

TPO News, Events and Opportunities



Upcoming Events

March 14, 11:00

CoastWise; UNCW / Town of Oak Island Collaboration
Kickoff at Nature Center @ 5202 E. Yacht Drive

March 18 at 10:00 a.m. -

Regular Tree Peace Meeting at Crossroads next to Doodles.

March 20, 3:00 - 5:00.

Arbor Day at Bill Smith Park by the Serenity Oak

March 21, 12:00 - 4:00

Spring Fling at Middleton Park

April 21

Town of Oak Island
Budgeting session for Public Works, Stormwater...

April 22, 2:00 - 5:00

Earth Day at Middleton Park

Ongoing Research and Conservation of the Bald Head Woods

Conservation Technician Lauren Collver

The 191 acres of the Bald Head Woods Reserve and the patches of preserved forest throughout Bald Head Island make up the unique maritime forest ecosystem that **anchors our barrier island.** [editor's emphasis] As part of our mission to discover and conserve the natural wonders of BHI, the Conservancy has focused efforts on monitoring the health of our unique maritime forest.

Over the past fifty years, forestry experts have been increasingly focused on the ecological mystery of oak regeneration failure, which refers to the slowing rate of recruitment and growth of young oak trees in forests across the continent. Historically, across North America, mature oak trees that die have been replaced by young oak saplings that have been lying in wait in the midstory of the forest. These young saplings grow slowly in their "teenage years" in the shady midstory until a disturbance causes a mature tree to die. In the space where a mature tree has fallen, a gap forms in the canopy where sunlight can reach the next generation of saplings, allowing them to take off and grow quickly into the canopy. This natural cycle relies on a healthy population of 3-4 foot tall saplings ready to take over following a disturbance. [the 25 gallon trees that TPO offers from Penderlea Farms fill this need]

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About Us

Tree Peace OKI is a 509 (c) (3) non profit incorporated in the State of North Carolina dedicated to promoting and educating about the value of trees to Oak Island, NC. We may endeavor to influence legislation for that purpose but we may not support any candidates or political parties.

Contact us

We meet the third Wednesday every month at 10:00 a.m. Message us on our Tree Peace OKI Facebook page.

Our Officers

Phil Dudley, President

Paula Byerly, Vice President

Eileen Soderberg, Treasurer

David Merkle, Secretary

Judy Reid, Events Coordinator

John Schweikart, Chief Information Officer

Join or Donate to Tree Peace OKI

at treepeaceoki.org

A one year membership is only \$20

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Similar to mainland forests, research conducted by Bald Head Island Conservancy scientists and collaborators has revealed that our new generation of oak trees may not be strong enough to replace our mature trees. Initial surveys began in 2011 by collaborators John Taggart and Zachary Long of UNCW and have been continued by Jodi Forrester of NCSU. These surveys have found a very low abundance of oak seedlings and almost no young trees in the 3-4 foot height range, meaning that there may not be many viable candidates to replace our mature live oaks.

Young oak trees face a wide array of challenges that make reaching the teenage years difficult. The oaks that call Bald Head home are well adapted to the natural challenges of living on a barrier island, like salinity in the wind and groundwater, high heat and humidity, and frequent storms, which should allow for occasional clearings in the canopy to provide sufficient sunlight. While

these environmental challenges are likely contributing to this concerning pattern, the main culprit could be a member of our island fauna. Unfortunately for our oaks, millions of years of evolution have not prepared them for the challenge of being a tasty snack for an island population of white-tailed deer that is largely unsuppressed by top predators or hunting practices.



This Cedar on Caswell Beach held on as long as it could.

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We closely monitor our deer population through spotlight surveys and camera traps, and alongside our collaborators' ongoing vegetation surveys, we have been able to recommend an island capacity of about 120-200 deer. This capacity represents the largest population that BHI is able to support without detrimental effects to our forest and the spread of disease and malnutrition expected with overpopulation. BHIC Director of Science Dr. Beth Darrow recently spoke to the Coastal Review about ongoing talks related to deer management.

This summer, we completed a re-survey of the forest vegetation with the help of Dr. Jodi Forrester and Thomas Hatling. This survey will culminate in a report on how the vegetation of the island has changed over time and how the deer population has been affecting the forest. We found that our young oaks are still struggling to grow above about six inches, both in areas that deer have been able to access and in plots where deer access has been intentionally restricted by fencing. Data analysis will focus on determining if the deer are changing the density of oak seedlings and how they are impacting the growth and composition of the rest of our forest floor and shrub species...[go to bhic.org](http://bhic.org) for the full article from July 2025

The predominant threat to the tree canopy on Oak Island is people not deer and people also present the greatest opportunity for protection and renewal. With your support Tree Peace OKI has encouraged the town to provide tree protections and replacement requirements in the Uniform Development Ordinance, and plant trees in the right-of-way of W. Oak Island Dr., Holly and East Oak Streets.

We were questioned why we wanted to plant trees on Barbee Boulevard in December [with the Southport Christian School] where there were so many mature trees. This is exactly why... we need to be thinking about the next generation of trees.

Submitted by Jennifer Metzler-Fiorino

Mardi Gras by the Sea

Thank you to the volunteers that showed up on a damp and chilly Saturday to spread the word on our efforts to preserve and restore the tree canopy on Oak Island. Never has so much fun been had whilst doing good! [Maybe next year the town can schedule the Mardi Gras festivities during the actual Mardi Gras season and not during Lent so we can party with clear conscience!]





The Yaupon Hollies in the Yaupon neighborhood of Oak Island are vibrant this time of year. They have provided color to the landscape all winter, birds will feed on the berries and these trees will be clean of berries before the end of April. Such is the cycle of life....

Thank You Volunteers

Thank you to Pat Young, Chris Riegert, Chris Richards and Phil Dudley for trimming trees along Oak Island Drive. There are several opportunities for volunteers upcoming eg. Arbor Day, Earth Day, Spring Fling, trimming and mulching trees on Oak Island Dr., planting at Brunswick County Habitat for Humanity new homes, tree sales... See the events calendar on page 1. sidebar. Attend next weeks' regular meeting for more information.

Recognizing our Sponsors!

Live Oak Level Sponsors



Julian Creek Artworks



Oak Island NC



A multi-generation Oak Island family donated \$1,000.00 to continue our efforts to preserve and restore the tree canopy. Anonymously.

Magnolia Level Sponsors

Adam Powell, AAMS, Financial Advisor, EDWARD JONES

Yaupon Holly Level Sponsors

Pelican Pack and Ship

Francesca Slaughter, Realtor, Keller Williams Innovate

Paula@Coastal Beauty Salon / Spa

Crossroads - A Gathering Place