

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**For Immediate Release**



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## **The 2025 North Carolina Rice Festival: Five Events, Four Days— Returning to Brunswick Town, Co-Hosting Reaves Chapel Grand Opening**

LELAND, NC – The North Carolina Rice Festival, Inc. ([www.northcarolinaricefestival.org](http://www.northcarolinaricefestival.org)), launched in Leland in 2019, is pleased to announce that its daylong, signature event will be held for the third year in a row at the Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historical Site in Winnabow, North Carolina, on **March 8, 2025**.

The 2025 North Carolina Rice Festival will mark the fifth year NCRFI has hosted major events in northern Brunswick County, historically one of the state’s most productive rice-growing regions from the colonial period to the early 1900s. Each of the planned 2025 events will continue to celebrate the diverse cultural and agricultural history of southeastern North Carolina, with a focus on its distinctive and still-vibrant Gullah Geechee heritage—a vestige of the enslaved “Rice Coast” West Africans’ contributions to the region’s wealth.

The 2025 Festival activities lineup will be *expanded from four to five events over four days*, including a program marking the Grand Opening of the fully restored, Navassa (NC)-based Reaves Chapel A.M.E. Church on March 7, 2025. The chapel is an important Brunswick County site and an historic African American place of worship with Gullah Geechee roots in the post-slavery experience.

### **The Festival Lineup: March 5-8, 2025**

*Back by popular demand, Wednesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>*—The return of the Festival’s **Introducing the North Carolina Rice Festival** event—an evening of films and discussion designed to inform the “new and few” unfamiliar with the Festival about Brunswick County’s rich rice heritage and the state’s distinctive Gullah Geechee culture. **6:00 pm, WWAY3-TV Headquarters, 1224 Magnolia Village Way, Leland.**

On *Thursday, March 6<sup>th</sup>*, the Festival’s **Ancestry Reveal** program returns, co-hosted again by African Ancestry, Inc., and led by its CEO, Dr. Gina Paige. This event explores the genetic connections between present-day African American county residents and the enslaved Africans brought here centuries ago to enrich the nearly 60 plantations that once flourished in our region. **6:00pm, Navassa Community Center, 338 Main Street, Navassa.**

*Friday, March 7<sup>th</sup>* brings two events: First, the **Grand Opening of the newly restored Reaves Chapel A.M.E. Church**, co-hosted by NCRFI, North Carolina Coastal Land Trust, and Cedar Hill/West Bank Heritage Foundation. State and local dignitaries, organizational representatives, and community partners will be in attendance, so please join us in marking this historic site on an historic day. **1:00pm, 2042 Cedar Hill Road NE, Navassa.**

*Later on March 7<sup>th</sup>*, NCRFI hosts its **North Carolina Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Dinner Gala**, its premiere fundraiser and another Brunswick County must-attend event. The 2025 Gala will feature live Gullah Geechee-themed “edutainment,” a silent auction, and cuisine prepared by our award-winning Culinarian, Catch Restaurant’s Chef Keith Rhodes. Get *your* tickets early—this event sells out quickly every year! **5:00pm, Leland Cultural Arts Center, 1212 Magnolia Village Way, Leland.**

*Saturday, March 8<sup>th</sup>* is the **North Carolina Rice Festival** day—featuring outdoor and indoor festivities, speakers, music, food, crafts, and more for young and old. Once again, the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) will host the Festival’s “Come Hear NC Stage”; other stages will be hosted by the Gullah

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Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor and the Brunswick and NC Arts Councils. (Performers and vendors interested in participating, contact NCRFI for more info.) **10:00am - 5:30pm, 8884 St. Philip's Road SE, Winnabow.**

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**About the NCRFI:** The NCRFI is a 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to enlighten the public about the history and culture of rice production in southeastern North Carolina, the northernmost sector of the federally recognized Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor. Its efforts focus on Brunswick County's past as the top rice-producing region in the state of North Carolina and on the generally unexplored connections between the historic Gullah/Geechee Cultural Corridor of the United States and the inhabitants of West Africa's "Rice Coast" region. NCRFI supports the development of tourism in Brunswick County by planning and producing a diverse array of activities and programs that attract families, history enthusiasts, educators, and retirees to the Leland, North Carolina, area and surrounds. It is an all-volunteer organization with a board consisting of nine civic-minded Brunswick County residents. Persons interested in supporting and contributing to its efforts may contact NCRFI at [northcarolinaricefestival@gmail.com](mailto:northcarolinaricefestival@gmail.com).

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