

GROUP CHARTER & GROUND RULES

Morgan and Little Creeks Local Watershed Planning Group



Background

The North Carolina Wetlands Restoration Program (NC WRP) is a non-regulatory program charged with wetland, stream and riparian buffer restoration across the state. To implement wetland, stream and riparian buffer restoration projects where both locally specific restoration needs and opportunities exist, the NC WRP is initiating Local Watershed Planning within several small watersheds statewide. The purpose of the Local Watershed Planning effort is to promote local recommendations and actions to address water quality and wildlife habitat degradation, and floodwater retention issues within a particular watershed. The NC WRP recognizes that it is important to work with local stakeholders to develop solutions for local degradation issues identified. The NC WRP is interested in helping local stakeholders identify and implement wetland, stream and riparian buffer restoration projects in concert with other watershed restoration strategies. Some of the projects the NC WRP works with local stakeholders to implement will help meet future compensatory wetland and stream mitigation requirements.

With the assistance of local input, water quality data and sensitive resource information, the NC WRP has identified three 14-digit hydrologic units in which to work with the local community to develop a Local Watershed Plan. These hydrologic units consist of drainages to University Lake and Jordan Lake Reservoir which include: Booker and Bolin Creeks feeding into Little Creek, and Morgan, Phils, Neville and Wilson Creeks.

Purpose of Local Watershed Planning:

Local Watershed Planning, initiated by the State through the NC WRP, is unique in that local community members are asked to help direct state resources that will be spent in their watershed. The framework of the Local Watershed Planning process allows stakeholders to use the state as a technical and funding resource to work toward developing and implementing local recommendations. The NC WRP believes that this is how good resource planning occurs and that water quality improvement cannot occur without local understanding of the issues and solutions to address those problem areas. While the Division of Water Quality, along with other Department of Environment and Natural Resources agencies, collect reliable data and information concerning water quality, the insight and experience brought to the Local Watershed Planning process by local citizens and groups who live in the area is extremely valuable. The NC WRP is able to serve state citizens through empowering them with the expertise and resources to make a difference in quality of the water in their own communities and backyards. Stakeholders have a vested interest in working toward water quality improvement within the watersheds in which they live and work because of the positive benefits it can bring to their own health, safety and enjoyment.

Purpose of the Group

The primary purpose of the Local Watershed Planning Group is to develop watershed improvement and protection recommendations for the watershed area based on a functional assessment. To help develop these recommendations, the group will provide input at integral points during the watershed assessment. These integral points are described below:

Group Tasks

- ◆ **Review existing assessment information:** Review of broad watershed characterization work conducted by KCI, to identify information gaps and existing / ongoing watershed protection and/or restoration strategies.
- ◆ **Participate in identifying intact and degraded watershed functions:** Stakeholders will be provided with returnable cameras to photograph intact and degraded watershed functions within the defined planning watershed area. Stakeholders will also be asked to log the locations of various photographs taken and which functions they feel are intact or degraded.
- ◆ **Develop general watershed planning goals and objectives:** Stakeholders will provide input on perceptions of issues and ideas for general planning goals and objectives. At minimum, stakeholders will be working with goals, which include water quality protection and improvement, flood protection, and habitat protection and improvement. Tetra Tech will work with the NC WRP to use this input to establish watershed indicators, which are quantifiable parameters that can be used to measure progress toward goals and objectives. Management targets are numeric values or quantities of the indicators that reflect desirable or acceptable conditions for watershed functions. Where appropriate, management targets will be developed for watershed indicators.
- ◆ **Feedback on Preliminary Summary of Findings Report:** Stakeholders will be asked to provide feedback on data and information compiled by Tetra Tech in the Preliminary Summary of Findings Report. This information will be organized by sub-watersheds and delineated within the larger watershed area. The purpose of this report is to communicate available watershed characterization information and to lay the foundation for more detailed assessment that is needed to identify possible solutions to watershed functional deficits and threats.
- ◆ **Identifying high-risk areas (i.e. sub-watersheds, stream segments and potential project sites) for further analysis:** At certain points in the assessment process, Tetra Tech will need guidance in identifying high risk areas within the watershed (i.e. sub-watersheds, stream segments and problem locations) to pursue more detailed information. Because the watershed planning area is large, it is important to narrow the focus of where this level of analysis occurs.
- ◆ **Identify protection and restoration/rehabilitation opportunities:** Ultimately, stakeholders will participate in ranking proposed project sites and recommendations based on the assessment information / results, agreed upon project ranking criteria and local experience.
- ◆ **Local landowner interactions:** Local participants can promote the process by assisting with landowner contacts within their neighborhoods and communities to help allow for voluntary assessment and monitoring activities within the watershed. Please note that these efforts are entirely voluntary, and are not part of any wetlands or Clean Water Act regulatory enforcement.
- ◆ **Helping identify additional funding assistance:** The NC WRP will also work with stakeholders to help identify other funding / technical assistance (state, federal and nonprofit) resources available to implement other project recommendations that will work to improve habitat and water quality within the watershed (beyond wetland, stream and riparian buffer restoration) throughout the planning process.

