

*Welcome to the Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Program **E-Update** – a monthly summary of selected activities of the APNEP staff, committees and our partners...*

NC Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) -

CREP is an initiative established as part of the highly successful Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CREP expands CRP's effectiveness by allowing USDA to work in partnership with state and local interests to meet specific conservation objectives. CREP utilizes Federal and State resources to achieve long-term voluntary protection of environmentally sensitive cropland and marginal pastureland. These voluntary protection measures are accomplished through 10, 15, or 30-year permanent agreements with landowners to plant grassed filter strips, forested riparian buffers, hardwood trees and to restore wetlands. For more information or to learn more about enrollment in to the program contact your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) or Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and Soil and Water Conservation District office.

CREP is currently being implemented in the Neuse, Tar-Pamlico, and Chowan River basins and the Jordan Lake Watershed. There are approximately 31,000 acres enrolled in the program, 24,600 of which are under conservation easements. The Division of Soil and Water Conservation has submitted a proposal to USDA requesting to expand CREP into six additional basins, the Cape Fear, Lumber, Roanoke, Pasquotank, White Oak and the Yadkin-PeeDee. This expansion would allow agricultural landowners within the entire APNEP region of North Carolina to be eligible for the program

USDA's response to the proposal is supportive, however, there are still some concerns that the Division of Soil and Water Conservation and the CREP partners will be addressing over the next few weeks. Working with the USDA, the Division of Soil and Water Conservation hopes to have the approval process completed as soon as possible, although no timeline has been set for enrollment in these new areas.

House Panel Holds Hearing on Offshore Fish Farms -

Last week the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans held a hearing on HR 2010, the National Offshore Aquaculture Act of

2007. The bill, introduced on behalf of the Administration by the Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, Nick Rahall (D-WV), directs the Secretary of Commerce to establish an operating permit process for the development and operation of offshore aquaculture facilities in areas of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). At a hearing, administration officials and members of the House Natural Resources Committee agreed they want to ramp up the United States' ability to produce its own seafood. But Democrats on the panel expressed concerns that the White House proposal to do so would not include enough environmental standards. The administration's proposal requires NOAA to address environmental risks but does not say it must "minimize" them. That is of concern to some legislators and environmental groups, who want any fish farming bill to require the smallest possible fish escapes and water pollution. NOAA chief, Conrad Lautenbacher, noted during the hearing that he is willing to work with Congress to put standards in the language. Additional information on the hearing as well as witness testimony can be viewed at:

<http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/hearings/hearingdetail.aspx?NewsID=116>

House Agriculture Chairman Unveils His Proposal for Farm Bill

— Last week the Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, Collin Peterson (D-MN), released the chairman's mark for the farm bill. The Committee is scheduled to vote on the measure during the week of July 17th. Representative Peterson's amendment would authorize 39.2 million acres to be enrolled in the Conservation Reserve program through 2012. The current level is 39 million acres. The amendment provides \$1.6 billion to reauthorize the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and extend the program through 2012. It also extends the current Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program and Grasslands Reserve Program. In addition, the measure provides an extra \$1.4 billion for the popular Environmental Quality Incentives Program. The bill allots \$25 million for a conservation pilot program directed to resources concerns around the Chesapeake and \$150 million for river restoration projects in the Chesapeake Bay. The Chairman's mark, which will require offsets to fund it, can be viewed at: <http://agriculture.house.gov/inside/2007FarmBill.html>

