



New Hanover County  
Local Watershed Planning Group

## MEETING SUMMARY

Wednesday, March 06, 2002 meeting held at the Cape Fear River Watch.  
Summaries available on WECO website: [www.ces.ncsu.edu/WECO](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/WECO)

**Next meeting scheduled for  
Wednesday, April 3 from 6:30pm  
to 8:30pm Cape Fear River  
Watch Educational Center**

### Agenda:

- ◆ Continuation of Goals Discussion
- ◆ The Local Watershed Plan – where do we go from here?
- ◆ Project implementation status

#### Group Members/alternates present:

Joe Blair, NC DOT  
Bouty Baldrige, Cape Fear River Watch  
Stacy Smaltz, Cape Fear River Watch  
Michael Pope, Sierra Club, Wrightsboro Community  
Jim Bordeaux, Castle Hayne Steering Committee  
David Mayes, City of Wilmington  
Tommy Tew, Corbett Timber Co.

#### Support staff & guests present:

Christy Perrin, WECO/NCSU  
Patrick Beggs, WECO/NCSU  
Bonnie Duncan, NC WRP  
Jason Jolley, WECO/NCSU  
Joe Pfeiffer, KCI  
Penny Tysinger, Cape Fear Council of Governments

**This summary for the March 6 meeting  
includes the following items:**

- ◆ Overview of Group History
- ◆ Wilmington Stormwater Roundtable
- ◆ Discussion of Water Quality Goals

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### Overview of Group History

Christy gave a brief overview of the history of the New Hanover County Local Watershed Planning Group. The group was convened in Fall 2000 and developed a charter. In Winter 2000-2001, the group developed a list of watershed concerns:

1. Water Quality
2. Flooding
3. Growth and Development
4. Wildlife Habitat
5. Education
6. Quality of Life

In Spring 2001, the group decided to concentrate their efforts in specific subcatchments by using models developed by KCI, which ranked the groups concerns. The group decided to concentrate on

- Burnt Mill Creek
- Lower Smith Creek
- Prince George Creek

The group then assisted KCI in choosing stream segments for further study. After discussing some potential goals for the watershed plan, the group participated in a charette to review and rank projects based on information and findings provided by KCI. An agreement was reached by the group to explore conservation of high quality land in the Northwest portion of the watershed (undeveloped land along the Northeast Cape Fear River).

After further reviewing potential projects in the three subcatchments, the group helped WRP pinpoint top wetland restoration, stream restoration, and BMP projects to implement.

The group has received water quality and degradation information from a variety of sources throughout the group's history. Educational information provided includes:

- NC Division of Water Quality
- UNC-Wilmington
- Urban stormwater runoff
- Mitigation requirements
- BMPs (Best Management Practices)
- Wildlife and natural heritage sites
- DOT projects
- Land conservation
- Restoration techniques
- Visiting restoration sites



### **Wilmington Stormwater Roundtable**

Dave Mayes, City of Wilmington, gave a presentation on the Wilmington Watershed Protection Roundtable Committee. The committee was formed to make recommendations to improve water quality. The committee representation consisted of realtors, a landscape architect, UNCW research professors, developers, non-profit environmental staff, engineers, planners, and CP&L.

Using the *Better Site Design Handbook* from the Center for Watershed Protection, the committee examined their current development ordinances to determine the current level of watershed protection. Answering 22 categories of yes-no questions, the City of Wilmington scored 67 out of a possible 100 points. The test results demonstrated that "development rules are likely inadequate to protect local aquatic resources." A site planning roundtable would be very useful."

The Roundtable focused on three habitats: people, cars, and nature, where improvements could be

made. By recommending changes to current regulations and ordinances, such as allowing use of curb openings and grassy swales, alternative types of header curbing, requirements for minimum percentage of open space when cluster and density bonuses are provided, and buffer maintenance requirements the City was able to raise its score. In total, 78 recommendations were developed and an implementation strategy was developed for each principle, with demonstrated costs savings calculated where applicable. Because of the recommended changes, the City of Wilmington was able to raise its score from 67 out of 100 to 91 out of 100.