The NC WRP cannot act as a grant sponsor / applicant on all projects proposed and implemented through this process. The stakeholders will need to take the lead on some of these projects.

- ◆ **Involving local governments, constituents, and the community:** The stakeholders also play a role in introducing and promoting recommendations and solutions to their local governments (as constituents) as well as other community groups / entities who have not been directly associated with the Local Watershed Planning Process.

Authority of the Group

The Local Watershed Planning Group has the authority to provide technical guidance and direct input in the development of recommendations for the Local Watershed Plan.

Nature of the Final Product

The Watershed Planning Group will develop a report that contains a set of consensus-based recommendations for protecting and improving water quality, habitat and water quantity issues in the watershed. If necessary this report will include a listing and description of issues where consensus could not be reached. Recommendations will be delivered to the Wetlands Restoration Program, Orange, Chatham and Durham County Commissioners, Chapel Hill and Carrboro's Town Councils, as well as other appropriate organizations and government entities as necessary to achieve the group's goals. Although all recommendations will be a part of the final report, recommendations may be delivered to appropriate recipients throughout the process.

Stakeholder Group and Participants

The Watershed Planning Group consists of a broad range of stakeholders and agency / program supporters and advisors who represent various interests related to water quality, water quantity and habitat management in the watershed described above. The following are the specific individuals who carry the credibility necessary to make this process successful:

PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATION

Orange County

- Dave Stancil, Director, Environment & Resource Conservation Department
- Ren Ivens, Planning & Inspections Department
- Hollie Rennell, Erosion Control Officer, Planning & Inspections Department

Town of Chapel Hill

- Fred Royal, Stormwater Management Engineer
- Sandy Maunz, Stormwater Management Assistant

Town of Carrboro

- Phil Prete, Environmental Planner, Planning Division

FARMING INTERESTS

- Karen McAdams, Agricultural Extension Agent, Cooperative Extension Service

LOCAL WATER QUALITY AND HABITAT INTERESTS

- Ed Holland, Director of Planning, Orange Water and Sewer Authority
- Pat Davis, Water Resources Planner, Triangle J Council of Governments / Orange Water and Sewer Authority
- Sharon Myers, Environmental Specialist, Environment, Health & Safety, UNC at Chapel Hill
- Dave Cook, Piedmont Bioregional Institute / Bolin Creek Group
- Lorelei Costa, Associate Director, Triangle Land Conservancy
- John Randall, Assistant Director for Conservation, The North Carolina Botanical Garden, UNC at Chapel Hill / Morgan Creek Valley Alliance
- Jim Ward, Curator, The North Carolina Botanical Garden, UNC at Chapel Hill

LOCAL ECONOMIC & DEVELOPMENT INTERESTS

- Richard Whisnant, Associate Professor, Institute of Government, UNC at Chapel Hill

AGENCY / PROGRAM TECHNICAL ADVISORS

- Brent Bogue, Natural Resources Conservation Services Director, US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Shari Bryant, Wildlife/Fish District Biologist, NC Wildlife Resources Commission
- John Thomas, Jr., US Army Corps of Engineers
- John Ann Shearer, US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Garland Pardue, US Fish and Wildlife Service

SUPPORT STAFF

- Bonnie Duncan, Asst. Planning Coordinator Wetlands Restoration Program
- Jason Doll, Project Manager, Tetra Tech, Inc.
- Trevor Clements, Director, Tetra Tech, Inc.
- Jon Butcher, Senior Analyst, Tetra Tech, Inc.
- Deborah Amaral, Special Projects / Communications Coordinator, Cape Fear River Assembly, Inc.
- Don Freeman, Executive Director, Cape Fear River Assembly, Inc.
- Sarah Bruce, Assistant, Cape Fear River Assembly, Inc.

