SEA TRAIL 40TH ANNIVERSARY

1985-2025

HISTORY

Presented by Roz Dahlen at the STMA Annual Meeting

November 22, 2025

The vision for Sea Trail started in 1977 with four Brunswick County businessmen. Before Sea Trail was developed, the wealth of the land was in its timber and there were several sawmills in the area. In fact, International Paper Company was the original owner of the land. Paul Dennis, President of Sea Trail Corporation for many years, was all too familiar with the lay of the land because of his early involvement in the timber business. Of course, this background was very helpful when the 54-hole layout and the community master plan were designed

The first 625 acres of land for Sea Trail was purchased from International Paper Company by Ed Gore, Sr., Harris Thompson, Paul Dennis and Miller Pope. Additional land was purchased after Sea Trail began construction. They started Sea Trail Corporation. Their first development was a mobile home community called Seaside Station at Sea Trail. They were the original founders of Seaside Station and Sea Trails POA. Harris Thompson and Paul Dennis were in the mobile home business, and they first wanted to develop a large mobile home community. Ed Gore Sr. had the idea to do home sites and a golf course project. Paul Dennis also decided that they could build individual homes. Sugar Sands in Sea Trail was first going to be mobile homes until they made the decision to build patio homes.

At the same time, Larry Young wanted to build a golf course, and he approached them about leasing land for Oyster Bay. Sea Trail Corp leased the property to Larry Young with some very favorable terms, and he built Oyster Bay Golf Course. It was a wonderful deal for Oyster Bay and

a defining point for Sea Trail. When the Sea Trail group saw that Mr. Young had a six-month waiting list for golf tee times, they turned their attention toward developing a community that would allow for golf as well as single family homes. Thus, the vision for Sea Trail Golf Resort was born. Without this turn of events, things might have been very different for Sea Trail and the Town of Sunset Beach.

Because of Larry Young and the success of Oyster Bay, the idea for the Maples course came into being. The partners saw how much income he was generating and wanted some of the action. Without Larry Young's success with Oyster Bay, Sea Trail might have become the largest mobile home park in North Carolina!!

After the death of Harris Thompson, John Williams became the fourth partner in Sea Trail Corporation.

Dean Walters started working with the 4 founders in 1984. Every Wednesday a group would meet at Ocean Isle Beach and play golf. Paul Dennis was one of the leaders who always chose the teams. Paul noticed that Dean played a little better than the average player and since Paul liked to win, he made sure that Dean was on his team as often as possible. That's when Paul pulled Dean aside and said, "you know, you seem to know a lot about golf courses." He found out that Dean, after graduating from Wake Forest had been involved with building golf courses, remodeling them and even running one in Charlotte so he said, "You know we finished Oyster Bay and it looks successful and we're looking to do something else. Would you be interested in what we plan to do?"

Dean thought that was an interesting thing to consider. Dan Maples came and met with everyone. They all bought in because Dan Maples had built Oyster Bay and it was turning into a huge success. Sea Trail fronted the money to help Larry Young make Oyster Bay a reality. Oyster Bay was a success and in 1983 Golf Digest proclaimed it the Resort Public course of the year!

The original Sea Trail land had already been marked as home sites for stick-built cottages and mobile homes same as Seaside Station. Building a golf course with homesites was a departure from the current development plan, so much discussion ensued before it was decided to build patio homes. Dean said he remembers Paul Dennis on a bulldozer at Seaside Station driving straight down the line building streets just as straight as could be and then returning to clear the land. Dean met Dan Maples and together they started laying out the course. That night Paul Dennis said he wanted to show Dean the spot he had selected for the Maples Clubhouse. He took Dean out in his Lincoln town car and after driving around the undeveloped land and woods, he pulled up and got out of the car. He walked over, pointed and said, “this is where I want to build the clubhouse.” Dean remembers looking around and not being able to see anything in the dark, but Paul could see it all, saying this is the highest piece of land on this whole property and I'm going to build the clubhouse here and you can build the golf course around it. That was the beginning of the Maples Clubhouse and the Maples golf course!

When 1800 additional acres became available from International Paper, it was Sea Trail bidding against Odell Williamson for the rights to it. They agreed on a price of $3000 an acre. When International Paper first bought the land, they paid $0.80 an acre. One day, Paul and Dean were on #15 at Sugar Sands, named because it was pure and white and spun fine like sugar. Roy Gibson approached them about buying lots and building houses where the woods were. Dean thought the location along #16 was a great place for houses. The partners didn't want to build. They wanted other people to do that work. Finally, it was decided to find a builder and let him do it. James Brown came from Albemarle where Paul Dennis was born. Paul was a partner with some of his family, so James Brown came and built patio homes in Sugar Sands. That was the beginning of the Sugar Sands neighborhood! The Maples golf course was completed and opened for play in October of 1985 and was named one of the Best New

Resort Courses in the Country in 1986. The Maples Clubhouse and Tavern on the Tee opened in 1986.

