

Soundings

Newsletter of the Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Program

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Director's Note

I just returned from our annual spring National Estuary Program meeting in Washington, D.C. and hope you will take time to contact your representative to thank them for their support of our program. The Economic Recovery Act has directed funds to the Environmental Protection Agency to support clean water and estuarine projects through the state revolving funds and to NOAA for restoration activities. We are working with our partners to develop a list of possible projects. Contact APNEP staff if you would like to add to our "wish list."

The fiscal 2009 federal budget was not passed last year and we hope Congress will pass it soon. We expect the same funding level as last year. As a precautionary step to manage cash flow, N.C. will transfer up to \$300 million from several accounts, including \$100 million from the Clean Water Management Trust Fund, into the general fund. The money will be put into reserve and may be used to support General Fund obligations if necessary. We are cautiously optimistic that many of the awarded projects will find funding elsewhere.

I am happy to announce that our report on public perceptions of sea level rise is available on our Web site and that APNEP was recently awarded a grant to study submerged aquatic vegetation in the field. Additionally, the Citizens' Advisory Committee will be reviewing Schoolyard Grant Applications this month.

-Bill

Economic Recovery Funding for Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 specifically includes \$7.22 billion for EPA administered projects and programs that will protect and promote green jobs and a healthier environment. As part of the plan, the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund projects have been funded \$4 billion to help communities with water quality and wastewater infrastructure and \$2 billion to help with drinking water infrastructure. Funding is targeted for green infrastructure, water efficiency, energy efficiency and environmentally innovative projects. The EPA is developing grant guidance to assist states in managing Recovery Act funds. Grants will be announced on the Web to ensure transparency (see Web sites to right).

Upcoming Events

March

6 – APNEP Schoolyard Demonstration Grant Application Deadline

12 – Family Science Night, Wiley Elementary School, Raleigh, N.C.

17 – North Carolina Fisheries Forum, New Bern Riverfront Convention Center

17 – AP3C Meeting, Elizabeth City, N.C.

19 – Family Science Night, Oakwood School, Greenville, N.C.

19-21 - Southeastern Estuarine Research Society Spring Meeting, Conway, S.C.

21 – Arbor Day Celebration & Open House, N.C. State University, Raleigh, N.C.

24 – APNEP Citizens' Advisory Committee Meeting, Williamston, N.C.



Visit our calendar at www.apnep.org for more detailed event information.

N.C.'s Clean Water State Revolving Fund:
<http://www.nccgl.net/fap/cwsrf/index.html>

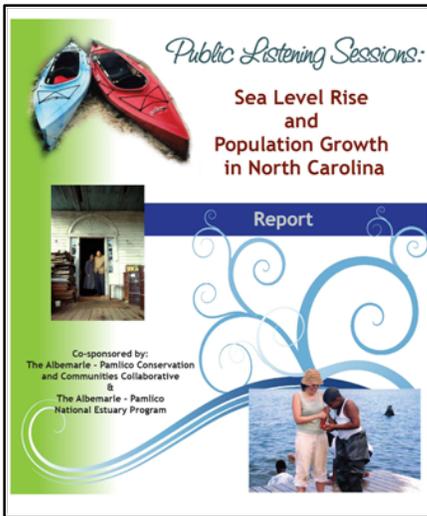
Virginia's Clean Water State Revolving Fund:
<http://www.deq.virginia.gov/cap/>

State-by-state fund distributions:
<http://www.epa.gov/recovery>

NOAA Restoration Center:
<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/recovery/>

Report Available: Public Listening Sessions

The official report on public perceptions of sea level rise is now available online at <http://www.apnep.org> – What's New



APNEP staff member Lucy Henry spent the summer of 2008 traveling to seven coastal cities in the APNEP watershed with members of the Albemarle-Pamlico Conservation and Communities Collaborative (AP3C) to facilitate listening sessions. The goal of these sessions was to provide residents of the Albemarle-Pamlico watershed with an opportunity to voice their concerns about the combined impacts of sea level rise and population growth and to elicit their ideas about solutions. They were also intended to gauge public perceptions about landscape change, social change, population growth and sea level rise for the purpose of improving public outreach and education efforts. More than 100 residents attended the sessions, representing a rich diversity of backgrounds and knowledge about the issues.

The sessions began with a discussion about changes that people are seeing in their communities and the environment. Observed changes ranged from positive influences of population growth, such as revitalizing downtowns in places like New Bern and Edenton, to concern over a loss of culture and natural resource-based jobs.

One participant commented that the type of new development occurring in his community “would have been unthinkable ten years ago” and another commented that “we’re the last cheap land to develop. The world has discovered us.”

Participants were then provided with maps showing projected sea level rise and population growth and were asked what kinds of impacts might result from these changes. Beyond the obvious environmental changes that would be caused by sea level rise, participants contemplated the resulting social and economic impacts their communities would experience. Even those participants who didn't have waterfront or low-lying property and therefore didn't at first see how the changes would impact them directly began to see the potential for their livelihood and way of life to change. One person commented that “family dynamics will change and communities will change.”

The sessions concluded with a discussion about solutions. Participants came up with a wide range of solutions, from specific actions to preserve natural shorelines to buffer sea level rise, to education of new home buyers. One participant suggested that “Protect[ing] waterfronts for aesthetic purposes will increase the value of the waterfront as a public resource and keep people from living there.”



Questions about the sessions should be directed to Lucy Henry at: lucy.henry@ncmail.net.

Visit <http://www.apnep.org> – What's New



Duke Energy to Donate \$1 Million for Coastal N.C.