Defined Roles and Responsibilities of Various Group Participants

Primary Stakeholders

-Role:

Primary Stakeholders are considered to be the people who have a seat at the table and directly participate in the process to develop recommendations for a viable Local Watershed Plan. These people represent the various interests within the watershed, i.e. agriculture, forestry, wildlife / habitat, local government, economic development etc. and are expected to participate in all meetings or send an alternate to represent their identified interest.

-Responsibilities:

Attending Meetings

Each member of the Group or his/her alternate is expected to attend and fully participate in all meetings. In the event that a member and alternate are not able to attend a meeting of the Group, and the member is not in agreement with an action(s) taken by the Group during his/her absence, that member will register his/her dissatisfaction with actions taken at the beginning of the next meeting. E-mail may also be used between meetings to address such issues.

Member Alternates

In the event that a Primary Stakeholder member cannot attend a meeting, he or she may be represented by an alternate of his or her choosing without concurrence of the group. Alternate representatives should be fully briefed by the Group member before attending any meetings. Any member alternates attending meetings should inform the facilitator of the member for whom they are filling in. If both the Group member and their alternate attend the same meeting, they are both welcome to participate in discussions. However, each stakeholder interest represented will have one voice in the decision-making process.

Constituent Representation

Group members will be expected to represent (1) themselves, (2) organizations to which they belong, or (3) coalitions of constituents. Representation will be made explicit by each of the group members.

Keeping Constituents Informed

Members are expected to keep constituents informed through active, but informal means. Members will receive meeting minutes and flip chart summaries for keeping constituents informed. On request, the facilitators will assist Group members to convene constituency meetings to enable a two-way exchange of information between the Group member and his or her constituency.

Withdrawal and New Appointments

If a stakeholder group member withdraws from the Group, he/she may appoint a replacement from the same organization without concurrence of the group. If the member is unable to appoint a replacement, the remaining Group members may appoint a new member from the same organizational category.

Preparing for Meetings

Group members shall read appropriate materials and arrive prepared to work. Materials presented for discussion must be distributed at least one week in advance of the meeting or as practical.

Project Responsibilities

Members of the group may also be asked to take the lead on identified projects the NC WRP can not implement.

•Technical Advisors

-Role:

Technical Advisors are considered to be the people who can provide technical support and expertise to the primary stakeholders with regard to various watershed characteristics and activities going on in the watershed. In addition, Technical Advisors may present relevant issues for consideration in the identification of potential projects and with identifying potential agency / program funding.

-Responsibilities:

Technical advisors will provide information and raise issues that they believe are important for the group to consider. When necessary, technical advisors other than those already listed as Group Technical Advisors may be invited to attend meetings. They are encouraged but not required to attend all stakeholder meetings and will not be party to the final decision-making with regard to Local Watershed Plan recommendations.

•Support Staff

-Role:

Support staff consists of the individuals and agencies working to initiate, facilitate, organize, guide (through the development of technical information) and financially support the development and implementation of recommendations contained in the Local Watershed Plan.

-Responsibilities of the Facilitators:

Deborah Amaral with the Cape Fear River Assembly will provide primary facilitation for the Local Watershed Planning process. On occasion, Bonnie Duncan of the NC Wetlands Restoration Program may provide facilitation support.

The Cape Fear River Assembly, Inc. (CFRA) has been contracted by the NC WRP for facilitation of stakeholder meetings for the Local Watershed Planning Process as a neutral, nonbiased party.

During Meetings

The primary task of the facilitators is to guide the meetings of the Group and/or task groups within the group charter and ground rules. The responsibilities include managing the Group's agenda, keeping a visible record of the meeting, helping the group stay on task and on process, protecting group members and their ideas from attack, and helping members reach consensus. The facilitators will not express their views on any substantive issues and will be solely concerned with the process of the group.

