

ECOSYSTEM ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

N.C. Ecosystem Enhancement Program



Restoring... Enhancing... Protecting Our State

OVERVIEW

The North Carolina Ecosystem Enhancement Program (NCEEP) is responsible for providing ecologically effective compensatory mitigation in advance of permitted impacts associated with road projects and other development activities. The fundamental mission of the program is to restore, enhance and protect key watershed functions in the 17 river basins across the state. This is accomplished through the implementation of wetland, stream and riparian buffer projects within selected local watersheds. The vital watershed functions that NCEEP seeks to restore and protect include water quality, floodwater conveyance and storage, fisheries and wildlife habitat.

The NCEEP is not a grant program, but can implement its restoration projects cooperatively with other state or federal programs such as the Section 319 Program. Combining NCEEP-funded restoration or preservation projects with 319 or other local watershed initiatives (e.g., those funded through the Clean Water Management Trust Fund or local/regional Land Trusts) increases the potential to improve the water quality, hydrologic and habitat functions within selected watersheds.

WATERSHED PLANNING BY NCEEP

The selection of optimal sites for NCEEP mitigation projects is founded on a basinwide and local watershed planning approach that results, respectively, in the development of River Basin Restoration Priorities and Local Watershed Plans.

RIVER BASIN RESTORATION PLANNING

In developing River Basin Restoration Priorities (RBRP) (formerly called Watershed Restoration Plans), the NCEEP identifies local watersheds with the greatest need and opportunity for restoration, enhancement or preservation projects. These high-priority watersheds are called "Targeted Local Watersheds" (TLWs). Targeted Local Watersheds are identified, in part, using information compiled by DWQ's programmatic activities (e.g., Basinwide Assessment Reports). Local factors considered in the selection of TLWs include: water quality impairment, habitat degradation, the presence of critical habitat or significant natural heritage areas, the presence of water supply watersheds or other high-quality waters, the status of riparian buffers, estimates of impervious cover, existing or planned transportation projects, and the opportunity for local partnerships. Recommendations from local resource agency professionals and the presence of existing or planned watershed projects are given significant weight in the selection of TLWs. Targeted local watersheds represent those areas within a river basin where NCEEP resources can be focused for maximum benefit to local watershed functions. TLWs are therefore given priority by NCEEP for the implementation of new stream and wetland restoration/enhancement or preservation projects.

The 2003 Watershed Restoration Plan for the Yadkin-Pee Dee basin can be found on the NCEEP website at <http://www.nceep.net/services/restplans/watershedplans.html>. The NCEEP is currently updating its selections of Targeted Local Watersheds within the Yadkin- Pee Dee basin. NCEEP Planning staff will be finalizing TLW selections by the end of 2008. The updated TLW information for the Yadkin- Pee Dee basin will be made available on the NCEEP website by early 2009.

LOCAL WATERSHED PLANNING

In addition to river basin restoration planning, NCEEP also develops Local Watershed Plans (LWPs), usually within targeted local watersheds identified in the RBRPs. Through the local watershed planning process, NCEEP conducts watershed characterization and field assessment tasks to identify critical stressors in local watersheds. The NCEEP

planners and their consultants coordinate with local resource professionals and local governments to identify optimal watershed projects and management strategies to address the major functional stressors identified. The LWPs prioritize restoration/enhancement projects, preservation sites, and best management practices (BMP) projects that will provide water quality improvement, habitat protection and other environmental benefits to the local watershed.

NCEEP planners make decisions regarding the possible need for new LWP initiatives within a given basin annually. These decisions are based primarily on the quantity and type of compensatory mitigation projects the Program is required to implement, as well as the opportunity for local partnerships within selected 14-digit hydrologic units within the basin. NCEEP has initiated a new Local Watershed Planning effort in the lower Yadkin, Catalog Unit (CU) 03040105, focusing on the identification of stream and wetland restoration, enhancement and preservation projects within the Goose and Crooked Creek watersheds. Goose and Crooked Creeks are located within Mecklenburg and Union Counties, southeast of the City of Charlotte. Stakeholder kick-off for this plan took place in July 2008 and Phase I efforts are expected to continue through late 2008 or early 2009. For more information on this LWP, see the online factsheet at http://www.nceep.net/services/lwps/Goose_Crooked/Goose_Crooked_1_07.pdf (Goose and Crooked Creek Local Watershed Plan) or contact NCEEP Planner Anjie Ackerman at (919) 715-1950 or via email at anjie.ackerman@ncmail.net.

NCEEP also initiated a new Local Watershed Planning effort in the upper Yadkin (CU 03040101) in the spring of 2008, focusing on the identification of stream restoration/enhancement and preservation projects within the Ararat River drainage in eastern Surry County. This is designed as a “fast track” planning effort, to be completed by July of 2009. Local stakeholder meetings are scheduled for October 2008, February 2009 and June 2009. For more information on this LWP, see the online factsheet at http://www.nceep.net/services/lwps/fact_sheet_list.htm (Ararat River and Upper Yadkin LWP) or contact NCEEP Planner Hal Bryson at (828) 450-9408 or via email at hal.bryson@ncmail.net.

NCEEP has completed previous LWP initiatives in the Yadkin-Pee Dee basin including the Kerr Scott Reservoir LWP in the northwest area of the basin and the Upper Rocky River LWP in the central area of the basin to the east of the City of Charlotte. In addition, there are two LWP initiatives that are currently on hold due to lack of current mitigation need; these are the Mountain/Little Mountain Creeks LWP and the Upper Uwharrie LWP.

For further information on NCEEP LWPs please visit the NCEEP factsheets located online at <http://www.nceep.net/services/lwps/localplans.htm>.

NCEEP PROJECTS IN THE YADKIN-PEE DEE BASIN

As of summer 2008, a total of 89 NCEEP mitigation projects have been implemented within the Yadkin basin. Implemented projects include stream and wetland restoration/enhancement and preservation projects that are in one of three stages: design; construction; or monitoring (construction complete). The 89 NCEEP projects in this river basin include 11 projects under construction and 32 in monitoring. Of these 89 projects, 18 have been acquired through NCEEP’s full delivery mitigation program.

TABLE 1: EEP MITIGATION PROJECT IN THE YADKIN-PEE DEE RIVER BASIN BY COUNTY

COUNTY	NUMBER OF PROJECTS	COUNTY	NUMBER OF PROJECTS	COUNTY	NUMBER OF PROJECTS	COUNTY	NUMBER OF PROJECTS
Anson	6	Forsyth	3	Richmond	4	Wilkes	7
Cabarrus	8	Iredell	6	Rowan	5	Yadkin	3
Caldwell	1	Mecklenburg	5	Stanly	3		
Davidson	2	Montgomery	8	Surry	5		
Davie	3	Randolph	10	Union	10		

For more information on NCEEP mitigation projects in the Yadkin-Pee Dee River basin, contact Mike McDonald (western regional supervisor) at (828) 231-7912, or Deborah Amaral (central regional supervisor) at (919) 715-3466.

For additional information about NCEEP’s Project Implementation efforts, go to: http://www.nceep.net/services/implementation/project_implementation.htm.

For additional information about NCEEP in general, including its various program activities and products, visit <http://www.nceep.net/>.