In the beginning Sea Trail was not in the town and there was no relationship at all with the Town of Sunset Beach. Dean said Sea Trail was treated as a stepchild, so Sea Trail was left entirely on their own. At that time, Brunswick County was a “dry” county. The first thing that drew Sea Trail and the Town closer together was legislation that allowed liquor to be bought by the drink at Sea Trail. Until then if you dined out and wanted a drink with your dinner, you had to bring it with you. Butch Redwine introduced legislation that said any golf course in Brunswick County could serve liquor by the drink whether they were in a municipality or not. This might have been the first time that the Town of Sunset Beach began to realize the potential tax revenues that Sea Trail would bring into the Town!

At this point Sea Trail didn't really care if they were in the Town or not. At this time, nobody even lived in Sea Trail. The first owners didn't move in until 1987 or 88. The first people were in Sugar Sands, known as the project. At that time, property was sold to get the Food Lion, and the expansion has continued ever since. The first parcel incorporated was a section of Sugar Sands and then the Maples clubhouse.

Club Villas Townhomes began construction in 1988. This was the first Multifamily Townhome complex in Sea Trail. The Club Villa HOA was established on December 16, 1988, with the filing of the Declaration for the Association. Building 1 was already in use as a model at that time with unit 1A having been completed and furnished for that purpose. With the filing of the Declaration, the other units could be sold. Construction of three phases of Club Villas was completed around 1995.

In 1989 the Resort Swim and Tennis Club, now known as the MAC was built. This was the first amenity built for the homeowners in Sea Trail. In 1989, the first homeowners started STMGA, STLGA, Garden Club and many card and Mah-jongg groups. These clubs are all active today.

In the Spring of 1990, the Rees Jones course opened and in the Fall of 1990 the Willard Byrd course opened. The Jones Byrd Clubhouse was completed at the end of 1990.

1993 was a banner year for Sea Trail. Money magazine stated that Sunset Beach, NC was a sleeper market on the Atlantic coast and was the top coastal vacation home spot in the nation.

Sea Trail added over 100 new families in 1993.

Spring of 1993, the new property owners Plantation Swim and Tennis Club aka The Pink Palace officially opened with first class facilities featuring a private clubhouse, swimming pool and tennis courts.

River Creek Phase II golf villas located on Maples 18 were introduced and four buildings were completed and sold out very quickly.

The Jones/Byrd Pavilion, located just north of the Jones Byrd Clubhouse, was completed in August. The 6500 square foot facility was primarily used for weddings, social events and performances. It also housed the Swing Dynamic Institute Golf School. An enjoyable feature was the outdoor barbecue facility called The Commons with surrounding courtyard and outdoor seating areas.

The 6th annual Plantation Day was held at Jones/Byrd Clubhouse. Over 400 golfers played in the Plantation Day Golf Tournament on Byrd and Jones courses.

Golf Week Magazine nominated the Rees Jones Course and the Dan Maples course as being one of “America’s Best Golf Courses” for 1993.

Brassies in the Maples Clubhouse was a great place to go after golfing from the 1990s until 2015!

Development was booming at Sea Trail from the early 1990s until 2007. Here are some examples of the real estate prices in the mid-1990s.

Lots in the new neighborhoods of

Live Oaks, Olde Oaks and Kings Trail on the Maples were from $44,900 off fairway and from $59,900 on the fairway

Rice Mill and Baroney Place on Rees Jones Course were from 44,900 off fairway and from $89,900 to $119,900 on fairway.

Oyster Pointe lot prices were from $44,900 off fairway and from $64,900 on fairway

Prices for the new homes in the early 1990s:

Sugar Sands Patio Homes- 2 bedrooms starting at $117,900

Wood Stork Fairway Homes- 3BR from $179,900 to $194,900 including lot

Osprey Watch Luxury Townhomes- 4BR from $229,900 to $254,900

Sawmill Townhomes- 2 or 3 BR- from $119,900. Did you know that Sawmill Townhomes were named for the Sawmills that were used in the timber business on this land prior to the development of Sea Trail?

River Creek Condos- 2 BR from $139,900

Club Villa Townhomes- 3 BR Golf Villas from$179,900

As you can see, Sea Trail had something for everyone and still does today!

Another financial comparison:

1994 Sea Trail Master Association **Budget $125,712** for (118 multi-family units, 160 single family homes and 215 unimproved lots**) 493 members** vs. **2026 STMA Budget of $2,464,335 and 1847 members**.

Construction continued through the 1990s.

