

Stakeholder Group, Tuesday June 17, 2008

The meeting was held from 1-3:30pm in the first-floor Multi-purpose Room of the Lincoln County Senior Center located on the Gaston Community College Campus in Lincolnton.

Agenda:

Welcome and Introductions (10 min) *Hal Bryson*

Prior Meeting Follow Up – EEP Planning Elements vs. EPA 9-step Plan (15 min) *Mike Herrmann*

DWQ Watershed Monitoring Activities Update (20 min) *Stratford Kay, Susan Gale*

Stakeholder Feedback – Key Watershed Issues Part I (30 min) *Hal Bryson*

Break (10 min)

Key Watershed Issues Part II (30 min) *Hal Bryson*

Phase I Work Status Update (20 min) *Mike Herrmann*

Questions/Comments/Announcements (10 min)

Adjourn

Attendees List:

Name	Organization	Email
Hal Bryson	EEP, Watershed Planning	hal.bryson@ncmail.net
Michael Herrmann	EEP, Watershed Planning	michael.herrmann@ncmail.net
Paul Wiesner	EEP, Project Manager	paul.weisner@ncmail.net
Robin Dolin	EEP, Project Manager	robin.dolin@ncmail.net
Jessica Paddock	EEP, REACH Intern	jessica.paddock@ncmail.net
David Ledford	Lincoln County Natural Resources	naturalresources@lincolncounty.org
Robert Carson	Lincoln County B & LD	rcarson@lincolncounty.org
Randy Williams	Lincoln County B & LD	rwilliams@lincolncounty.org
Steve Gurley	Lincolnton Planning Dept.	stevegurley@ci.lincolnton.nc.us
Dean Parker	Gaston County Natural Resources	dparker@co.gaston.nc.us
David Freeman	Gaston County Natural Resources	dfreeman@co.gaston.nc.us
Jim Burke	Gaston County Cooperative Extension	jim_burke@ncsu.edu
Debbie Maner	NCRWA	ncrwadm@aol.com
Tom Yocum	DWQ WAT	tom.yocum@ncmail.net
Susan Gale	DWQ WAT	susan.gale@ncmail.net
Stratford Kay	DWQ WAT	stratford.kay@ncmail.net
Sharon Wilson	Catawba Lands Conservancy	sharon@catawbalands.org
Jay Frick	NC Public Water Supply	jay.frick@ncmail.net
Dan McClure	Carolina Land & Lakes RC&D	dan.mcclure@nc.usda.gov

Minutes:

Hal Bryson provided a welcome and overview of the agenda.

Mike Herrmann distributed a hand-out to follow-up on a question that was posed at the previous meeting. This handout is included as an attachment to the meeting notes.

The handout compared EEP's watershed planning elements and the EPA's 9-step plan. Mike noted three main differences between the EPA and EEP watershed plans:

1. EEP watershed plans have elements specific to preservation of lands and protection of rare, threatened and endangered species habitat;
2. EPA plans have a list of the practices needed for the watershed to achieve the load reductions specified in its TMDL; and
3. EPA plans require a schedule with dates to achieve implementation of project milestones.

Stratford Kay, a member of DWQ's Watershed Assessment Team (WAT), provided an update on DWQ's watershed monitoring. He presented Power Point slides summarizing existing data within the watershed as well as their water quality monitoring plan. Stratford stressed that there is not much existing DWQ monitoring data available, and the water quality monitoring plan will focus on filling in many of the gaps by establishing monitoring locations within the watershed. This data will include assessment of the benthos habitats within the streams.

- NOTE: On Power Point slide (# 7), map titled "Indian and Howard's Creek LWP Proposed Monitoring Locations", location point # 17 is located on the wrong spot. It should be further north, located directly on Howard's Creek.

Susan Gale, also with WAT, concluded DWQ's update by providing a summary of their ongoing wetlands study. She explained that DWQ has developed the North Carolina Wetlands Assessment Method (NC WAM), a tool that allows them to rate a jurisdictional wetland in comparison to a reference wetland in the order of low, medium, or high. This system rates in terms of the functionality of the wetlands hydrology, vegetation, and soils. DWQ's is developing the study plan in the next 2-3 weeks and plans to implement the study in early August. Products from the study will include a GIS layer delineating and assessing 30-35 wetland sites. This product may prove to be helpful to EEP in terms of identifying wetlands for preservation or enhancement.

