

Name: Dr. Mark Wilde-Ramsing, Archaeologist, NC Underwater Archaeology Branch (retired)

Dr. Joni Thomas Backstrom, Assistant Professor – UNCW Department of Environmental Sciences

Abstract Title: Rowing in the Rice Fields of Eagles Island: Investigative Tools Old and New

Abstract Description:

On May 29, 1875 the *Wilmington StarNews* announced, “A rowing club for our city is the newest”, organized by “great lovers of the many art of rowing, who appear to see fascination in a long pull, a strong pull, a pull altogether,” and promoting “a healthful, invigorating exercise”, while exploring “the serpentine courses of Alligator Creek, in search of new worlds to conquer.” Fast forward to recent times, as rowers of Eagles Island Community Rowing glide along Alligator Creek, seeking much the same benefits as their predecessors. At low tide they spotted remnant structures from rice cultivation, which dominated the landscape and was an economic force for Wilmington throughout the 18th and 9th centuries. Efforts to locate, document, and interpret these finds are bolstered by faculty specializing in shallow water, sidescan sonar from UNCW’s Department of Environmental Sciences and archaeological fieldwork committed by faculty and students from ECU’s Maritime History Department.