Study Provides Preview of Effects of Sea Level Rise on Marsh Plants

- Coastal managers know they need to incorporate sea level rise into many of their planning and policy decisions, a tall order when the actual effects of sea level rise are not yet entirely known. A recent study demonstrates that the sea level rise picture is likely to be complex for marsh systems, as increased flooding of tidal marshes will have varying impacts on different marsh plant species. The investigators simulated sea level rise in experimental enclosures by varying salinity and flooding depths for three species of marsh plants. With this design, they could test the effects of flooding and salinity individually and look at interactions between the two factors. Panicum

hemitomon, a freshwater marsh grass, was least affected by flooding at low salinities but was most sensitive to increased salinities, as measured by plant growth above and below ground. The most salt-tolerant species, *Spartina patens*, was the least flood tolerant. The brackish species tested, *Sagittaria lancifolia*, showed an intermediate response. Results also indicated that higher salinities led to reduced soil organic matter, as the plants held at higher salinities produced less below ground biomass. This study shows that the very structure of coastal wetlands will likely be altered by sea level rise, as community shifts will be governed by the responses of individual species to new environmental conditions. The study can be found in the Journal Estuaries and Coasts, Spalding, E. A., and M. W. Hester. 2007. Effects of hydrology and salinity on oligohaline plant species productivity: Implications of relative sea-level rise. (View Abstract: <http://erf.org/cesn/vol30n2r4.html>)

NCCOS Releases Regional Ecosystem Prediction Program Funding Announcement

- The National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science, Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research (CSCOR) announced its most recent solicitation for multidisciplinary, regional ecosystem-scale research to support sound coastal management under its Regional Ecosystem Prediction Program. Focus areas in this year's announcement include 1) a regional-scale approach to invasive species in the Great Lakes, 2) cumulative impacts of stressors at the land-water interface in the Mid-Atlantic, and 3) ecosystem goal-setting in coastal waters and reefs of South Florida. All proposals must include management participation to guide the scientific research toward successful applications. These regions and issues were identified by CSCOR as critical national gaps in understanding and opportunities for synthesis of prior research efforts. This announcement complements a diverse portfolio of regional ecosystem-scale research that has been supported by CSCOR and its Coastal Ocean Program in support of sound coastal management for over 15 years. More information on the program and details on how to apply may be found at: http://www.cop.noaa.gov/opportunities/grants/funding_grants.html

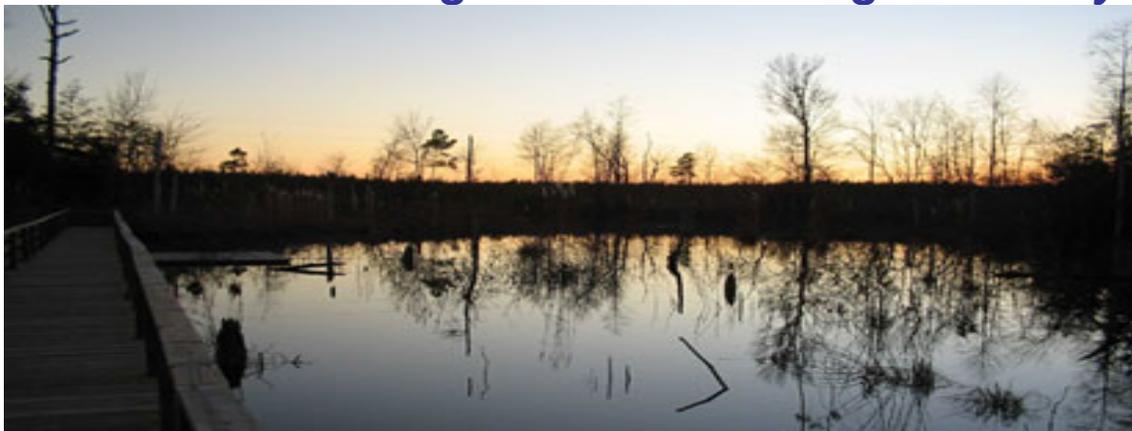
Smart Conservation: Energy, Waste, and Water - Drought conditions have affected all 100 counties in North Carolina forcing mandatory water restrictions in many of them. Landfills are taking up more and more land when much of the material within could have been reused. But anybody can help make this world a better place! Energy, waste and water conservation are just three smart ways that you can help the environment. This program (July 24, 2007 on OpenNet at 9:00pm) will focus on eco-friendly tips and the impact they have on earth. Appearing on the program will be: **Linwood Peele**, Water Supply Planning Section Chief in the Division of Water Resources within the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources; **Tom Mather**, Public Relations Officer for the Division of Air Quality within the Department of

Environmental and Natural Resources; **Bianca Bradford**, Solid Waste Education Specialist for the City of Raleigh, and **Bob Slocum**, Executive Vice President of the North Carolina Forestry Association. Send in your questions and comments by email to open@ncmail.net or call in, toll free, to 1-888-228-6736. To watch, find your local cable channel that carries OPEN/net on APT's web site: www.ncapt.tv/local.htm. Or watch the program via live streaming video on APT's web site (www.ncapt.tv).

