

Realtors **SOLD** on Barrier Islands Workshop

The third workshop for real estate professionals – Living on a Barrier Island – was held last week in the New Hanover County Center in Wilmington, NC. These workshops, offered by the Reserve’s Coastal Training Program (CTP), are designed to inform realtors about barrier island information that can be shared with current and future clients. By participating, realtors earn four continuing education elective credits towards the eight hours required for license renewal each year. What makes this workshop unique is that it’s free and topics cover everything from the formation of barrier islands to rules and policies impacting development to effective methods of dune stabilization.



Dr. Paul Hosier talks about Barrier Island Processes

After the arrival of over 50 excited realtors with license pocket cards in hand, the workshop was ready to begin. A variety of subjects were covered by a group of multidisciplinary speakers from federal, state, and local agencies. To kick things off, Dr. Paul Hosier with the University of North Carolina Wilmington described barrier island processes and human impacts. Explaining the vulnerability of these islands allows for a better appreciation for the rules and policies that were established in order to protect them. Dr. Hosier’s presentation was followed by Heather Coats with N.C. Division of Coastal Management, and Emily Hughes with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who discussed permitting laws and building regulations in coastal areas. This information is useful for clients looking to build on or near estuarine shorelines, wetlands, or the oceanfront.

After a round of questions and a quick break, Pete Benjamin with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Randy Mundt with N.C. Emergency Management, explained current federal and state policies that are used to govern development on barrier islands. Knowledge of updates and changes to these policies is essential for buyers and sellers with properties in certain areas. For example, in 1982 Congress created the Coastal Barrier Resources Act, or CBRA, which designated coastal barrier units where Federal funding is prohibited. Depending on the unit or area, some properties won’t receive any Federal assistance, while others are only prohibited to receive Federal assistance for flood insurance. CBRA was enacted in an effort to keep people out of harm’s way, save taxpayers’ money, and protect valuable habitat for fish and wildlife.

Other local efforts to protect beaches were highlighted by Layton Bedsole, Shore Protection Coordinator with New Hanover County. He demonstrated the success of beach nourishment and inlet management projects on our barrier islands by showing before and after images. These projects not only protect homes and property, they also support tourism and the local economy.

Melanie Doyle wrapped-up the afternoon with an enthusiastic presentation about native and nonnative species found on barrier islands. Doyle, a horticulturist at the N.C. Aquarium at Fort Fisher, also gave tips about the best native plants to use for dune stabilization. Her message was clear – a combination of dunes and healthy native plants is the best way to protect your house from storm damage and erosion.

Since the event the Reserve's CTP Coordinator, Whitney Jenkins, was asked by two participants to hold workshops for their staff and other local realtors interested in attending. Based on the number of attendees and overwhelmingly positive feedback received, it's clear that real estate professionals appreciate having this information to pass on to residents of coastal communities. Read some of the comments from the post-workshop evaluation below.



Participants at the Living on a Barrier Island Workshop for real estate professionals

Did you learn something new that you will apply in your work or future decisions? If yes, where would we look in the future to see evidence of that application?

"I will use the knowledge gained when listing property for builders and when selling property in locations on barrier islands, and properties that contain wetlands."

"I live on Topsail Island so everything you discussed is pertinent to my life, as well as my work as a Realtor/Property Manager. I especially enjoyed the discussions at the beginning explaining why our island is traveling south and the last speaker with information on native and invasive plants. There were also great resources given for the proper agency to contact with questions. Thank you, this was a great workshop."

What was the most valuable thing you learned?

"The most valuable thing I learned is that the government environmental agencies are staffed by knowledgeable, caring people who are here to help. It was most helpful learning more about what each agency does."

"How much the land changes over time and how much landscaping can affect it."

"The Economic/infrastructure value of beach re-nourishment, beach plant life and purpose."

What changes would you make to this workshop?

"The workshop was well coordinated and all the speakers were top notch. I felt it could not have been any better! Each speaker's topic was interesting and delivered in a concise, informative manner. My absolute favorite topic was on the native plants that grow on the dunes and in the wetlands. Very enjoyable class in every way."

"I thought the topics were great and the short presentation time for each speaker, with lots of agencies represented was perfect. It kept the class moving with good information. Thank you for having it and inviting us."

“None - format, content and speakers were excellent!”