



WATERSHED EDUCATION FOR COMMUNITIES AND OFFICIALS

NEW HANOVER COUNTY LOCAL WATERSHED PLANNING GROUP

FALL 2005 NEWSLETTER

WATERSHED PARTNERS UPDATES

The New Hanover Local Watershed Group met on October 12. Participants updated each other on watershed projects and news.

- NCEEP: Regarding the Mineral Springs Branch, EEP is circulating a conceptual plan for wetlands in and around the Forest Hill Apartments, to help reduce storm water impacts adjacent to the stream restoration. At the location where the stream restoration is to occur, Burnt Mill Creek was over its banks after the heavy rains.
- Flooding was bad after the recent rains—there were several sewage overflows.
- New Hanover SWCD: They recently signed an agreement with EEP to identify and evaluate potential restoration sites, develop BMP plans, and educate landowners on easements.
- NHSWCD also is participating in the NC Community Conservation Cost Share Program, a new program for helping landowners install BMPs. They are seeking funding through the legislature and grants.
- Cape Fear River Watch: They've conducted educational programs and cleanups in Smith Creek and at the Kerr Ave. wetland. The wetland weathered recent storms well.
- There have been some gripes from neighbors about mosquitoes at the Wallace Park wetland—there is a request for city to help control (through "dunks").
- UNC-W would like to buy the former 84 Lumber site. The city can help with

(Continued on page 2)

The next New Hanover Watershed Group Meeting will be scheduled in early 2006

(to be announced)

Have a wonderful holiday season!

BURNT MILL CREEK BMP UPDATE

Jason Wright provided the group with the updates on the BMP sites under investigation.

Stonethrow Townhomes: The HOA president hopes the project will help alleviate flooding such as what they experienced recently. We need to be careful to be clear that these projects will not reduce flooding from extreme events.

Some constraints of the site include:

- The soils are a bit sandier than preferred for wetland.
- There are options for working around these obstacles— the BMP may be a hybrid between a wetland and a bioretention area, with plants that can handle dry and wet spells. The group agreed that the Stonethrow BMP should be constructed in early 2006 for optimal planting conditions.
- The McMillan Oaks wet pond nearby may have a potential for retro-fitting for a littoral shelf, and the property owner is interested.

- Transformer on the site limits the drainage area for treatment to 5 acres.
- There is not much slope between the upstream retention basin and the BMP.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

WATERSHED PARTNERS UPDATE 1-2

BMC BMP UPDATE 1-2

ED. OUTREACH PLANNING 3

WATERSHED PARTNERS UPDATES CONTINUED

(Continued from page 1)



the inlets that lead to the Kerr Ave wetland.

- **Birch Creek Week:** Tom Tewey worked with his homeowners association to host a week of educational activities about water quality in Sept. They were assisted by the City of Wilmington, New Hanover County SWCD, NCSU, and Cape Fear River Watch.
- **New Hanover County Watershed Management Advisory Board:** The board goals include developing watershed profiles for all watersheds in county, identifying BMPs, and identifying riparian areas for purchase or conservation ease-

ments, with a focus on Smith Creek since the best greenways opportunities occur there.

- **Laney High School BMP:** A .25 acre wetland was constructed behind the high school and planted with >40 types of plants. After Hurricane Ophelia some erosion required retrofits, although overall there is good vegetative establishment.
- **Remote Data Systems** is donating monitoring equipment to test on the Laney HS site. Student involvement is being sought (Shelly Miller mentioned Laney HS has a new envirothon team)

"THE BEST WAY
TO FIND
YOURSELF IS TO
LOSE YOURSELF
IN THE SERVICE
OF OTHERS."
- GHANDI

BURNT MILL CREEK BMP UPDATE CONTINUED...

(Continued from page 1)

Kerr Ave/Cinema Drive site: Paul Nelson, a Cape Fear River Watch Board Member, spoke with Mr. Sneedon, who owns this property. He is redeveloping the site and incorporating BMPs, so does not believe there is a role for participation in the grant project. He did say he was willing to meet with the project team to hear them out. *The group agreed it would be beneficial to meet with him, for educational outreach purposes.*

YMCA: Jason presented two options for the site-

- **Rain garden on back side:** this is the only feasible place, since stormwater is piped in the front of the building.
- **Pervious pavement** where current gravel parking is located

The Director would like a letter about the project to present to the maintenance crew before we proceed with speaking to the Board.