OPEN/net is a statewide, cable television call-in program about state government produced by the Agency for Public Telecommunications (APT) within the NC Dept. of Administration. Since 1984, over 43,000 viewers across the state have called or emailed OPEN/net to talk with policymakers about public affairs issues. The program is a public-private partnership produced by the State of NC and made possible by donated air time from NC cable companies every Tuesday night from 8-10:00pm. Find more information about OPEN/net on APT's web site (www.ncapt.tv) or contact Fran Wescott (fran.wescott@ncmail.net, 919-733-6341). OPEN/net is also available on C-Band satellite, Galaxy 26 on Transponder 15.

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From briars and bugs to bird-watching sanctuary



Nature Trail Dedicated in Northampton County May 25

Jamie Kritzer, Office of Public Affairs

Until a few months ago, the land behind the Northampton Cooperative Extension office was thick with brambles and bugs at the edge of the county landfill.

Now, the land features a wide nature trail where people can exercise, hike across a wetland filled with beavers and fish, observe one of the area's most abundant bird sanctuaries and identify dozens of upland tree species.

The nature trail in northeastern North Carolina came about thanks to a \$20,000 grant from the Albemarle Pamlico National Estuary Program, the hard work of staff with the N.C. Division of Forest Resources and a host of local monetary and in-kind donations.

Northampton County officials unveiled the nature trail to the general public at a May 25 dedication ceremony.

"We no longer have a place that is just holding the world together," said Kay Winn, a member of the estuary program's citizen advisory board. "We have a place that is bringing people from around the world together right here."

Bill Crowell, director of APNEP, praised the efforts of Winn and others who pitched the idea of a nature trail at the site in Jackson, the Northampton County seat.

After APNEP's contribution, others started to chip in with monetary and in-kind donations, Winn said.

Some of the important in-kind work came from members of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Local staff with the N.C. Division of Forest Resources used a tractor plow to carve a path through the dense vegetation. Later, the path was leveled and covered with crushed gravel. Winn thanked Rodney Black, Jason Miller, Earlie Boone and Donald Strickland – staff with the Division of Forest Resources who helped build the trail.

"Now, we have nearly a mile of trail open to everyone free of charge," Winn said.

At the dedication, Winn and Rose Massey, with the Northampton County Cooperative Extension Service, helped lead those interested on a tour of the trail. People ambled along the neatly maintained trail as it looped into the wooded area before arriving back to the extension service lawns about a mile later. Along

the path, people could see the light impressions of little feet – deer and mallards as well as eastern painted turtles that come here to lay their eggs. Then, there were the chirp, chirp, chirp of the orioles and the croak of the frogs.

Visitors followed the path to a wooden foot bridge that traversed a shallow pond filled with fish and beavers (as evidenced by the recently constructed beaver lodge at one end) and plenty of snakes.

Many of the trees have been labeled, thanks to the Division of Forest Resources.

Winn and others say the trail has something for everyone – birders, naturalists and people who just enjoy the outdoors.

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)- is pleased to announce that it will accept applications for the Citizen Monitoring Grant Program for the 2008 monitoring year. The grant can support volunteer water quality monitoring activities from January 1, through December 31, 2008. Funds can pay for monitoring equipment, laboratory analysis, publications, and related items. Grant awards cannot pay for office space, salary for staff or staff benefits. Applications are due by August 31, 2007. Applicants can apply for one of two types of grant opportunities.

