

NEUSE RIVER BASIN REGIONAL COUNCIL

River Bend Town Hall
45 Shoreline Drive
River Bend, NC 28562
(252) 638-3870

December 8, 1999

10:00AM

AGENDA

10:00am	Welcome	Chairman Bill Ritchie
10:05	Roll Call	Joan Giordano
10:20	Acceptance of Minutes	Chairman Ritchie
10:30	<u>Old Business</u>	
	Discussion:	Dr. John Costlow
	State & Federal Agency Programs Affecting Water Quality	
	Nominating Committee Report	Chairman Ritchie
	Demonstration Project Update	Guy Stefanski
11:45	<u>New Business</u>	
	Discussion:	Rick Dove & Marion Smith
	Hurricane Floyd and Aftermath	
12:45pm	Public Comment & Plans for Next Meeting	All
1:00	Adjourn	

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MINUTES

Chairman Bill Ritchie called the meeting to order at 10:00am. He welcomed those present and asked Joan Giordano to do a roll call. Following roll call (See Attachment A) Chairman Ritchie asked for a motion to accept the minutes of the last meeting. Motion by Sondra Riggs, second by Andy McLawhorn, to accept the minutes as written. Motion carried.

Discussion followed regarding determining a regular meeting date for the RC beginning in January 2000. The group agreed to designate the **4th Friday during ODD months** as the regular meeting date for the **FULL Council**. The **4th Friday during EVEN months** was designated as the regular meeting date for the Neuse RC **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**. **PLEASE NOTE THESE DATES ON YOUR CALENDARS.**

Under Old Business, Chairman Ritchie proposed that the discussion dealing with State and Federal Agency Programs Affecting Water Quality, be tabled due to Dr. Costlow's absence.

The next agenda item was the formation of a nominating committee to develop a proposed slate of officers for the coming year. Norman Ricks, Marguerite Whitfield and Sondra Riggs were designated as members of the ad hoc nominating committee. They will present the slate of officers at the next meeting.

The last discussion item under Old Business concerned the status of the Regional Council demonstration projects. Guy Stefanski outlined the status of the demonstration project submitted by the Neuse River Foundation (NRF) and the comments received during its review period. Marion Smith responded to the comments and added that the NRF looked forward to beginning the work.

Under New Business, discussion turned to the aftermath of Hurricane Floyd. Of concern was the issue of flooding relative to animal operations, the breaching of lagoon berms, etc. and the amount of nitrogen being deposited into waterways. Andy McLawhorn then recommended that there be the opportunity, at a future meeting, to have someone from the Division of Air Quality speak about atmospheric deposition of nitrogen. The group wondered whether the nitrogen reduction factor of 30%, imposed by the Division of Water Quality, could be met when new research pointed to atmospheric deposition as being a major contributor.

Further discussion resulted in the question of whether or not a resolution should be drafted portraying farmers in a "positive light." It was decided that a resolution was not necessary but that representatives from the NC Cooperative Extension Service and the NC Division of Soil and Water be invited to address the RC on the topic of "no till" farming.

The next meeting date was set for January 28th in Goldsboro at the Wayne Center, beginning at 10:00am.

There being no further business to conduct, a motion to adjourn was made by Norman Ricks and seconded by Margaret Holton. Motion carried.



Attendance
Neuse RC
River Bend
12/8/99

<u>NAME</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
Jean Leonard	APNEP staff
Randy Beeman	Pamlico County
Andy McLAWTURN	PITT COUNTY
Margaret Halton	Orange county
Sondra Spock Riggs	Jones County Commissioners
Joe Hughes	Forestry
Sam Halton (Visitor)	Orange County
Guy Stefanski	APNEP STAFF
Terry Kolan	City of Durham
Marion Smith	Neuse River Foundation
Norman Rutter	Wayne County
Bill Rutter	River Bend

MEMORANDUM

TO: Neuse River Basin Regional Council Members

FROM: Bill Ritchie, Chairman *BR*

SUBJ: Next Meeting - December 8, 1999

DATE: November 18, 1999

Enclosed is the agenda for our next meeting being held on **December 8th at the Town Hall in River Bend, beginning at 10:00am**. As you can see, our meeting promises to be informational and most relevant to those of us who suffered from Hurricane Floyd's visit. I trust you have begun recovery in your respective areas and the information which will be imparted during our meeting will be of interest and use to you. Also, I'm hoping a number of comments, questions, and views will be shared because plans for our next meeting include response from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

I look forward to seeing each of you and ask that you please make every effort to attend. Thank you for your dedication and commitment to preserving and protecting the precious natural resources of eastern North Carolina.

