

White Oak River Watershed Advisory Board



April 25, 2005 MINUTES

www.ces.ncsu.edu/WECO

For Monday, April 25, 2005 meeting

THE GOOD NEWS COLUMN

WHITE OAK RIVER RE -OPENING CEREMONY

Since the hurricanes of 1996, the upper White Oak River has been blocked by debris from a series of major storms. Through a partnership between Jones County, local citizens, and North Carolina's Division of Water Resources, the debris has been successfully removed with minimal impact to natural resources, and the river is now navigable for small watercraft. Please join in celebrating one of the area's most significant natural resources.

Ribbon cutting ceremony:

Saturday, June 4, 2005

3:00 p.m. (Paddle trips are arranged all day long)

White Oak River Family Campgrounds

North side of Route 17 at the foot of the bridge just south of Maysville, NC

And more good news...

QUATERNARY TRACT ACQUISITION CELEBRATED

On May 6 the NC Coastal Federation and the NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund (NC CWMTF) hosted a dedication for the successful acquisition of the Quaternary Tract- 1,443 acres of pristine property along 7 miles of the White Oak River. The Coastal Federation received funding to preserve the land from the NC CWMTF and the North American Wetlands Conservation Act administered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Preserving open space has many important benefits:

-Protects water quality, shellfish resources, wildlife habitat

-Provides an economic benefit via eco-tourism

-Another economic benefit of open space- it uses fewer local public resources than other land uses

Congratulations and thank you to all who made this important acquisition happen!

White Oak River Watershed Meeting

Participants met on April 25 to share information about various ongoing and new projects occurring in the White Oak River Watershed. These projects include

- NCDWR grant to clear debris from upper reaches of River
- A new EPA grant acquired by NC Coastal Federation in cooperation with NCDOT for improving shellfish waters in Boathouse and Dublin Creeks
- Part 2 of the Swansboro/Pettiford Creek EPA project

This newsletter summarizes the discussions about the various projects. The WORAB will meet next in mid-late July- date TBA.

For information or to be removed from this mailing list, contact

Christy_perrin@ncsu.edu or 919-515-4542.



UPDATE ON PROJECT TO CLEAR PATH OF WHITE OAK UPPER REACHES

Connie Asero provided an overview of this project, which was funded by a partnership between the NC Division of Water Resources and Jones County.

Her presentation is available for viewing online at our website:

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/agecon/WECO/advisoryboard.html>

This project was a first for NCDWR for removing storm debris- the purpose was to allow for commercial navigation, and to establish new Best Management Practices for removing debris from rivers. Canoe and kayak access was determined as commercial since outfitters benefit economically from the navigation.

The area cleared was a 20-mile stretch from the Hoffman Forest to Haywood Landing.

Technique: A tree-cutter was hired, who removed only what was blocking the river at mean water level, using methods that were agreed-upon by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission as minimally impacting wildlife habitat and water quality. Only enough debris to allow for small boat access was removed.

Cost: The grant provided \$70,000. Five hundred trees (or portions of trees) were removed so far. Connie estimates that this is cheaper than a typical FEMA-funded clean up.

Maintenance: Yearly maintenance will be important after major storms, which could be conducted for just a few thousand/year. Various parties could cost share. Since much debris was left in the river, there is a potential for debris to back up against it.

Highlights:

- During the project, several more significant cypress trees were discovered above Emmet Bridge. So far 100 visually significant trees have been documented for a paddle trail brochure.
- After being informed of the project, Dr. Pete Peterson, UNC Marine Science made the following statement:

Following intense storms, tree falls and debris often block streams and creeks, preventing ready access by canoe, kayak, and small boat. Debris removal is commonly conducted as part of a clean-up process after such storms. However, such debris removal can cause serious environmental harm if it does damage to the

riparian buffer along the stream bank. Such buffers are critical to maintain so as to filter out pollutants, stabilize stream banks, and provide bird, fish, and wildlife habitat. Careful thought and cautious approaches are required to avoid doing serious damage to the waterways.

A recent debris removal project done on the White Oak River provides a superb example of how to do the clean-up in an environmentally friendly and responsible way. This approach should be widely followed in the future and even mandated by the government agencies that fund clean-up after such storms. We must recognize the critical ecosystem services provided by vegetated zones adjacent to streams and creeks and respect the integrity of these streamside buffers.

Group discussion:

Diana Rashash mentioned that her program monitors water quality at Gibson Rd. and Emmett Bridge, so she can look at the data to see if there is any impact on water quality following the project.

The group pointed out the importance of citizen involvement for acquiring funding.

Someone asked if there were any estimates of paddling traffic on the White Oak. Since the upper reaches have been blocked, there are no estimates for this portion. Three outfitters have been supplying recreationists for paddling below the blockages. A Sea Grant study estimated the impact of recreational paddling overall on the coastal NC area. A suggestion was made to survey users of the White Oak River through the outfitters.



Part Two of Swansboro/Pettiford Creek EPA Grant

Christy explained that funding had been left from the previous EPA 319 grant although all the deliverables had been met. A new proposal and contract was required to continue work on this project, which accounts for the time lag from finishing last summer and starting up again this spring.

