

# 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 2004 Watershed Restoration Plan for the Tar-Pamlico River 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 Tar-Pamlico Basin. NCEEP Planning staff will be finalizing TLW selections by the end of 2010 which will be available on the NCEEP website.

## LOCAL WATERSHED PLANNING

In addition to River Basin Restoration Planning, NCEEP 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 environmental stressors. 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. The LWPs prioritize restoration and enhancement projects, preservation sites, and best management practices (BMP) that will provide water quality improvement, habitat protection and other environmental benefits to the local watershed.

NCEEP planners assess the need for new LWP initiatives in each basin annually. These decisions are based primarily on the quantity and type of compensatory mitigation projects the Program is required to implement in each 8-digit HUC. Local Watershed Plans are best supported by local partnerships with local governments, resource agencies and non-governmental organizations. LWPs are typically conducted within the boundaries of one or more selected 14-digit hydrologic units. In the Tar-Pamlico Basin, NCEEP has one ongoing LWP in the Fishing Creek watershed around Oxford in HUC 03020101. This plan focuses on projects that address sedimentation and nutrient issues related to agriculture and forestry, stormwater runoff issues around Oxford and from highways, and degraded mussel habitat that may be improved to help reestablish viable populations of mussel species found in adjacent watersheds. In 2005, NCEEP completed a LWP in HUC 03020103 called the Middle Tar-Pamlico LWP. This plan consists of recommendations and project atlases for four separate watersheds around Tarboro and Greenville. The fact sheets for these LWPs with links to plan documents can be found at <http://www.nceep.net/services/lwps/> or contact NCEEP Planner ROB BREEDING at 919-733-5311 or via email at [rob.breeding@ncdenr.gov](mailto:rob.breeding@ncdenr.gov).

## NCEEP PROJECTS IN THE TAR-PAMLICO RIVER BASIN

As of summer 2009, a total of 75 NCEEP mitigation projects have been implemented within the Tar-Pamlico basin. Implemented projects include stream and wetland restoration or enhancement and preservation projects that are in one of three stages: design; construction; or monitoring (construction complete). The 75 NCEEP projects in this river basin include three in design, none in construction, and 18 in monitoring. Of these 75 projects, 11 were acquired through NCEEP's full delivery program. Additionally, four of these projects were focused on nutrient offset and six more yielded significant buffer credit.

For more information on NCEEP mitigation projects in the Tar-Pamlico River Basin, contact Rob Breeding (Eastern Watershed Planner) at (919) 733-5311.

For additional information about NCEEP's Project Implementation efforts, go to: [http://www.nceep.net/abouteep/watershed\\_planning\\_project\\_control.htm](http://www.nceep.net/abouteep/watershed_planning_project_control.htm).

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

**EEP MITIGATION PROJECTS IN THE TAR-PAMLICO RIVER BASIN**

COUNTY	NUMBER OF PROJECTS
Beaufort	4
Edgecombe	6
Franklin	25
Granville	18
Halifax	1
Hyde	3
Martin	1
Nash	1
Pitt	5
Warren	10