

Black Creek Watershed Survey Results Public Meeting – March 21, 2006

Summary:

As a “kick-off” to the Black Creek Watershed Project, a public workshop was held for any interested stakeholders. We asked the attendants to fill out a preliminary survey, and we got nineteen completed surveys in response. The majority of surveys were completed by residents in the watershed. Several salient points came out of this survey:

- Most people consider the greenway system the most visible feature of the watershed.
- Water quality is a major concern for most stakeholders, but many think the watershed is healthy enough for all purposes short of ingesting the water.
- The community is interested in taking action, but would like to learn more about specific actions they can take.

- Landscaping practices could be a potential target for action, as most respondents indicated that they used chemical treatments for their lawns, few indicated that they used best management practices for rainwater retention, and individuals expressed interest in learning about better landscaping options. People expressed interest in the impacts of development, but it was not the primary concern for most respondents.

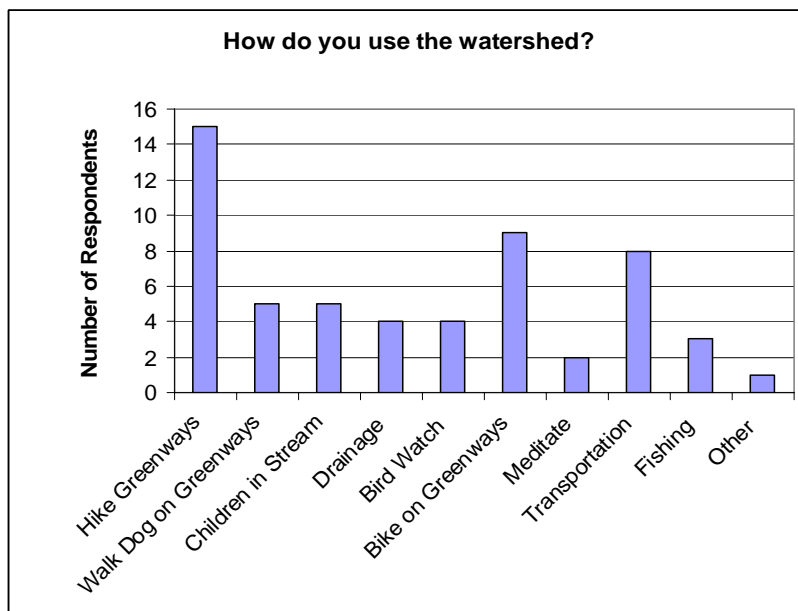
Additionally, we asked about how people handled pet waste and where people got environmental information. We did not get enough pet owners to make any notable conclusions on that subject. People’s sources of environmental information varied, but print information in newspapers and Town of Cary mailings were the most common.■

Question 1: What is your connection to Black Creek?

We had 19 completed surveys turned in; 14 were from residents, 2 were from business owners, and four were from government officials (2 local, 1 state, and 1 unknown). Additionally, three of the residents also listed other connections to black creek: one person served on the Parks and Cultural Resources Advisory Board, one person taught science at a middle school in the watershed, and one person listed recreational ties to the watershed.

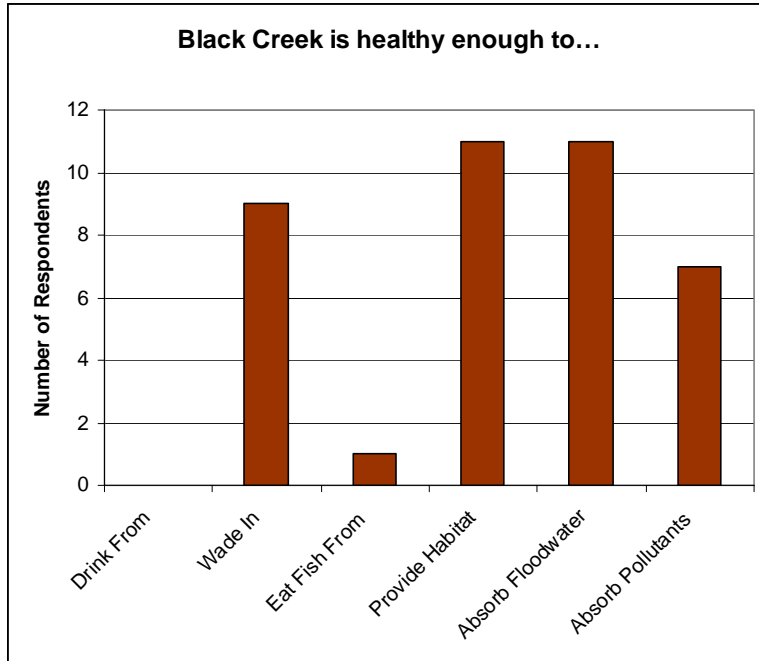
Question 2: How do you use the watershed?