The City of Wilmington supported the implementation strategy, but New Hanover County has not officially announced its support as of yet. One possible option for the group is for Bonnie to contact Dexter in New Hanover County to determine if the support of the group would be beneficial.

Copies of the report were provided to group members and will also be available on the City of Wilmington's website.

#### *Questions:*

*Q: What are the advantages of a developer using a wetland?*

*A: There are possible cost savings.*

*Q: What is responsibility of a homeowner who has a wetland on their property?*

*A: The wetland would still fall under the Corps jurisdiction, but the homeowner could need permit. In some cases they could not clear, but could maintain the wetland.*

*Q: Was it the current or past City Council that supported this Report?*

*A: It was the past, but the approval would not change unless current City Council rescinded it – which is not likely.*

### **Top Eight Sites for Restoration**

Bonnie reminded the group that eight sites were selected as priority projects to pursue for restoration due to WRP staff constraints and state budget crunch. Other projects will be pursued as resources become available.

The landowner letter is set to go out. WRP will follow up with interested landowners using stakeholder assistance.

## Review of Tentative Watershed Plan

### Goals for Group

Christy reviewed the tentative goals for water quality for the group to discuss.

#### **1. Goals for Water Quality**

##### ***A. Determine a level of water quality to a certain standard-more information needed to determine water quality standard to achieve***

A discussion occurred regarding the level of water quality standard the group was seeking to achieve. The group had previously discussed 10% improvement as a goal. Some group members expressed concern that a goal of 10% improvement was arbitrary and not applicable to state's use support ratings. Some expressed concern that a 10% improvement meant very little if the creeks in question still did not support their uses.

Joe Pfeiffer from KCI noted that reaching the state's use support rating is a complicated task and using it as a measure is difficult. It was noted that we are trying to overcome a long history of degradation in Burnt Mill Creek and improvement may have to occur incrementally and 10% is a good first step in this process. Joe noted that a watershed plan's success needs to be simple to measure. Using the model KCI developed, the group can show how much nitrogen is removed from the system by BMPs and other projects to determine how they are moving towards their goals. Grab samples can be taken after the BMPs have been installed and are fully functioning.

##### ***B. Reduce sediment from eroded stream banks***

Stream restoration and riparian buffers could assist in improving eroded stream banks.

##### ***C. Protect and improve water quality through wetland, stream, and buffer projects, and other water quality improvement programs.***

WRP is currently exploring priority projects for restoration.

##### ***D. Improve water quality for safe consumption (recreation, fish consumption).***

Improving water quality for safe consumption was another tentative goal. The group discussed education and awareness problems with people fishing in Burnt Mill Creek, but decided not to focus on this problem.

**Decision: The group decided not to focus upon the issue of safe consumption for the watershed plan.**

##### ***E. Reduce fecal coliform inputs.***

Reduction of fecal coliform pollution was another water quality goal. It was noted that there is a pet waste ordinance (city and county) on public property (not enforced) and the City of Wilmington is currently

replacing the Mineral Springs outfall.

*Question: How much will projects affect fecal coliform?*

A: Joe Pfeiffer: The water quality data did not indicate that fecal was coming from sanitary sewer leaks, so fecal could be and most likely is coming from pet waste. Education and enforcement are needed if pet waste is the lead contributor. We should educate children regarding pet waste and pollution.

The group discussed several ideas for addressing this problem, including displaying flyers at PetSmart and mailing information to pet owners. It was noted that there is an ordinance against placing pet waste in the garbage, so pet owners are limited in their disposal options. The previous Cooperative Extension Director in New Hanover County published some educational materials regarding fecal coliform and pet waste - group members should check in to these resources.

### Other Issues

Christy informed the group that they may not need to meet monthly in the near future.

*Question: When can WRP start implementing projects?*

A: We are trying to get going soon on Mineral Springs branch and close to Forest Hills Elementary School in Burnt Mill. The NCWRP is also trying to secure resources for a stormwater wetland at Wallace Park.

For more information about the New Hanover County Local Watershed Planning Group, or to be removed from this mailing list, contact Christy Perrin or Jason Jolley at (919)515-4542  
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