If the facilitator needs to express his or her own views or provide technical information to the group, he or she should ask the group for their permission to "switch hats" before doing so. It is important for the facilitator to be clear about his or her role in the group's decision making process, and for the group to be comfortable with that role.

Outside of Meetings

Outside of meetings the facilitators will write up meeting summaries and make them available to the members of the Group. Meeting summaries will be recorded and distributed to Group members and Technical Advisors prior to the next scheduled meeting by the facilitators. Summaries shall include an attendance record, a summary of actions taken at the meeting, and other information pertaining to the deliberations.

OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS:

•Agendas

At the end of each meeting, the Group will specify a tentative agenda for the following meeting. Draft meeting agendas will be developed by the Group, with the assistance of the facilitator, prior to each meeting.

•Decision Process

Use of Consensus

The Group will operate by consensus. Group decisions will be made only with concurrence of all members represented at the meeting. It will be the responsibility of the facilitator to assist the group in reaching consensus.

Consensus is the decision rule that allows collaborative problem solving to work. Consensus requires sharing of information, allows building of trust, which leads to mutual education, which, in turn provides the basis for crafting workable and acceptable alternatives. Consensus promotes joint thinking of a diverse group and leads to creative solutions. Also, because parties participate in the deliberation, they understand the reasoning behind the recommendations and are willing to support them. Consensus does not mean that everyone will be equally happy with the decision, but all do accept that the decision is the best that could be made at the time.

The group will reach consensus when it finally agrees upon a single alternative and each participant can honestly say:

- I believe that other participants understand my point of view;
- I believe I understand other participants' points of view;
- Whether or not I prefer this decision, I support it because it was arrived at openly and fairly, and it is the best solution for us at this time.

If Consensus Cannot be Reached

If the Group is unable to reach consensus on any component of the final recommendations, the pros and cons of the decision will be presented to Primary Stakeholders. After this presentation if consensus still cannot be reached, the lack of consensus will be noted and the points of disagreement will be documented in the final report.

•Ground Rules

In order to have the most efficient and effective process possible, the following ground rules are required, Group members agree to:

- A. Make every effort to attend the meetings. In some cases, it may be helpful to bring additional staff members with special expertise at different parts of the process.
- B. Treat each other with respect at all times and put personal differences aside in the interest of a successful team.
- C. Stick to the topics on the agenda, be concise and not repeat themselves.
- D. Speak one at a time.
- E. Work as team players and share all relevant information.
- F. Ask if they do not understand.
- G. Openly voice any disagreement with other members.
- H. Look for mutually beneficial solutions.
- I. Follow through on their commitments.
- J. Share information discussed in the meeting with the appropriate people in the group they are representing.
- K. Encourage free-thinking and the sharing of all ideas.
- L. Commit to issues in which they have an interest.

•Input From and Information to the Public

The Group is intended to be representative of the public through the members' own organizations or affiliations, as well as through their work with coalitions of groups. All Group meetings are open to observation by the public. A public comment period may be provided at meetings of the Group. Summaries of Group meetings will be available to the public upon request.

Members of the press are welcome to attend Group meetings. Group members will not address specific positions held by other Group members, or negatively characterize other Group members in the media.

•Schedule and Duration

The Group will meet about once every other month at times and locations of its choosing. The group effort is anticipated to last for approximately one year. The following major steps will be undertaken during the stated timeline (approximated):

First year (October 2002 - December 2003):

- ◆ Issue identification, characterization and prioritization
- ◆ Action/solution identification and prioritization
- ◆ Matching actions and solutions with appropriate resources

Second year, as needed (January 2004 – December 2004):

- ◆ Focus on implementation
- ◆ Delivery of recommendations to appropriate entities
- ◆ Development of final report
- ◆ Communicate findings and recommendations to community and other appropriate groups

During the first year of the stakeholder process Tetra Tech will undertake a technical assessment of the watershed. They will share information and data with the group on various occasions, will also get feedback from the group on the direction of their study.

•Changes to the Charter

Changes to the charter can be made at any meeting of the Group through a consensual procedure.