The most common response to this question was ‘hiking on the greenways’, followed by ‘biking on the greenways’, using the greenways for ‘transportation’, ‘walking dogs on the greenways’, and letting ‘children play in the stream’. Clearly, the greenway is the most visible use of the watershed for those surveyed. A smaller number used the watershed for access to nature (bird watching, fishing, meditating). Only about a fifth of those surveyed considered ‘drainage’ a major use of the watershed. One person listed “regulated development” as an ‘other’ use of the watershed.



Question 3: Check all of the following that can complete this sentence: Black Creek is healthy enough to...

Over half the respondents felt that the watershed was healthy enough to ‘provide habitat to local wildlife’ and ‘absorb floodwaters’ to some degree. Over a third of the respondents felt the watershed was safe to ‘wade in’ and could ‘absorb pollutants’. Nobody felt the watershed was healthy enough to ‘drink from’ and only one person felt the watershed was safe to ‘eat fish from’. Of the 19 respondents, only one individual did not find any of the provided options adequate.

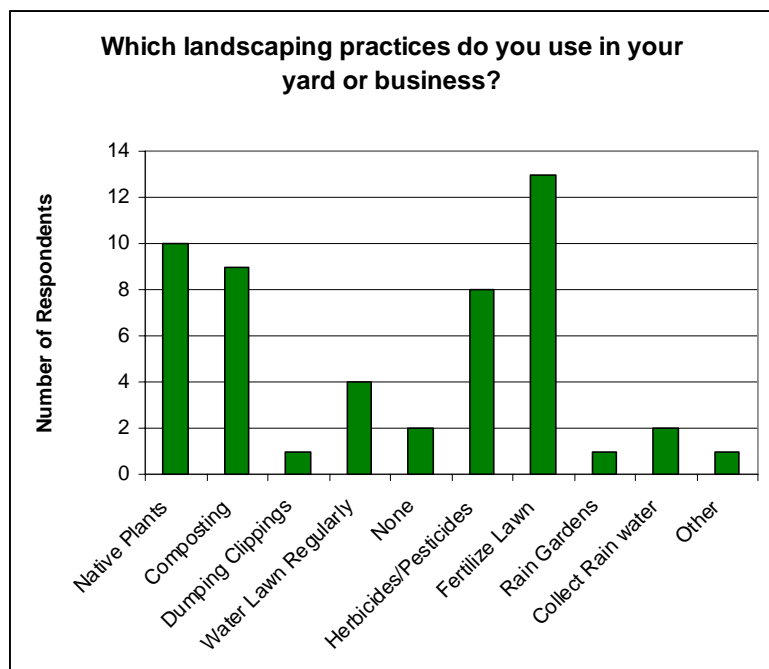


Question 4: Are there actions you can take to improve the condition of Black Creek Watershed?

Fifteen respondents said “Yes”; three respondents said “Not sure”; one respondent did not check any of the available options. No one selected “No actions needed”, indicating an interest in the community to improve the watershed. On a positive note, no one selected “No”, indicating a general sense of empowerment.

Question 5: Which landscaping practices do you use in your yard or business?

The most common practice was ‘fertilizing a lawn’, followed by ‘using native plants’, ‘composting’, and ‘using pesticides/herbicides’. Four respondents ‘watered their lawn regularly’. Only one person admitted to ‘dumping clippings’. Two people ‘collected rainwater’ and one person used a ‘rain garden’. Of the two people listing ‘none’, one person commented that they lived in a complex, so yard work was not relevant. The person who listed ‘other’ wrote in that they installed a French drain to alleviate flooding.