Duke Energy plans to donate \$1 million to help the fragile coastal North Carolina peninsula adapt to climate change, the Nature Conservancy announced earlier this month. Funds will be used to help the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge cope with rising sea levels. The refuge is located on the 2,100-square-mile Albemarle Peninsula, just inside the Outer Banks. The peninsula is highly vulnerable to sea level rise, one of the hallmarks of climate change, the Environmental Protection Agency said in a January report. Two-thirds of the peninsula sits less than five feet above sea level. Erosion is removing up to 25 feet of shoreline per year.

The 152,000-acre Alligator River refuge is feeling the effects of advancing saltwater, said Mike Bryant, refuge manager. Aerial photographs reveal lost shoreline, he said. Man-made ditches dug years ago to drain low-lying areas are growing wider near Albemarle Sound. Forests are dying and converting into marsh as saltwater creeps farther inland. "All we want to do is make sure the rate of change isn't being accelerated by man-made features like the ditches," said Bryant. Devices to manage water flow in the ditches will help restore the natural hydrology, he said. The conservancy also plans to plant marsh grasses, restore wetland buffers and rebuild absorptive oyster reefs.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has a 30-year history on the peninsula and has protected 540,000 acres mostly owned by the federal government. Alligator Refuge is home to endangered red wolves and a wealth of wildlife from black bears to migratory songbirds. "Duke Energy's generous gift will help us protect that investment against rising sea levels," said Katherine Skinner, executive director of TNC's North Carolina field office. Other donors will contribute an additional \$250,000 toward the sea level project, the first of its kind by TNC. The group plans to hire a manager to oversee the project by mid- to late summer and may expand the work to other refuges.

To learn more about the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, please visit:
<http://www.fws.gov/alligatorriver/>



Feature Project: Submerged Aquatic Vegetation

Congratulations to Program Scientist Dean Carpenter and our excellent science and technical partners for securing a \$110,738 grant for APNEP. This grant money will be used to establish a protocol for sampling submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) in the field using revenues from the N.C. Coastal Recreational Fishing License (grant awarded by the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission and the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission).



Field sampling protocols will be complementary to the SAV aerial mapping project that our program is supporting. The proposal team included Dr. Jud Kenworthy (National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration), Anne Deaton (N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries), Kevin Dockendorf (N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission), Gayle Plaia (N.C. State University), Dr. Joe Luczkovich (East Carolina University), and Jacquie Ott (N.C. National Estuarine Research Reserve).





APNEP News in Brief:

Out and About

The N.C. Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance (DPPEA) co-sponsored a Municipal Solid Waste curriculum workshop featuring Project Learning Tree last month in Elizabeth City. More than 30 teachers and informal educators participated, including APNEP Community Specialist Lori Brinn. The hands-on workshop featured advice from experts about recycling, vermicomposting and incorporating these topics into the classroom.

Participants went on a field trip to Fun Junktion, a former landfill site in Pasquotank County that has been converted into a beautiful park. Fun Junktion features a catch and release fish pond, swim area, walking trail, picnic area, playground, skate board park and 18-hole disc golf course. Most activities are free of charge. For more information about Fun Junktion, call

(252) 337-6600 or visit:

<http://www.co.pasquotank.nc.us/funjunktion.htm>

The workshop also offered a tour of a Tidewater Fiber Corp. recycling center. Tour guides explained how machines are used to separate comingled glass, plastic, aluminum and paper and prepare it for transport to other facilities for processing.

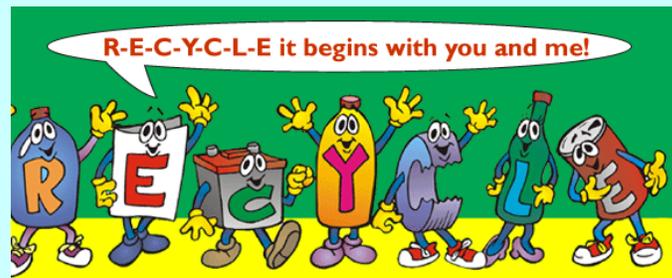
Teachers left the workshop with a wealth of resources about solid waste and recycling, and DPPEA was able to offer all of this free of charge, thanks to a grant from the National Project Learning Tree office.



Interested in Recycling?

For more information about recycling and how to set up a program for your school, contact Kelley Dennings, education and outreach project manager for DPPEA, at (919) 715-6507 or visit:

<http://www.p2pays.org/recycleguys/schools.asp>



New Guide, Synthesis of Adaptation Options for Coastal Areas

The Climate Ready Estuaries program has produced a technical report that serves as a guide for coastal managers about what adaptation options are available to reduce their system's vulnerability to climate change impacts.

Visit <http://www.epa.gov/climateradyestuaries/adaptationoptions.html> to access the guide.

New Report, Coastal Sensitivity to Sea Level Rise: A Focus on the Mid-Atlantic Region

This report represents one of 21 climate change studies being conducted by the U.S. Climate Change Science Program. It discusses the potential impacts of sea level rise and how governments and communities can respond to rising waters.

Visit <http://epa.gov/climatechange/effects/coastal/sap4-1.html> to access the report.

Correction from Feb. Newsletter

The task force for offshore drilling mentioned in last month's newsletter is more appropriately called the Offshore Energy Study Committee. According to Nancy White, Director of the Coastal Studies Institute, the committee's work will not be confined to just drilling but will consider any energy that could possibly be generated off shore.

Please send questions or comments about this newsletter to lori.brinn@ncmail.net.

