



CONSERVE THE POINT FACT SHEET AND POSITION STATEMENT

Updated: May 2023

Background

The untouched southern tip of Topsail Island has been a preserved coastal treasure for decades. For both residents and tourists, it is place of pristine beauty and tranquility where different generations have come to walk the beach and fish in the sound, to celebrate weddings, and to scatter the ashes of loved ones who have passed. For the first time, The Town of Topsail Beach is considering allowing development in the southern area of the island, known as “The Point” which is currently zoned as a Conservation District and located in a hazardous inlet area and bounded by the Atlantic ocean and sound side of Banks Channel.

Todd Olson, CEO of Pender, Inc., has submitted a conditional rezoning application to build a 30-acre compound with six 4,000 square foot homes, one 2,400 square-foot home, a 5,000 square foot maintenance building, a swimming pool and pool house, a beach walkway and gazebo, and a marina with six boat lifts extending 150 feet into the sound.

The proposed development will destroy dunes, wetlands, and wildlife habitats and threatens to forever change this unique 150-acre tract of land that has been an untouched natural sanctuary for decades. A concerned group of citizens is working together to urge public officials to deny this application and preserve and conserve the entire property for future generations.

The southern tip of the island is zoned for conservation and is not suitable for development. This property has always been zoned as a Conservation District by the town in order to protect the special characteristics of this area, which is the last line of defense against severe flooding during storms and hurricanes. According to a 2019 study by the North Carolina Coastal Federation, The Point is unsuitable for development. Both state and federal agencies agree. The proposed development is to be located in a Coastal High Hazard Area that is a flood hazard area with frontal dunes that border an unstable Inlet Hazard area. Furthermore, it is located in a Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA) zone which was passed by Congress to encourage conservation of hurricane-prone, biologically rich coastal areas and discourage development by restricting the availability of federal flood insurance. Consequently, this property - if approved for rezoning and development - will not be eligible for the Town’s utility services and will have to rely on independent water wells and septic tanks which raise additional concerns.

The development will destroy natural dunes, wetlands and critical wildlife habit for birds and sea turtles. The Point is a delicate habitat area and any development would impact 31 species of wildlife with the greatest conservation needs – including the Piping plover, Redknot, and endangered loggerhead sea turtles. Colonial waterbirds nest in the sparsely vegetated dune systems where the structures are proposed. State and federal agencies have advised town officials on the importance of preserving this wildlife habitat and conserving the south tip of the island.

The general public and residents of the island are overwhelming opposed to this proposed development. The prospect of this development has triggered tremendous concern. Since October 2022, hundreds of people have attended and spoken at public meetings, more than 3,500 people have signed the Conserve The Point petition, and nearly 800 people are part of a social media group opposing the plan - all urging public officials to conserve the land and preserve The Point. The overwhelming sentiment is that a real estate development on the point would forever change this untouched part of our coast that has been accessible and beloved by the North Carolinians for generations.

Our proposed solution: Create a public/private partnership to raise the funds to purchase this property and put the entire site in a Conservation Trust that can never be developed. It’s a win-win situation: The McLeod family will then receive financial compensation for its property and also leave a permanent conservation legacy so that future generations of people and wildlife will continue to enjoy The Point at Topsail Island.