1. The regular Citizen Monitoring Grant has a maximum award of \$5,000. As in previous years, this grant requires recipients to provide or possess a DEQ approved Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).
2. The new Citizen Monitoring Mini-Grant has a maximum award of \$1,000. The mini-grant is open to groups new to citizen monitoring or groups who have not received a DEQ Citizen Monitoring Grant in the past three years. Mini-grant awardees do not need to submit a QAPP or SOP. Mini-grant recipients must use at least 33% of the grant towards actual water quality monitoring.

DEQ will only accept one grant application from a monitoring group. Grant proposals should contain the actual application (regular or mini-grant), Attachment 1 and 2, and any other necessary information. Applications should consist of one signed original and four copies. DEQ will announce grant awards by mid-October. The attached file contains additional information about the grant and the grant applications. The file is in Microsoft Word to allow users to fill out the application using a PC. If a potential applicant does not have access to Word, please visit the DEQ Citizen Monitoring Grant webpage at:

www.deq.virginia.gov/cmonitor/grant.html

<<http://www.deq.virginia.gov/cmonitor/grant.html>>. Near the top of the webpage is a copy of the grant package formatted in Adobe Acrobat.

Wind an Untapped Resource, Experts Say

Jimmy Ryals, The Daily Reflector

An untapped and virtually bottomless source of energy swirls off the North Carolina coast.

That's the message a group of energy experts offered Thursday night, June 21st, at the Pitt County Agricultural Center. The resource they touted — wind — is the same one that periodically wreaks havoc on eastern North Carolina.



(ENLARGE)

Rhett Butler/The Daily Reflector

Harnessed in its non-hurricane form, wind could help the state meet spiraling energy demands as its population grows, said Ben Leker, renewable programs manager for the State Energy Office.

"North Carolina has tremendous wind resources which are essentially completely untapped except for some assorted small wind turbines," Leker told an audience of about 50 Thursday night at the center.

A large-scale wind turbine could produce enough energy in one year to power 500 homes, Leker said. An expanded investment in wind could have other benefits, too, creating jobs, giving farmers an alternative use for their land and reducing the amount of power the state imports, he added.

Leker said. Anything above level two, where Pitt County's wind resources rate, could sustain a wind farm, he said.

The state's strongest wind prospects are along the Outer and Inner Banks, where consistent winds rate a four or five on a seven-point scale,

Leker was particularly enthusiastic about the state's sounds, which he said offer an ideal combination of shallow, relatively calm water and consistent wind.

Siting turbines, essentially large propellers on 200-foot stems, is the biggest obstacle for wider use of wind power in North Carolina, Leker said. They have to be located close to existing power lines so the energy they generate can reach other areas.

Aesthetic and environmental concerns also have emerged in state opinion polls conducted by the N.C. Solar Center, which co-sponsored the forum. The center also is hosting wind power talks in Morehead City and Nags Head this summer.

There's a perception that turbines pose a threat to birds and bats. Turbines kill between 10,000 and 40,000 birds annually, far fewer than cats, power lines or communication towers, Leker noted.

"If you look at the cause of death of birds, wind turbines are really an insignificant cause," he said.

Two local environmental groups, the Washington, N.C.-based Pamlico-Tar River Foundation and the Cypress chapter of the Sierra Club, brought the forum to Greenville. The river foundation hasn't staked a position on wind power, but the local Sierra chapter supports it.

"Frankly, the United States, with our tremendous resources in terms of wind power could be a world leader in this area," said Art Langrish, chairman of the Cypress chapter.

Wind is gaining attention from state leaders, said Steve Kalland, director of the solar center.

Bills pending in the Legislature would establish a permitting process for construction of wind turbines. Other legislation has indirect consequences; it would require the state's power providers to generate at least 7.5 percent of their energy from renewable sources.

"There's more energy legislation going on right now in North Carolina than there has been in the last five years combined," he said.

Jimmy Ryals can be contacted at jryals@coxnc.com and 329-9568.

Until Next Time...

Joan Giordano
APNEP Outreach Coordinator

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