



# White Oak River Watershed Advisory Board Workshop for the White Oak

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Summary of March 29, 2004 public workshop

## Workshop for the White Oak River Held

Twenty five community members participated in the workshop on Monday, March 29, 2004 at the Western Park Community Center in Cape Carteret. Participants saw exhibits on water movement through a watershed and septic tank maintenance, completed surveys on their water quality habits and knowledge, and heard presentations on shellfish closures, the Pettiford Creek research results, septic tank maintenance, and creating backyard rain gardens for treating storm water runoff. We want to acknowledge the following people for their contributions to the workshop:

Kate Ardizone, NC Sea Grant- for creating the survey used at the workshop

Elmer Eddy- for publicizing the workshop

Gene Heath- for donating food from his restaurant, the Flying Bridge (delicious!)

Jane Hoveland- for donating food and publicizing the workshop

Bill Hunt, NC State University- for informing participants about rain gardens

Wayne Mobley, NC Division of Shellfish Sanitation- for updating participants on shellfish closures

Diana Rashash, Onslow County Cooperative Extension Center- for informing participants about septic tank maintenance

Thanks to **everyone** who participated for making this workshop a success!

### Next Steps for EPA 319 Pettiford Creek Project

A stormwater wetland was constructed and planted in May on Peletier Mayor Walter Vinson's land on White House Fork Road. A sign will be created to accompany the wetland.

The project is slated to end in June 2004, but funds remain due to financial efficiency of the project team. A grant extension has been requested of NCDENR to allow for additional BMPs and education. Once approved, the project team will work with WORAB members to identify project locations.

The next WORAB meeting will be scheduled as needed. Contact Christy Perrin with any questions or comments at [christy\\_perrin@ncsu.edu](mailto:christy_perrin@ncsu.edu) or (919) 515-4542.

## Workshop Survey Results



Participants filled out pre- and post-workshop surveys to share their perceptions about water quality in the White Oak River and to determine how well the workshop met the goals of providing residents with useful information for protecting the watershed.

### Survey Respondents

Eighteen of the 25 workshop participants completed the survey. Of those, 5 were local government staff, elected/appointed officials. Respondents came from all over the watershed- Swansboro, Cedar

Point, Cape Carteret, Peletier, and Stella. Two were from Morehead City.

### Watershed Conditions

This group was fairly watershed savvy – we would say that participants have a strong watershed ethic, and are open to improving it.

**94%** were familiar with the word “Watershed”

**44%** Correctly defined that a watershed is all the land draining into a particular water body

Participants had a pretty good idea of what might be degrading their watershed.

53% said stormwater runoff was the main source of pollution in the White Oak River

13% said septic tanks

13% said development/too many people

other answers included fecal coliform, household products, chemicals, restricted water flow, and too many trees (perhaps meaning trees impede flow).

When asked to assess the water quality in White Oak River, (choices included poor, fair, good, excellent)

53% chose fair

29% chose good

18% chose poor

0% thought water quality was excellent

*(The White Oak River is impaired for shellfishing)*

56% of respondents get their environmental news from the newspaper.

38% get their environmental news from television

### Septic Tank Maintenance

89% of respondents have septic tanks. Of those, 89% know where their tanks are located.

However, of the respondents with septic tanks, 31% have *never* had their tanks pumped.

31% get their tanks pumped every 5-10 years

27% do this every 1-4 years

13% do the deed every 10-15 years

*(editor’s note-septic tanks should be pumped every 3-5 years)*

### Pets and Water Quality

67% of respondents have pets (9 dogs and 8 cats)

Of these folks:

42% dispose of their pets’ waste in the trash

**50% leave it on the ground**

*(Waste left on the ground can wash into the river!)*



### The Connection Between Land Use and Water Quality:

100% of respondents agreed that land use and development patterns affect water quality

When asked if they are in favor of their community adopting policies that guide development in a way that protects water quality

94% said YES

94% also believed that there were actions they could take as an individual to improve and protect water quality

### Commitments to the White Oak River

When asked what they will do to protect water quality, respondents showed they were committed to do their part. They committed to:

- Pick up after my pets (2 pledges)
- Shorten rain gutter so it will drain in grass
- Educate others (2 pledges)
- Create a raingarden (2 pledges)
- Increase vegetated buffer on the waterway (2 pledges)
- Be aware of water use
- Stop using weed killer
- Maintain my existing rain garden
- Look for sources of runoff
- Stop using fertilizer