

Appendix O. Alternative Approach to Public Education

New Proposed Positions: Public Information Specialist and Education Agent

To enhance basinwide education, the creation of two positions is recommended. The two positions would work closely with the local governments of the targeted communities to help implement the Model Education Plan. It is recommended that targeted communities have an opportunity to participate in this type of arrangement to lessen the burden the Model Plan requirements will impose on local governments.

There are many on-going education efforts in the Neuse River Basin, refer to North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources, including the divisions of the Office of Environmental Education (OEE) and the Division of Water Quality (DWQ) and/or the NCSU Cooperative Extension Service for information on existing appropriate resources and efforts. These two positions will serve to unify the ongoing efforts and target new educational and assistance opportunities. The Specialist and Agent would work with groups currently conducting environmental programs within the basin. The Specialist and Agent could serve to build a cohesive and unified basinwide stormwater education program.

1. Public Information Specialist (to be referred to as Specialist)

The Specialist would conduct basinwide media efforts that will include working closely with local television, radio, and newspapers along the entire Neuse Basin including the Triangle and New Bern-Kinston-Havelock TV markets. Therefore, the Specialist will be required to have a marketing background. A similar position has been developed successfully by the City of Greensboro.

The Specialist will develop and utilize existing public service announcements and informative videos that would be shown, heard, or read throughout the Neuse River Basin. The Specialist shall also work closely with a newly hired Education Agent (described below), the Office of Environmental Education, the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service's Neuse Education Team, Oversight Board members, and other groups or agencies in the field of water quality.

2. Education Agent: (to be referred to as Agent)

The Agent would develop and utilize existing videos and other teaching tools for teachers in the classroom; provide technical assistance to the general public; and, maintain a clearinghouse of resources for technical professionals. Whereas the Specialist is positioned to reach great populations with multi media tools, the Agent would serve in an outreach, hands-on capacity. Example activities for which the agent could be responsible:

- Organize a county and/or basinwide educational contest, examples include speaking, poster or web-design contests.
- Conduct environmental field days for schools or interested focus groups.
- Conduct tours to water quality demonstration sites.
- Organize/Conduct water quality education training workshops for educators.
- Develop homeowner water quality Best Management Practice materials.

The Specialist and the Agent could work together to pick an environmental education focus so that a targeted, unified educational effort can be made.

Funding for the two positions is imperative and funding options are summarized below. Similar and existing work in Greensboro that involves only one TV market, one radio market, and one major newspaper requires an operating budget of approximately \$300,000. The majority of the budget is spent to buy discounted time on local TV and radio and the remainder is utilized for video production and other educational materials. The same amount is recommended as a working budget for the Public Information Specialist and the Education Agent. The amount of \$300,000 is minimal considering that two main TV and radio markets will be targeted in addition to at least ten local newspapers.

Oversight Board

It is suggested that if this approach is implemented, an “oversight board” be created from one representative of each targeted community. The purpose of this Board would be to serve in an administration capacity to the two (2) positions. The board will determine how to measure the success of the educational efforts and whether to renew the contracts of each position.

Housing of Positions

It is recommended that agencies or organizations interested in facilitating these positions submit an application and proposal to the Oversight Board. The Oversight Board will have the authority to select the most appropriate persons or organizations to facilitate these positions.

Funding

It is recommended that funding for the operating budget be grant generated. The persons or organization selected to facilitate the two positions would be responsible for securing operating budget funds and would need to include the plan to secure funds as part of their proposal to the Oversight Board.

It is further recommended that the budget for the two positions’ salaries and benefits be funded by the participating targeted communities. The anticipated cost of this is \$100,000. It is suggested that the total budget amount be equally divided between the participating communities.