

Summer 2003

Cathey's Creek Newsletter

Watershed Education for Communities and Local Officials

Kick off meeting for New Watershed Planning Project Held

On June 23, NC Wetlands Restoration Program (NCWRP) held a public workshop to kick-off a new project in the Cathey's Creek watershed.

NCWRP is a non-regulatory program within NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources (NCDENR) that is charged with restoring streams and wetlands throughout the state.

NCWRP prefers to choose their restoration projects through a holistic method which considers a community's needs and local ecology. They do this by sponsoring *local watershed planning* in targeted watersheds throughout the state.



A watershed contains all the land that drains to a particular water body

The Cathey's Creek watershed in Rutherford County has been selected as an area for local watershed planning.

NCWRP has hired Earth Tech of North Carolina, Inc. to conduct a technical assessment of the watershed, and has hired Watershed Education for Communities and Local Officials (WECO) to facilitate community involvement in the planning process. WECO is a NC Cooperative Extension Program based at NC State University.

The kick-off meeting was hosted by the Rutherford County Cooperative Extension Center. Kristin Cozza, NCWRP, provided information about her program and how the local watershed planning process works. Ben Goetz, Earth Tech of NC, Inc., explained what their watershed assessment involves and what they are learning about the watershed.

Christy Perrin and Patrick Beggs, WECO, then engaged participants in activities to hear from them about important issues in the watershed.

Please read further to learn more about the kick-off meeting and the opportunities that this new project presents for the community!

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At the first Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting:

- *Watershed Advisory Committee will see the preliminary results of the watershed assessment*
- *The committee will provide feedback regarding the preliminary results and next steps for the watershed assessment*

Catheys Creek Watershed Advisory Committee To Be Formed

A technical watershed advisory committee is being convened to oversee the watershed planning effort. Potential members were contacted based on suggestions of stakeholder interests provided at the public meeting. The committee will meet about 5 times between now and December 2004 to review the water-

shed assessment results and to help identify projects for the watershed plan. The first meeting of the committee will be held on:

**Monday, September 29, 2003
2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m. at the
Rutherford County Cooperative Extension Center in Spindale.**

What is Local Watershed Planning?

The NC Wetlands Restoration Program (NCWRP) is a non-regulatory program that is charged with wetlands and stream mitigation in the state.

What is mitigation? The NC Department of Transportation must compensate the public for impacts that road building has on streams and wetlands. NCWRP ensures that projects are created to offset these impacts.

NCWRP needs to implement restoration projects in the Broad River Basin to mitigate impacts from road projects. NCWRP chose the Cathey's Creek watershed since Cathey's Creek and Holland's Creek (known historically as Sheppard's Creek) is on the 303(d) list– the state's list of impaired waters.

Rather than just picking out projects randomly, NCWRP would rather identify projects in the context of a *watershed plan*.

Local watershed planning involves two major components:

1. Gathering technical and scientific information about the watershed.

2. Involving local stakeholders to ensure that local priorities are incorporated in the plan.

The resulting watershed plan will include an assessment of the watershed, and recommendations of management actions needed to reach the goals for the watershed. Local stakeholders help to determine what are appropriate goals for the watershed.

NCWRP has funds to pay for stream and wetland restoration projects, and potentially for land conservation. They can also help identify funding sources for other management strategies that may be identified in the watershed plan.



Watershed Planning includes all stakeholders who can impact or are impacted by water resource decisions

A Watershed Assessment of Cathey's Creek

Ben Goetz and Jane Almon, Earth Tech of NC, Inc. are conducting a watershed assessment of Catheys Creek.

There are 3 steps to the watershed assessment:

1. Watershed Characterization

- Collecting Data
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Windshield Surveys (driving around watershed looking)

2. Detailed Analysis

- Field work
- Monitoring water quality
- Identify focus areas for action

3. Identify specific solutions

Ideal projects will save pastureland, help fish, improve water quality, provide mitigation credit for road projects, and address local goals.

What have we learned so far?

Watershed Focus

- ⇒ In 1970's flood prevention was key. Four impoundments were created in watershed to alleviate flooding.
- ⇒ 1980's farming practices were improved. No-till methods and other practices decreased erosion from farming.
- ⇒ Currently, livestock exclusion from streams is a local fo-

cus, with money available from the federal Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Ben and Jane spent some time looking around the streams in the watershed. They commented that Mill Creek looked very nice, as it was heavily vegetated around the streams.

They showed photos of other areas in the watershed where streambank erosion was prevalent. Streambank erosion can cause a loss of land, including pastureland, as the land falls into the stream.

They let participants know that they will be out in the streams taking measurements to conduct the watershed assessment. They will send letters to landowners before they do so, to inform people as to why they are wading in streams with equipment.

Anyone who has information about conditions in the watershed that they would like to

share can contact Ben at 919-854-6243, or at

ben.goetz@earthtech.com

Cathey's Creek and Holland's (also called Sheppard's) are listed as impaired (or degraded) by the State of NC

What should be considered in this watershed planning effort?

Participants of the public meeting were invited to provide their ideas on what should be considered in the watershed planning effort. Participants then categorized their responses and provided heading titles to help organize the information. These responses follow.