The funding will allow for another stormwater best management practice in Pettiford Creek or Swansboro, and some additional educational outreach activities. All activities must be completed by December, 2005.

BMP Location: Project team members scoped Pettiford Creek last fall for a potential BMP, and found an ideal location to retrofit a parking lot with bioretention areas (raingardens) adjacent to Captain Ed's Restaurant. However, after speaking with the landowner, the land use may change so the site is not good for a project this year. There may be an opportunity to partner with the landowner as the land use changes if another funding source could be found.

Instead, the project team decided to partner with the Town of Swansboro and Gene Heath to control stormwater runoff on or near the site of the White Oak Bistro. The Town is constructing a dock walk that will connect to this property, so an opportunity exists to have another high profile project, with an educational kiosk.

Some participants expressed the need for a canoe access at the existing pervious paved parking lot. Somebody suggested a launching ramp next to the dock walk for this purpose (such as those used for jet skis).

Another suggestion was made to use drainage ditches for BMPs in Swansboro- in the town's right of way.

Educational Activities:

Participants discussed how to make the best use of educational activities. Comments:

- Target policy makers
- Emphasis cost
- Involve a developer who has completed an environmentally sensitive project (Ed

Mitchell, developer of River Dunes, on Neuse River).

- It's more effective to address these issues up-front. Cape Carteret has stormwater and environmental problems, and education is needed.
- River Reach subdivision in Swansboro would be a good place to install raingardens.
- Target the audience and the message for effectiveness- are you teaching people how to implement BMPs, or how to provide incentives for developers to do?
- New Hanover and Pender Counties will have an environmental-friendly certification that is peer-promoted for developers.
- We need to bolster the planning boards- give them support. Get to the policy-makers who are in control
- Goal is to increase stormwater management on the ground, make it politically feasible
- Audience should be planning and public works staff.
- Poll the staff to see what they are interested in and what would be most useful to them.
- Include information about how it helps economic development, and is financially feasible
- Connect it to the outcomes of the Economic Summit held in Carteret County if possible
- Upcoming workshop: *Cumulative and Secondary Smart Growth Workshops*, in Nov./Dec. in Morehead City, Wendy Jenkins, National Estuary Research Reserve.

Final decision- the group wanted to see an educational workshop targeted to local planning and public works staff (the people who review site plans, etc.) about low impact development. The purpose would be to provide information on options available to local governments, ordinances to expore, where to look for more information. In Cape Carteret, Buddy Dew reviews plans and enforces the local ordinance. The workshop can be targeted for late summer.

WECO staff will begin surveying local staff to develop content for the workshop. The WORAB will meet again in July to review and help hone workshop contents.

NCCF and NCDOT Partner on New EPA Grant for the White Oak River

Sally Steele, a White Oak River watershed resident and Director of Development for the NCCF, told the group about a new project that will be undertaken by a partnership of the NCCF, the NC Dept. of Transportation, the Town of Cedar Point, and Buck Engineering. The project will begin in November 2005.

Main points about the project:

- An EPA grant was acquired to develop a strategy for impaired shellfish waters in the southeast White Oak River (including Boathouse Creek, Dubling Creek, and nearby embayments of the White Oak).
- Strategy involves developing a TMDL-Total Maximum Daily Load- for fecal coliform, through modeling and monitoring data.
- Ten best management practices (BMPs) will be identified as part of the strategy.
- NCDOT will be a primary collaborator to identify sources of pollution and how they are conveyed to the shellfish waters
- NCDOT would like to determine if bacteria is being conveyed through their stormwater drainage system
- Once the information is analyzed, NCDOT will evaluate the costs/benefits of installing stormwater BMP retrofits.
- Stakeholders will be involved as the project progresses.

The group discussed the Highway 24 Causeway widening, and how this project may have negatively impacted the shellfish resources. Some participants questioned whether WORAB's recommendations were implemented in the construction. Gene mentioned that some piping was installed that moved water to the river side as recommended, but they could not move all the water there. A lack of available land to use for treating stormwater was mentioned as a problem.

Bill Crowell informed the group that the NCDOT had said that they were only able to follow some of WORAB's recommendations because of right-of-way issues, and that the NCDOT had done what they said was feasible.

Frank Tursi, NCCF, will be leading the new project. Public outreach is scheduled for year 2 of the project.

Participants of April 25, 2005 Meeting

Kate Ardizzone, NC Sea Grant
Connie Asero
Patrick Beggs, WECO; NC State University
Erin Bryan, NC Shellfish San. , Recreational Water Quality
Danny Crisman, Town of Swansboro
Bill Crowell, Abermarle-Pamlico NEP
Elmer Eddy, IWLA; Stewards of the White Oak
Gene Heath, owner Flying Bridge, White Oak Bistro
Todd Kelly, Carteret SWCD
Bill Norris, Onslow SWCD
Christy Perrin, WECO; NC State University
Julie Powers, Sea Grant/Coastwatch
Diana Rashash, NC Cooperative Extension, Onslow
Sally Steele, NC Coastal Federation
Thurman Upchurch

