

Winter 2005

Cathey's Creek Newsletter

Draft Watershed Plan to be Presented in May

The Cathey's Creek Watershed Advisory Committee met on February 17 to discuss the next phase of the watershed planning project for Cathey's Creek. In the final phase of the project, Earth Tech will develop a Restoration Plan that will include broad recommendations to address water quality problems throughout the Cathey's Creek watersheds and will also provide more detailed recommendations for restoration activities in four small subwatersheds.

The detailed subwatershed plans will include specific projects such as stream restoration opportunities or Best Management Practices that could be constructed to im-

prove water quality. The well-attended meeting was very productive, with participants providing the information that Earth Tech needs to move forward with the final phase of the watershed planning process. The Technical Advisory Committee will have the opportunity to review and provide feedback and suggestions at the next meeting.

**The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 5
1:00 p.m.– 4:00 p.m.
At the Rutherford County Cooperative Extension Center**

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Update on the Rutherfordton Bypass

Kristin Cozza, EEP, Jane Almon, Christy Perrin and Patrick Beggs (WECO) met with Brian Overton, an archeologist with NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT), to learn more about the Rutherfordton Bypass.

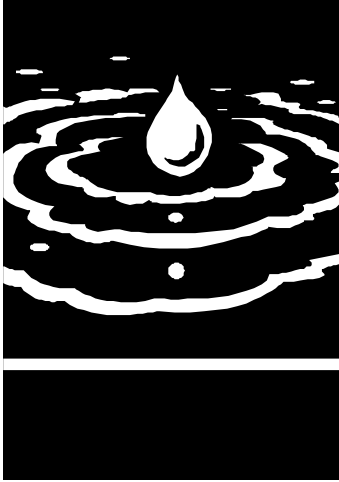
Kristin provided an update to the group on this NCDOT project. The American Battlefield Protection Program of the National Parks Service and the Rutherford Historic Society are working to get Gilberttown on the National Register of Historic Places. NCDOT hired a consulting firm to do background research and to map out potential boundaries of the Gilberttown site.

This work is scheduled to be complete in March 2005 and will help NCDOT avoid impacts to the Gilberttown site during construction of the bypass. In addition, the project is going through the NEPA (National Environmental Protection Act) process to determine potential environmental impacts and how to minimize those impacts.

There are several proposed alternative alignments for the bypass, and NCDOT is waiting for the archeological information, including site boundaries, before choosing the final alignment. NCDOT will have to consider both environmental and cultural impacts. There will be opportunities for



Update on Rutherfordton Bypass, continued



public feedback before an alternative is chosen in the next year. Currently, the scheduled date for beginning construction on the Bypass is 2010.

Q: Did NCDOT discuss what their mitigation requirements will be and how this will coordinate with the local watershed plan?

A: NCEEP does the stream and wetland mitigation for NCDOT, so there will be coordination. NCEEP has to follow the same federal guidelines for endangered species and historical sites as NCDOT.

Selecting Subwatersheds for Detailed Restoration Plans

Since summaries of the Critical Areas Report were mailed prior to the meeting, little time was spent discussing this report, which included the final watershed assessment results from Earth Tech. The group was informed that detailed restoration plans for three subwatersheds, including site-specific project recommendations, will be developed in a Watershed Management Plan. Although projects may be identified and implemented anywhere in the watershed, the project team recommends focusing restoration plans in the smaller subwatersheds to effectively target the project resources and have the greatest impact.

A matrix was created to help the Technical Advisory Committee evaluate each of the 14 subwatersheds in the Cathey's Creek watershed and decide which of these subwatersheds were the best candidates for detailed restoration planning. The matrix listed the functional indicators investigated in Earth Tech's Critical Areas Report and also listed other criteria that should be considered in selecting subwatersheds, including:

- Existing or proposed water quality project in subwatershed
- Potential stream restoration projects
- Potential wetland restoration sites
- Recent logging and clearing
- 303(d) listed streams within subwatershed
- Cattle access
- Historic mining
- Impervious cover >10%

Subwatersheds received zero, one, or two checks in each of the categories. Christy led the group through the exercise, providing participants an opportunity to discuss the

criteria, comment on why subwatersheds received checks or not, and to offer additional criteria. The matrix was stressed as a tool to aid in decision-making, with the final choices left to the watershed committee.

Discussion about criteria:

Participants commented that all the subwatersheds drain to the 303(d) listed portion of Cathey's Creek, so the existence of 303(d) listed stream within the subwatershed was not important.

Subwatersheds that had some but less than 4,000 linear feet of potential stream restoration received one check in the *Potential stream restoration projects* category, while those with more than 4,000 feet received two checks.

Areas where *historic mining* occurred were determined to need check minuses rather than checks, since disturbing those areas could potentially release toxic metals that may be buried in the sediment.

Participants added a new criterion, *Landowner involvement/visibility* to reflect the potential for partnerships with stakeholders that could yield high visibility projects. Those projects could serve as demonstration projects for the community, and raise interest in additional projects. This is important

What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have not been discovered.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Selecting Subwatersheds for Detailed Restoration Plans, continued

since all in-the-ground projects are conducted voluntarily with landowner permission.

The subwatersheds were rated for *cattle access* during the field assessment according to what was observed. It is possible that cattle access occurs in other subwatersheds but was not observed.

