

New Leadership, New Focus

In late 2025, Eagles Island Nature Park announced the appointment of five new board members who bring deep expertise and diverse regional perspectives to guide the park's future.

Most recently, the board unanimously appointed Belville Mayor Chuck Bost to its governing board, further strengthening EINP's partnerships along the Brunswick River corridor. Mayor Bost brings decades of public service experience, including leadership in expanding Belville's Riverwalk and championing conservation-focused, river-based recreation. He joins former Navassa Mayor Eulis Willis, Belville Riverwalk Project Manager Jim Bucher, and former Leland Town Attorney John Wessell in representing Brunswick County municipalities on the EINP Board of Directors.

The board is now undertaking essential groundwork: researching land ownership across the island's patchwork of parcels and identifying all the agencies and organizations—including CAMA, DEQ, NCDOT, the N.C. Ports Authority, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers—that would need to approve any blueway or greenway trail segments we might propose.

Understanding Land Ownership

Land ownership on Eagles Island is complex, with parcels split among private landowners, New Hanover Soil & Water Conservation District (approximately 520 acres in six parcels), and state agencies such as NCDOT, NC Department of Agriculture, and NC Ports Authority, each with different purposes and legal constraints.

This careful approach means future blueway and greenway segments can advance in phases—aligned with landowner partnerships and regulatory approvals—rather than remaining only on paper.

Battleship North Carolina 'Living With Water' Project



Spring 2026

Honoring Gullah Geechee Heritage

Eagles Island lies within the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor and still bears the imprint of historic rice cultivation. The dikes, canals, and fields connect to the broader story of West African agricultural engineers whose descendants sustain Gullah Geechee culture today.

The North Carolina Gullah Geechee Greenway/Blueway Heritage Trail has been authorized as a state trail and is planned as a corridor from Navassa toward Brunswick Nature Park and Belville's riverfront.

EINP is coordinating planning efforts so that future trails and access points complement this emerging heritage network and ensure cultural recognition and respect.



The USS North Carolina Battleship Memorial is in the midst of its 'Living with Water' coastal resilience project, backed by more than \$6 million in combined federal, state, and local resources.

- Project objectives include:
- Restoring approximately 800 linear feet of intertidal shoreline
 - Creating roughly 2 acres of new tidal wetland
 - Improving fish and wildlife habitat
 - Reducing nuisance tidal flooding
 - Removing invasive species

Wilmington Harbor Deepening and Dredging

The Wilmington Harbor 403 project would deepen the Cape Fear River channel near downtown, requiring extensive dredging and potential rock removal.

Conservation and community groups have raised concerns that deepening could worsen flooding, accelerate wetland loss, and disturb sediments containing PFAS chemicals.

The Eagles Island disposal area—constructed before modern environmental standards—has been identified as a site of concern for PFAS in dredge materials.

At a November 2025 DCM public hearing, 72 speakers opposed the project. During the written comment period, 132 comments were received, 125 in opposition.

The N.C. Ports Authority has stated that the project is important for long-term port competitiveness. At the same time, it is important to consider environmental, economic, and societal impacts. Our board is closely following the project and is prepared to provide informed input.

Development Pressure on Low-Lying Lands

An 83-acre tract between the Battleship North Carolina site and U.S. 17 was the subject of a conservation acquisition effort led by Unique Places to Save. The nonprofit sought to raise approximately \$16 million to purchase the land from Diamondback Development to prevent construction of the proposed Wilmington Hotel & Spa.

In October 2022, the North Carolina Land and Water Fund board voted 5–3 against awarding a major grant for the acquisition. While the ecological importance of Eagles Island was widely recognized, concerns about project complexity, cost, and readiness ultimately led the board to defer funding. The purchase contract expired, and the acquisition did not proceed.

The New Hanover County Commissioners have since designated the West Bank—land areas on Eagles Island south of the USS North Carolina Battleship and along the west bank of the Northeast Cape Fear River—as a Riverfront Conservation Place Type. This designation, included in the proposed 2050 Comprehensive Plan, emphasizes low-impact uses and long-term conservation goals.

Looking Ahead

Flooding, PFAS, dredging, and speculative development are converging on the same landscape we are working to conserve. But conservation momentum is building through land protection, resilience projects, and strengthened governance.

Eagles Island is a living system that absorbs floodwaters, filters pollution, provides habitat, and connects us to centuries of cultural history. Protecting it protects all of us.

Our board is committed to honest, transparent, community-centered leadership. Thank you for being part of this effort.

Visit our website:
www.eaglesislandnaturepark.org



Conserving wetlands, connecting communities, and celebrating heritage.