Education Needs

- We need more education about wetlands - define the word wetland

Erosion – (from timbering)

- Projected Population Levels
- Non-point-source pollution increases
- erosion along creek
- Damage to streambanks
- What can you do to keep water from running down a hill into the stream?
- Where you see trees you don't see erosion
- Terrible logging practices
- Logging equipment in water bodies
- Trees and leaves hold moisture, not grass

Catheys Creek Individual Discharges

- How to mitigate the effects of having the Spindale waste water treatment being dumped into Cathey's Creek at Hudlow Road
 - Vegetation is dying/dead
 - Concerned about lack of critters
- Concerned about water quality below discharge into Catheys Creek (below bridge on Hudlow Road)

Projects displacing people, or new people changing landscapes

- What happens to the people?
- Any people relocated due to watershed (activities)

Private Property Rights & community partnerships

- Private Property Rights
- Affected communities involved

Agricultural Impacts

- Keeping cattle out of our creeks
- Agricultural & urban water needs

Comments about watershed Maps

- The maps need to reflect local landmarks
- Accurate names need to be on maps (roads, churches, ? sites)

- Map needs to replace names all the names in Cathey's creek. Watershed with creeks and roads. Most reflect local landmarks, i.e. historical towns, schools, churches.

Development (disturbance of land)

- Large timber tracts being sold for development?
- Clearcutting to pay taxes
- Clearcutting activities
- Clear-cuts are often needed to pay taxes.
- High Property Tax
- People have to sell to developers, more erosion.
- When trees are cut and converted to pines.
- The best managed practice is "globally pines" according to tax office
- Can't afford property tax on timberland – timber companies selling because of tax
- Small farmers losing factory jobs, pressure to sell land to developers?
- Cathey's Creek individual discharge
- How to mitigate the effects of having the Spindale waste water treatment being dumped into Cathey's Creek at Hudlon Road
 - Vegetation is dying/
Concerned about critters (lack of)
- Concerned about water quality below the (cleaned waste water) discharge into Cathey's Creek (just below bridge in Hudlow Rd)

The headwaters of Cathey's Creek are in Union Mills, on Pinnacle Mountain.

Historical Sites

- Historical sites

Plants Quality

- Quality of plant community on banks – native vs exotics
- What plants can be put in to absorb pollution?

Flooding

- Flooding for Holland's
- Flooding of streams getting out of its banks
- Flooding
- Potential water reservoirs (Need for additional water retention)

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We're on the web!
www.ces.ncsu.edu/WECO/catheys



Why are wetlands important?

Bog, swamp, salt marsh, pond, riparian forest, vernal pool, mangrove forest: what do these all have in common? That's right, they are all wetlands.

Wetlands are areas that have the following similar characteristics:

1. **WATER:** Inundated (flooded) or saturated with water for a certain number of days in a row that add up to 7.5% of the growing season in an area. The growing season begins when the first buds on plants appear and ends with the first frost. For the rest of the year the area could have no water at all.
2. **SOIL:** Presence of hydric soil. The soil in wetlands is a special kind of soil called hydric soil. Hydric soils are those that are wet long enough during the growing season that anoxic (without oxygen) conditions are created in which hydrophytes (water-loving plants) will grow.
3. **PLANTS:** Presence of wetland plants. Wetland plants are hydrophytes, which simply means that they are water (hydro) lovers (phytes). They can grow in water or in soils that are anoxic (without oxygen).

You may have seen bumper stickers in NC that say "No wetlands, no seafood". While wetlands are important for providing habitat where marine life spawns, they also provide many other services in the NC foothills and piedmont that are critical for our lives and enjoyment. These services include:

- ⇒ Filtering pollution such as pesticides, herbicides, or heavy metals
- ⇒ Filtering nutrients that can otherwise cause algae blooms, which deplete oxygen in water bodies so that aquatic animals can't survive
- ⇒ Absorbing water that might otherwise cause downstream flooding
- ⇒ Preventing loss of land due to erosion
- ⇒ Providing habitat to a multitude of fish, birds, mammals
- ⇒ Providing recreational opportunities like hunting, bird-watching, fishing

This watershed planning project will identify existing and former wetlands in the watershed as part of the watershed assessment. For more information about wetlands, visit www.wetland.org or www.epa.gov/OWOW/wetlands/

What should be considered in this watershed planning effort cont.

DOT Projected 221 widening impacts

- What affect the widening of Hwy 64 had on Cathey's Creek and what else needs to be done to correct any resulting problems.
- Affected Roads
- DOT impacts/projects on flooding?

Wildlife and Aquatics

- Wildlife overpopulation- of predators
- What kind of fish are in the streams?
- Losing calves to predators (coyotes, wolves)
- Wildlife officers need to change attitude (property owners need rights to shoot)
- Wildlife is not where it supposed to be (in urban areas)
- Wildlife taking over our land - Help!

Thank you to everyone who participated in this exercise!

A follow-up public meeting will be held when the watershed plan is almost complete, in Summer or Fall 2004.

The information provided by participants will be considered while conducting the watershed planning effort.