Port City Java: The site was mentioned since the Market St. site that burned down recently is adjacent to Burnt Mill Creek and could provide retro-fit opportunities. Ideas included a

green roof, parking lot retro-fit, or bioretention. The group urged NCSU staff to contact the owners ASAP since they were likely to reconstruct soon.

Update: Jason obtained the owner's contact information and Christy contacted them about opportunities to partner on the grant. The marketing director indicated that they were beginning construction and would not be able to delay or change the designs. As they are entering the holiday rush and construction, they asked to defer the conversation until early 2006.



Stormwater run-off at the YMCA

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH PLAN FOR BURNT MILL CREEK

Based on the group's discussion in June, the following goals & objectives for the education/outreach efforts were proposed:

Goal: Improving water quality and stream habitat in Burnt Mill Creek

Education Objectives:

- Make land development-water quality link
- Make connection of stormwater to fish/hab
- Educate about habitat & aesthetic benefits of BMPs
- Install tangible number of backyard BMPs

The group discussed two proposed community projects for education/outreach efforts.

1. *The southwestern area of the watershed is mostly paved and piped, leaving little opportunity for large scale BMP implementation. Given the lack of land availability, work with residents to install low-cost rain barrels*

Participants agreed that this is an area where education/involvement would be helpful. There was concern that a rain barrel campaign might not be effective though, since it would really only target gardeners. Recent flooding may have put water concerns on residents' minds, however care should be exercised in not promising an end to flooding.

"Give them a choice!" The group agreed that a better way to proceed is to hold a public workshop to hear about residents' drainage problems, educate about potential stormwater solutions, and involve residents in locating projects in the community. This is called a "design charrette", and has been practiced by NCSU in other coastal neighborhoods.

Some suggestions for involving the community includes contacting people involved with Gregory Elementary, area churches, the Martin Luther King Center (run by the city), and

the boxing center.

Chris O'Keefe's colleague lives in the area and could be a good contact. Some residents from the area also participated in public meetings as EEP was beginning the watershed planning process, and could be contacted again.

2. *The Cherry St., Peachtree Dr., Audubon Drive area was suggested as a targeted neighborhood for the installation of backyard rain gardens.*

Some potential contacts/participants include:

- A gentleman with drainage problems in the area (spoke with C. O'Keefe)
- J. Butler has a contact there
- Check with the Council of Neighborhood Associations to see if there is an active HOA in area. Partnerships with HOAs provide a good avenue. Shelly Miller will have a list of HOAs compiled by watershed soon (thanks to the hard work of students).
- Management companies and landscaping companies deal with landscaping and drainage, and would be good to work with.
- Tagging on to neighborhood "block parties" could get you into a neighborhood
- Bill Murray spoke with WECT channel 6, and they may be interested in featuring a "backyard raingarden makeover".

WECO staff will begin contacting people in the communities to ask how best to proceed with these workshops.



October Meeting Participants:

Deborah Amaral, NCEEP
Bouty Baldrige, Cape Fear River Watch
Patrick Beggs, WECO, NCSU
Mike Burchell, NCSU Dept. BAE
Jennifer Butler, Wilmington Stormwater Services
Don Cooke, Forest Hills resident
Mindy Hauptmann, City of Wilmington
Dave Mayes, City of Wilmington Stormwater Services
Shelly Miller, New Hanover SWCD
Bill Murray, Cape Fear River Watch
Chris O'Keefe, New Hanover County
Christy Perrin, WECO; NCSU
Michael Pope, Wrightsboro resident/Sierra Club
Tom Tewey, Creekwatch
Jason Wright, NCSU Dept. BAE



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Kudos!!

to the Birch Creek Homeowners Association, including Tom Tewey, for pulling off a successful *Birch Creek Week (Living Along Downey Branch in the Burnt Mill Creek Watershed)*! Residents participated in a week-long series of events, including educational presentations, guided nature walks and field trips, and a cookout.

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