJhynLJK!-102435184?opId=69933&mode=VIEW](http://www.grants.gov/search/search.do;jsessionid=cjtRTkTG4p1gTDLSknLn3YLyW7F8TzRkB06vY0b0Sn8SVJhynLJK!-102435184?opId=69933&mode=VIEW)

### **NC Parks & Recreation Trust Fund**

The Fund provides dollar-for-dollar matching grants to local governments for parks and recreational projects to serve the public. A group would have to partner and submit the application through Carteret County. Their maximum grant is \$500,000, and the money can be used for land acquisition or capital improvements like buildings, boardwalks, piers, etc. The submittal deadline is January 31, 2012, and a first step is to contact the eastern field representative and introduce them to the project, while also contacting the County Parks and Recreation folks to see if they are already planning to submit grant requests for other projects.

[www.ncparks.gov/About/grants/partf\\_main.php](http://www.ncparks.gov/About/grants/partf_main.php)

### **NC Division of Parks & Recreation / Recreational Trails Fund**

The Recreational Trails Fund provides grants of up to \$50,000 and nonprofits are eligible to apply for these funds that can be used for trails, boardwalks, piers, signage, parking areas, restroom facilities, etc. Their deadline is also January 31st and you should contact the eastern field representative to discuss your project. [www.ncparks.gov/About/docs/RTP\\_2012\\_Info\\_Pack.pdf](http://www.ncparks.gov/About/docs/RTP_2012_Info_Pack.pdf)

### **NC Rural Center**

The Rural Center has a variety of grant and loan programs, including the Economic Innovation grants program and the Capital Access Program, which is designed to encourage banks to invest in riskier or non-traditional loans; and they provide micro-loans. They also recently announced a special youth initiative that has a range of programs to engage young adults in entrepreneurship, and community-based planning and project implementation. [www.ncruralcenter.org](http://www.ncruralcenter.org)

## MONITORING & EVALUATION

Constant evaluation of the recommendations in this plan, via regular review sessions with the Organization team, is critical to ensuring it remains a viable, living document. You will need to continually monitor your progress on how well you are furthering the Four Point Approach and how successful you are at managing projects, meeting deadlines, communicating internally and to your multiple external audiences, and utilizing the resources available.

Once again, this needs to be a living document used to prioritize the needs of the community and outline recommendations. The value of the plan lies with the ability of the organizational body to set realistic goals — and implement innovative strategies — against which progress can be measured. It also allows the community to gauge the ongoing product. Implementation, evaluation and modification will be continuous in order for the plan to remain relevant, responsive and proactive. This strategic effort will provide greater accountability and represents an organization-wide approach to the preservation and enhancement of the quality of life your very special community enjoys.

# INFORMATION SOURCES

## **Saltwater Connections**

Saltwater Connections is a regional initiative aimed at sustaining livelihoods, cultural heritage, and natural resources along North Carolina's central coast, from Hatteras Island to Ocracoke and Down East Carteret County. A visit to the website will reveal a variety of information resources available for download. [www.saltwaterconnections.org](http://www.saltwaterconnections.org)

## **Penobscot East Resource Center**

Penobscot East works in an area similar in many ways to the Outer Banks, on issues relevant to this report. Their mission is to support sustainable coastal communities in rural eastern Maine. Their primary target is small boat fishing operations, but their model is also useful in a broader sense. They actively work toward public participation in resource management decision making, community-based innovations in fisheries management and seafood markets, collaborative research, and resource stewardship education. Among their programs is the Community Fisheries Action Roundtable, as noted above, which offers knowledge and training to encourage resource stewardship through public participation in government decision processes.