1995- River Creek II Condos completed on Maples #17

Osprey Watch Luxury Townhomes started being built on Jones 12 and

13 fairways.

New Woodstork Village Custom homes began on Jones 15 Fairway

Club Villa #5 was completed at the end of the Maples Driving Range.

New Planters Ridge lots and homes overlooking Byrd 13 and 16 fairways

The Plantation Swim and Tennis Club (PP) and the Maples Swim and Tennis Club (MAC) changed for use by both single family and multifamily property owners. Previously PP was for single family homes and MAC was for multifamily homes.

1995- The Chapel on the Green was completed. The Sea Trail Prayer Support Circle donated funds along with Sea Trail Corporation, and homeowners to build the unique and beautiful Chapel. Bruce Quantrance, a local builder, donated his time and labor to build the Chapel. The Chapel construction took 7 weeks to complete. Today, the Chapel on the Green is still a beautiful and wonderful addition to our community.

1996- Royal Poste Road Villas began construction on Maples 9.

1997- Sea Trail Medical Center was opened in Sunset Beach.

1997- The Village Club and Activities Center opened with Indoor and Outdoor pools. This was designed for use by guests of Sea Trail.

December 31, 1999-Sea Trail founder, Mr. Paul Dennis passed away. His funeral service was held in the newly opened Carolina Convention Center.

2000- Champions Condominiums began construction.

2000 – Carolina Convention Center was opened.

Dean Walters left Sea Trail in 2000 after 18 years of working for Sea Trail Corporation. Through the years he was President, General Manager of

Sea Trail Corporation. During his tenure at Sea Trail, he was active in the community serving as President of the Chamber of Commerce and Chairman of the board of Brunswick Community College. Dean Walters currently lives in Ocean Isle Beach.

September 27, 2011- Bankruptcy of Sea Trail Corporation

July 15, 2013- Sea Trail Golf and property was purchased by Mr. Pan

2019- Seahorse Estates homes were built by Riptide Builders

July 2020

• Sunrise Corporate Development Holdings, LLC (Robert Hill & Donald Bean) acquired the remaining undeveloped land in Sea Trail — 220 acres.

2021• Byrd Watch development established — 49 homesites.

Early 2022

• The Townhomes on Eastwood Bluff — 80 units. Were started.

March 2023

• Sea Trail Investments, LLC (Hill, Bean, Smith) purchased the Convention Center, VAC, and the adjacent hotel/driving range tract.

April 2023

• Gulls Landing development begins — 93 homesites.

July 2023

• Conditional zoning approval for new commercial, residential, and recreational development across 22 parcels throughout Sea Trail Golf Resort.

• New Sawmill Townhomes construction begins.

November 2023- Just 2 short years ago

• Sea Trail Investments, LLC completes purchase of the golf courses.

• Formation of Sea Trail Resort, LLC (Hill, Bean, Smith, Sharda) partnership bringing Sandesh Sharda on board

December 2023
• Sawmill Townhomes Phase 2 — first 3 buildings completed.

January 2024
• Convention Center reopens.
• 55 Bistro Bar / Sunset Slice opens.

February 2024
• Sawmill Townhomes — remaining 4 buildings completed.

May 2024
• Byrd Course renovation project begins.

• Sunset Cove opens

October 2024
• Byrd Course reopens following a 5-month renovation.

November 2024
• Sunset Prime opens.

2025

May 2025
• Maples Course renovation project begins.

July 2025
• Pelican Reserve development begins — 147 homesites.

September 2025
• Maples Course reopens.

All of this history brings us to today. As you can see, Sea Trail has a very colorful and long history and continues with an exciting future ahead. We are blessed to live in this beautiful community that has been here for 40

years but now with new restaurants and updated golf courses and facilities. It is exciting to think about what is next to come!!

Creating this story in a few weeks would not have happened without the materials I received from one of our residents. I would like to thank Jacqueline (Jack) DeGroot for her tremendous contribution! I used excerpts from the book that she wrote with Miller Pope, *Sunset Beach A History* for the majority of this presentation. If you do not have a copy, you should purchase one. She also gave me lots of old newsletters, files and documents that were my other sources for this history. I also would like to thank Dana Connelly, Jo Donna O'Leary, and Kathy Blaine for answering many of my questions and providing historical background. A huge thank you to my partner in crime, Candy Fowler, for creating the photo video of our Sea Trail history that was playing today before the meeting. The History presentation and video as well as the video of this meeting will be posted on the STMA website.

Now we would like to ask everyone when you first became a property owner. Please stand when I call out the decade that you became a Sea Trail property owner: 1980s, 1990s, 2000-2009, 2010-2019, 2020s.

Now let's continue the celebration and then the Homeowner Q and A.