Changes/additions to the way subwatersheds are scored:

- Subwatershed 8 received a check under *Existing or proposed water quality project* for a conservation easement on a farm in that watershed.
- Subwatershed 8 also received checks under *historic mining* and *Impervious Cover > 10%*
- Subwatershed 8 received a check under *Landowner involvement/visibility* for the presence of the airport, and a potential opportunity to work with them as they expand. The group discussed whether the airport would be a likely partner or not.
- Subwatershed 13 received two checks under *Potential stream restoration projects* that were not noted before, and a check under *Cattle Access*. The group discussed the illegal dump that is present in the subwatershed as well.
- Subwatershed 9 received two checks under *Landowner involvement/visibility* for the presence of the R-S High School and the Broyhill factory as potential opportunities for partnerships. The group discussed whether Broyhill may be a likely partner or not, since the future of the industry is not certain.

Final decisions:

The group chose the following subwatersheds for detailed subwatershed plans, with Jane Almon agreeing to complete four rather than three detailed restoration plans:

- Subwatershed one: contains headwaters to Mill Creek
- Subwatershed eight: contains tributaries to Cathey's Creek and William Branch
- Subwatershed nine: includes the headwaters of Holland's Creek
- Subwatershed thirteen: which includes Holland's Creek, Case Branch, and Reynolds Creek

The subwatersheds chosen represent varying degrees of development and degradation, and can provide information about restoring the other subwatersheds later.

Questions:

Q: Isn't the watershed in pretty good shape? Why is it portrayed as being so degraded?

A: Although none of the subwatersheds look as bad as those you would find in an urbanized area like Charlotte, they are not pristine by any account, and if they are not managed they will continue to worsen in the future as land uses change. The State of NC and the US EPA officially lists the watershed as impaired, which means that the State and local governments are required to take measures to try to improve it.

Q: Why are we trying to create wetlands or other features that will provide breeding grounds for mosquitoes?

A: A well-designed and properly functioning wetland provides habitat for wildlife species that eat mosquitoes, so the projects we implement should not increase mosquito populations. In some cases, we could actually improve the landscape so that the number of mosquitoes may actually be reduced.

Q: Regarding the presence of exotic plant species, isn't kudzu helping hold streambanks in place?

A: It would seem so, but unfortunately the kudzu chokes out the native plant species that do a better job stabilizing the streambanks and providing habitat for native wildlife species. Kudzu turns natural areas into a monoculture where little else can survive.

"Healthy wetlands sustain numerous species of mosquito-eating fish, amphibians, insects, and birds, all of which help limit mosquito populations..."

...Excess nutrients in contaminated waters can spur microbial growth and cause harmful algal blooms, which feed mosquito larvae. Filling or draining wetlands may also increase mosquito outbreaks, as an altered landscape with stagnant pools of water may no longer contain mosquito predators."

-US EPA Office of Watersheds & Wetlands

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Looking Ahead to Potential Watershed Solutions

The group was asked to respond to the following questions to help the project team determine solutions for the watershed plan.

- Do you have ideas about what you would like to see recommended?
- Would certain recommendations hit local hot buttons? If so, how do we address this?
- Are there likely projects or recommendations that would appeal to citizens and community leaders?

Group member provided the following suggestions for developing solutions:

- Focus on successful projects that have been implemented
- To educate and increase public awareness of problems and solutions, take people to a “demonstration” site that has been finished.
- Cooperative Extension can help with demonstration areas
- Demonstration area can be within county (not necessarily in Catheys), in municipal areas, and rural areas
- Partner with Cattlemen’s Association
- Ordinance recommendations are a possibility if they do not negatively impact economic development
- Cleaner streams and a nicer environment could attract economic development
- If ordinance/policy is perceived as coming from outsiders it will not be accepted.
- Don’t use “buffer” term or be careful of terminology?
- Emphasize voluntary nature of watershed plan and projects
- Concentrate on “storm water management.” rather than “land use planning”
- Not necessary to “water down” the recommendations. Say what you mean- people are not so sensitive
- Focus on our approach, rather than terminology

Timeline for Completing Watershed Planning Process

April 25	Watershed Management Plan Draft Available for Cathey’s Creek Watershed Advisory Committee review
May 5	Watershed Advisory committee meets to provide feedback on draft watershed plan
Late May	Revised Watershed Plan available for review
June	Public meeting to share Watershed Plan
Late June	Final Watershed Plan completed

Participants of February 17, 2005 meeting

Tim Barth, Town of Spindale
Patrick Beggs, WECO-NCSU
Clint Calhoun, Upper Broad River Watershed Assoc.
Kristin Cozza, NCEEP
Deborah Daniels., NCEEP
Nancy Ellen Ferguson, County historian
Bill Hodge, Town of Spindale
Jan McGuin, Rutherford Cooperative Extension
Lois Moove
RuAnn Moove
James Padgett, NC Natural Heritage Program
Christy Perrin, WECO– NCSU
Travis A. Ringo, Rutherford SWCD
Danny Searcy, Rutherford County
Jerry Stensland, Rutherford Outdoor Coalition/CCRC
Mary Stone, NC Division of Water Quality
Amy Uppren, NC Division of Water Quality