[www.penobscoteast.org/default.asp](http://www.penobscoteast.org/default.asp)

## **Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance**

Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance offers a somewhat different model for grassroots involvement in natural resource decision making, again focused on the fishing industry. They conduct targeted advocacy campaigns to mobilize support for small businesses in natural resource management, and they support seafood market innovations. This group mainly works in the Northeast, but also has strong contacts here. Their focus is more on mobilizing regional support for regional and federal level advocacy, whereas Penobscot East organizes at the local level and targets mostly state and regional issues. <http://namanet.org/>

## **Preserving Coastal Heritage Video**

The link provided is for a video about Down East and Down East fishing communities that was featured at the NC Rural Economic Development Center 2010 Rural Partners Forum in Raleigh:

[www.yousendit.com/transfer.php?action=batch\\_download&send\\_id=981070217&email=f93396b06712c33f1c2e116e04c65383](http://www.yousendit.com/transfer.php?action=batch_download&send_id=981070217&email=f93396b06712c33f1c2e116e04c65383)

## **Sustainable Communities**

Developing more sustainable communities is important to our national goals of strengthening our economy, creating good jobs now while providing a foundation for lasting prosperity, using energy more efficiently to secure energy independence, and protecting our natural environment and human health. Three federal agencies came together to create the Partnership for Sustainable Communities to help places around the country develop in more environmentally and economically sustainable ways.

[www.sustainablecommunities.gov/toolsKeyResources.html](http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/toolsKeyResources.html)

### **“Living on the Margins - Connecting Individuals with Opportunities”**

This NC Rural Economic Development Center publication walks community groups through a planning process with step-by-step exercises to create actionable plans for job creation, educational opportunities, and youth engagement.

[www.ncruralcenter.org/publications.html](http://www.ncruralcenter.org/publications.html)

### **House Museums Info**

There are a number of online resources for local and “house museums,” including some provided by the National Trust for Historic Preservation ([www.preservationnation.org](http://www.preservationnation.org)); and OldHouses.com ([www.oldhouses.com](http://www.oldhouses.com)).

### **UNC School of Government Community Economic Development Program**

The School published the booklet *Small Town Big Ideas: Case Studies in Small Town Community Economic Development* to provide public officials with information to support local efforts to create jobs and wealth, expand the tax base, and maintain vibrant communities. [www.sog.unc.edu/programs/cednc/stbi/pdfs/stbi\\_final.pdf](http://www.sog.unc.edu/programs/cednc/stbi/pdfs/stbi_final.pdf)

### **“Philanthropy Journal”**

The Philanthropy Journal is an independent voice and champion for nonprofits and their supporters. Through a daily website and free, weekly email bulletin they deliver nonprofit news, resources, announcements and job listings. [www.philanthropyjournal.org](http://www.philanthropyjournal.org)

### **Regional Flavor: The Creative Power of Communities**

Published by the Illinois Institute of for Rural Affairs and written by June Holley in 2006, this report speaks to the emergence of regional markets and regional businesses through community coalition building. [www.networkweaver.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/HolleyRegFlavor.pdf](http://www.networkweaver.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/HolleyRegFlavor.pdf)

### **Building a Regional Entrepreneurship Network: A Guide to Action**

In 2005, June Holley wrote another booklet containing information about setting up Regional Entrepreneurship Networks, which was published by the Appalachian Center for Economic Networks, Inc. [www.networkweaving.com/june\\_files/HowToREN.pdf](http://www.networkweaving.com/june_files/HowToREN.pdf)

### **Regional Flavor: Marketing Rural America’s Unique Assets Small Towns**

Yet another June Holley-led writing effort, this report from the Association for Enterprise Opportunity delves into more detail about the “regional flavor” concept as a cutting-edge framework for rural development that is emerging and evolving.

<http://fieldus.org/Publications/RegionalFlavor.pdf>

### **Supporting the Education Pipeline: A Business Engagement Toolkit for Community-Based Organizations**

This business engagement toolkit is designed to help community-based organizations recruit, engage, and develop ongoing relationships with the private sector more fully and effectively in efforts to improve educational opportunities for children and youth. A companion website has been created to house background research, tools used by your peers in the field, protocols to help you



implement your business engagement efforts, and case studies to illustrate the successes and lessons learned by others in the field. [www.workforcestrategy.org/images/pdfs/publications/supporting\\_the\\_education\\_pipeline.pdf](http://www.workforcestrategy.org/images/pdfs/publications/supporting_the_education_pipeline.pdf)

**Workforce Strategy Center's Career Pathways Toolkit**

This toolkit is designed to be a reference portal for policymakers and practitioners with examples, lessons learned, and useful tools collected from around the country on developing effective education and employment policies that complement one another in order to better align public resources with employer demand. [www.workforcestrategy.org/toolkit.html](http://www.workforcestrategy.org/toolkit.html)