



North Carolina Shore & Beach Preservation Association

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PRESS RELEASE

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Turtle Nesting Underway, Endangered Species List Plant Thrives on Restored NC Beaches

With the completion of the Brunswick Beaches Consortium sand restoration projects on Bald Head Island, Caswell Beach, Oak Island, Holden Beach, and Ocean Isle Beach, the new wide, sandy beach provides much more than just enhanced public recreation areas for people. As the all-important nesting season begins for endangered sea turtles, the restored beaches of Brunswick County are already **“proud parents to be”** with viable sea turtle nests established within the Oak Island Sea Turtle Habitat Restoration Project and on all other restored segments of Brunswick Beaches.

Turtles are not the only living things benefiting from the restored coastal environment. The US Fish & Wildlife Service regularly monitors federally-listed endangered species plants such as the sea-beach amaranth along our coast as an indicator of a healthy beach environment. Having sand for the wind to move around on barrier islands is the most important factor for this “pioneer species”, allowing it to grow on newly created dunes and other areas of bare sand. **Sea-beach amaranth (*Amaranthus pumilus*)**, a federally-classified threatened species, is thriving on the new beaches of Brunswick County. Early counts by NC State University Coastal Management Extension Specialist David Nash indicate that **more than a thousand plants** will naturally occur on the Brunswick Beaches during the 2002 growing season.

This is a tremendous increase over previous years' counts and compares at about 20 to 1 with numbers touted in parts of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

With a dry sand berm now established on the restored beaches, the new sand will be transported landward by the prevailing winds and, with the help of other native plants such as sea oats and bitter panicum which were planted as part of the sand projects, new dunes will form to provide additional habitat for the birds, mammals, and reptiles that depend on the dune environment for food and shelter. With new dunes comes increased diversity in the species of plants that will colonize the dune fields. Along with the beautiful sea oats, flowering plants such as gaillardia, seaside goldenrod, yucca, beach morning-glory, sea pinks, purple hairgrass, and others will dot the dune landscape with their bright colors and detailed brilliance. **Prior to the restoration projects**, most of the Brunswick Beaches had **little or no dry sand** for the wind to transport, therefore starving the natural process that builds the essential sand dunes.

When you add these outstanding environmental benefits to the obvious (and better publicized) recreational and economic benefits of a wide, sandy public beach, the effort undertaken on the Brunswick Beaches will pay off many times over. **Now there is sand to meet the needs of the people who live and vacation on the public beaches, and finally we have created suitable habitat for the endangered flora and fauna neighbors who live and grow there too.**

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To see a color photo of the sea-beach amaranth, go to <http://www.ncshoreandbeach.org/amaranth.html>

North Carolina Shore & Beach Preservation Association is a statewide non-profit organization whose mission is to conserve, restore and preserve North Carolina's public beaches, a beneficial renewable resource. NCSBPA is governed by a diverse coastwide board of directors which counts state and local officials, academicians, engineers, economists, geologists and other scientists among its twenty-plus members. The NCSBPA website can be found at <http://www.ncshoreandbeach.org>.