Question 6: If you have a dog, please indicate how its waste is handled?

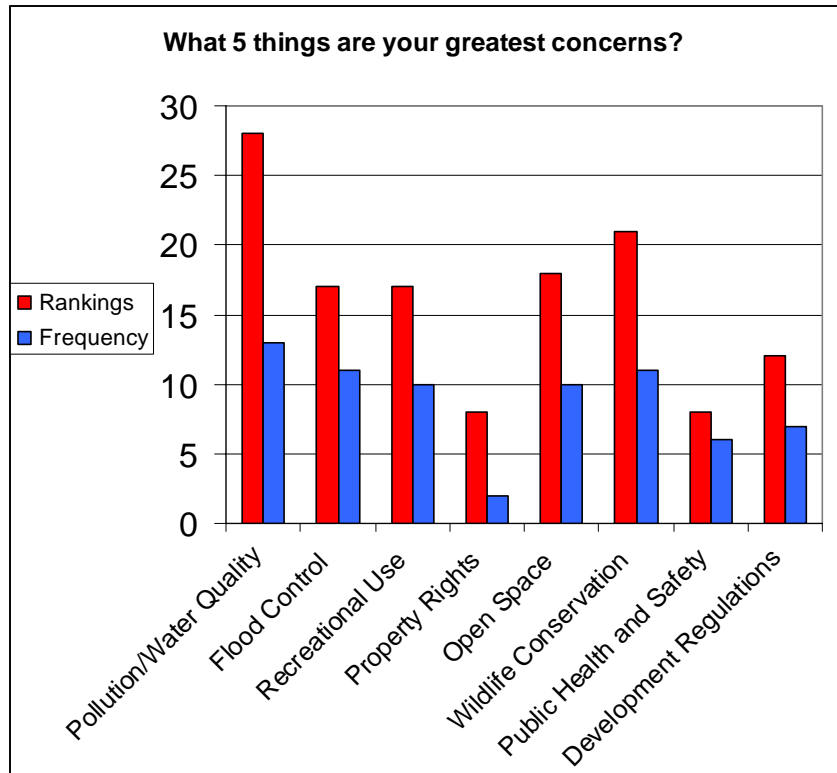
Of the nineteen respondents, only five had a dog, and one of the five noted that their dog recently passed away. Three respondents ‘picked up’ the waste, while the other two ‘left on the ground’. No one ‘buried’ their dog’s waste.

Question 7: What 5 things are your greatest concerns?

Respondents were asked to rank their five greatest concerns. These were reverse scored, so that the greatest concern received 5 points, and the lowest concern received 1 point. In cases where respondents did not rank, all chosen options were given 1 point. Four respondents did not answer this question at all. At least one person responded to each of the available options, and no one chose to include an ‘other’ item.

If we look at which items were most highly ranked, ‘pollution/water quality’ was the greatest concern, with ‘wildlife conservation’, ‘open space’, ‘recreational use’, and ‘flood control’ also being popular (>15 points). If we look at the frequency at which items were checked, those five items were also the most commonly

checked concerns, with over half of the respondents checking each of those items. Over a third of those responding, selected ‘public health and safety’ and ‘development regulations’. ‘Property rights’ was an outlier, in that only two respondents chose that option, but they both ranked it high.