Hal then facilitated an exercise to gain stakeholder input on what they saw as the local priorities within the watershed. He passed out a small stack of Post-It Notes to the attendees, and asked each to write down issues, both problems and assets, within the watershed that they felt needed to be addressed. Hal explained that EEP's priority within the watershed is to identify and implement compensatory mitigation projects that improve wetland and stream functions, but that the local stakeholders may have other priorities and needs. He asked the participants to place their Notes on the map of the watershed if it was an issue related to specific geographic areas, or on the blank sheet of paper hanging on the wall if it was a general issue (watershed wide). After

a short break, Jay Frick and Sharon Wilson volunteered to categorize into issues the Notes that had been placed on the blank sheet.

While Jay and Sharon were discussing their groupings, Mike Herrmann continued on with the agenda and presented Power Point slides to update the stakeholders on the work status of Phase I. He explained that EEP was working on analyzing the 2005 GIS aerial photography of the watershed to determine local priorities. Mike also mentioned that an effort to gain landholder permissions will need to begin shortly. Jim Burke offered to help coordinate with Cooperative Extension in Gaston and Lincoln Counties to notify landowners of the upcoming wetlands field work to begin in late August. Mike asked for relevant documents or reviews of existing plans that could be linked to the LWP website:

http://www.nceep.net/services/lwps/Indian_Howards_Creek/INDIAN_HOWARD_CREEKS.html that could be used to inform stakeholders and the local community.

Jay and Sharon finished grouping the issues which resulted in eight categories:

4. Threats from Storm Water Run-off
5. Outreach Education and Promotion of Effort
6. Drinking Water Protection and Wastewater Treatment Plant Issues
7. Water Quantity
8. Agricultural Issues
9. Regulatory and Enforcement Efforts
10. Erosion, Sedimentation, and Riparian Buffers
11. Land Conservation and Development Protection

Hal explained that the end products of an EEP planning effort consist of a Watershed Management Plan and a Project Atlas. The Watershed Management Plan will include a set of recommendations which will address both EEP's priorities as well the specific objectives of the local stakeholders. EEP hopes that this will result in a local watershed "steering committee" that will carry the torch to implement these projects after EEP's direct involvement has finished.

Action Items:

- Update at next meeting on the status of the contract with Entrix and stream assessments in priority areas. *Mike Herrmann*
- Forwarding links to project relevant websites, organizations and/or documents to Mike to be added to LWP project links page. *All*
- Summary of each item within the eight categories determined by Jay and Susan. *Hal Bryson*
- Discussion at next meeting to determine and possibly prioritize specific objectives within each category.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the stakeholders group is scheduled for Tuesday, September 16, 2008 from 1-3:30pm at the same facility.

Attachment A.

EEP vs. EPA elements to watershed plans.

Elements of a comprehensive watershed plan per FY03 EPA Guidance are:

- a. An identification of the causes and sources or groups of similar sources that will need to be controlled to achieve the load reductions estimated in this watershed-based plan.
- b. An estimate of the load reductions expected for the management measures described under paragraph (c) below.
- c. A description of the NPS management measures that will need to be implemented to achieve the load reductions estimated under paragraph (b) above and an identification (using a map or a description) of the critical areas in which those measures will be needed to implement this plan.
- d. An estimate of the amounts of technical and financial assistance needed, associated costs, and/or the sources and authorities that will be relied upon, to implement this plan.
- e. An information/education component that will be used to enhance public understanding of the project and encourage their early and continued participation in selecting, designing, and implementing the NPS management measures that will be implemented.
- f. A schedule for implementing the NPS management measures identified in this plan that is reasonably expeditious.
- g. A description of interim, measurable milestones for determining whether NPS management measures or other control actions are being implemented.
- h. A set of criteria that can be used to determine whether loading reductions are being achieved over time and substantial progress is being made toward attaining water quality standards and, if not, the criteria for determining whether this watershed-based plan needs to be revised or, if a NPS TMDL has been established, whether the NPS TMDL needs to be revised.
- i. A monitoring component to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation efforts over time, measured against the criteria established under item (h) immediately above.

Elements of EEP Watershed Plans

- a. Characterization of watershed conditions including general watershed stressors and priority preservation areas.
- b. Estimate potential nutrient and sediment reductions related to restoration opportunities and Best Management Practices.
- c. Project Atlas of restoration and preservation sites. Atlas will include map and a description of the project opportunity, including size, site condition, drainage area and field data collected on the site. Nutrient and sediment reductions are also included.
- d. Implementation costs are estimated for projects in the project atlas. Assignment of the authorities responsible for plan implementation is optional.
- e. education elements include public meetings, press releases, and options for other activities as appropriate.
- f. No schedule for plan implementation is detailed.
- g. plan implementation milestones are not detailed.
- h. long-term assessment of watershed changes and progress toward plan implementation are typically not EEP plan components.
- i. Plans have extensive monitoring activities to assess watershed conditions, identify sources of watershed stress and high quality areas.