River systems slowly on the mend

A STRANGE thing has been going on in West Tennessee river bottoms the last few years. While folks have been fighting each other in court and in the media over whether or not, how much and where to drain the stagnant, clogged up rivers, we have pretty much left them alone. Now, they are beginning to drain themselves.

It all began when we decided to improve on nature's way to carry water from the fertile West Tennessee uplands to the sea. We short circuited the natural river meanders by digging straight ditches.

Seemed logical

It seemed logical at the time and few, if any, opposed it. The straight channels carried rain water off faster, allowing us to cut the timber next to the streams and begin farming the fertile river floodplains.

It also dried up wetlands, allowing us to build houses and businesses along the river banks. But we didn't plan on birches, sycamores, gums and willows growing so rapidly on the spoil banks. And we didn't think about the increased speed of the channeled water washing the banks away so fast.

The young trees' roots simply couldn't stabilize the banks the way

the old trees had, and as the banks eroded, the abundant young trees toppled into the rivers, causing log jams and catching silt. The channels filled up with silt, and every few years the channels had to be re-dug.

But we couldn't keep them cleaned out — not enough money, not enough time. Beavers moved in to these artificial swamps from the Mississippi River, and pretty soon, the whole West Tennessee basin became a clogged, swamped-out mess.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was called in to build big, deep channels, but a court case in the early 1970s brought that operation to a halt. Meanwhile, the Obion and Forked-Deer River Basin Authority was established to bring relief to farmers, state and county highway departments, and towns along the rivers.

After a few years, increasing public concern about wetland loss resulted in decreased activity of that agency. Since the mid-1980s not much has been done to the rivers, and more of the bottoms swamped out more often.

While intense debate raged and the issue became more and more entangled in the courts, humans pretty much stayed out of the swamped-out bottoms.

Finally, Governor Ned McWherter established a West Tennessee Tributaries Committee, involving all groups and agencies who had been involved in the debate.

After more than a year of haggling in the presence of federal mediators, they arrived at a landmark unanimous agreement — to restore the natural meanders. We all finally learned the hard way — channelization doesn't work.

For awhile, the only obstacle to restoring the meanders was enough money to do the work. The delay allowed an old argument to re-surface — over the Corps buying enough mitigation land (to replace land they had already drained) to allow the work to begin.

Meanwhile the Obion and Forked-Deer River Basin Authority was expanded to include the Hatchie River (the only non-channelized river in West Tennessee). It was also restructured and renamed the West Tennessee River Basin Authority.

The new charge was to help keep rivers flowing by cleaning out critical "hot spots" and not re-digging channels.

A new machine called an amphibious trackhoe proved to be a versatile tool to clean these areas in a light-touch manner, with no damage to stream-side trees, the roots of which were increasingly gaining control of the eroding river banks.

Reduced soil loss

Meanwhile, the Conservation Reserve Program and increasing amounts of no-till agriculture had significantly reduced erosion in the uplands, and less and less silt was entering the streams.

While all this was going on, the rivers were discreetly going about their business — carrying water downstream in the most efficient way. Seeking serpentine paths of least resistance, they were

carving out new streambeds.

Folks didn't notice at first. Then, Jim Johnson, a biologist who spends a lot of time in the bottoms, began to see small sections of some of the streams bypassing the abandoned channels. And in these sections, the water was fast, deep, and clear.

For those who live in rocky areas, this might not seem strange, but for many folks who live in the fertile loess soil area of West Tennessee, they had never seen clear water flowing in their streams.

Almost a novelty

It was almost a novelty at first, but it soon became evident that this was a trend. Happily, more and more of these bypasses were cropping up all over the place!

This is resulting in a new direction for the West Tennessee River Basin Authority. At first, the agency contracted the use of an amphibious trackhoe. It has now bought one of its own.

While the river systems "continue doing their thing," at an increasing rate, the Authority is still removing woody debris in hot spots. It is also studying channelized tributaries to find out which ones are sending the greatest loads of silt and sand into the river systems.

Then, headwaters of these tributaries are being stabilized to reduce the problem. The faster these are brought under control, the quicker the rivers can repair themselves.

Neat idea. Working with nature instead of against it.

Meanwhile the swamped-out areas in the upper floodplain are slowly returning to productive fields and woodlands, wetlands in the lower floodplain are flushing and recharging periodically the way they are supposed to, and flooding of roads and towns is decreasing a little every year.

SOUTHEAST FARM PRESS

SOUTHEAST OUTDOORS

By Jim Byford

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1999

12/1/99
NKBRC