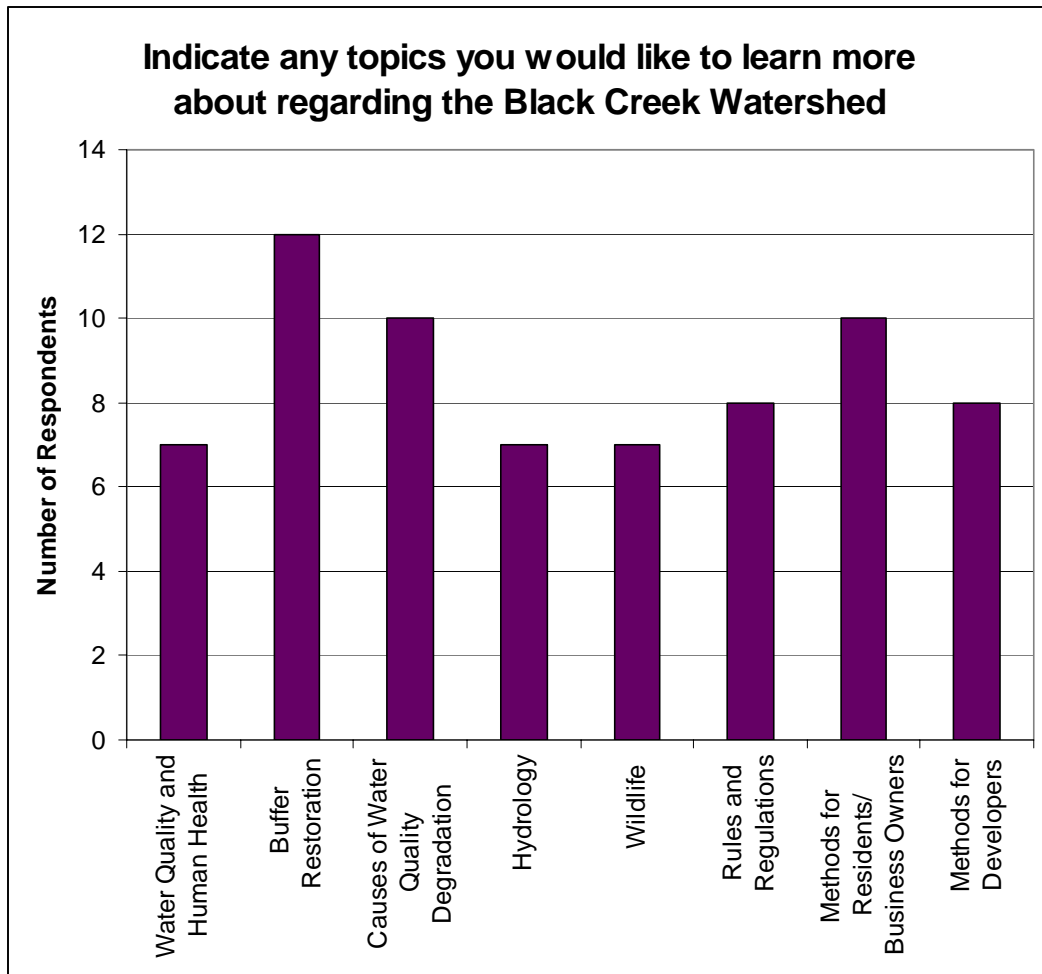


Question 8: Where do you prefer to get information on local environmental issues?

Of the 19 respondents, 2 did not answer this question. Eleven selected newspaper, with the Raleigh News and Observer and the Cary News being the only two sources named. Nine respondents selected the Town of Cary mailings. Six respondents selected the internet, specifically mentioning grist.org, NC DENR’s site, and ‘local government sites’. Five respondents selected television, listing the news programs from NBC 17, WRAL 14, and UNC-TV. Three respondents listed civic organizations and four respondents listed volunteering/community workshops. Nobody wrote in an option for ‘other’.

Question 9: Indicate any topics you would like to learn more about regarding the Black Creek Watershed.

Of the 19 respondents, 4 did not answer this question. All of our suggested topics were received well by the respondents. The most common response for this question was 'buffer restoration'. Over half of those responding also indicated interest in: 'causes of water degradation', 'methods for home and business owners', 'rules and regulations', and 'methods for developers'. About half of those responding indicated interest in 'water quality and human health', 'hydrology', and 'local wildlife'. Nobody wrote in any other suggestions.



Question 10: Any other comments?

There were three additional comments:

- As a teacher, what can my students and I do to help?
 - If there are "good" lawn maintenance companies, I would like to know. Are these companies inspected and/or rated based on environmental and health and safety practices?
- How does the health of Black Creek affect Lake Crabtree?