



CARTERET COUNTY

CROSSROADS

www.carteretcrossroads.org

PO Box 155, Beaufort NC 28516 | 252.729.2521

January 2011 | NL #135

save the date — Crossroads 31st Annual Meeting will be Thursday 2/17/2011, 6:30 p.m @ CCC's Joslyn Hall

Carteret County Crossroads will hold it's 31st Annual Meeting on **Thursday, February 17, 2011** in Joslyn Hall on the campus of Carteret Community College. The program, entitled **Finding a Balance: Environmental Challenges for Carteret County**, will feature a panel discussion with **Randy Martin**, City Manager of Morehead City; **Mike Orbach** from the Duke Marine Lab; **Walter Phillips**, Editor of the Carteret County News-Times; and **Frank Rush**, Town Manager of Emerald Isle. Topics will cover a broad range including growth and long term planning issues, effects of recently revised coastal stormwater rules, natural resource access and potential impacts of predicted sea level rise. Please join us at 6:30 p.m. for refreshments and bidding on Silent Auction arts and crafts items; the program will begin at 7 p.m.

environmental activism works! the Curtis Perry Park renovation saga by Bruce McCutcheon

"Environmental activism works!" How often we long to see that headline. Well, now we have a story from our own backyard that proves this hope has strength. About two years ago the NC Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) designed a plan to renovate the boat ramp at the end of Front Street in Beaufort. This plan was looked at by Carteret County and Beaufort and then received final scrutiny several months before site construction was to begin in December 2010. The group to give this plan its close attention was Beaufort's Planning Board Water Access Committee, comprised of Planning Board member Grey Sabiston and three citizen consultants. I was one of the consultants.

The most revealing meeting about the planned redo was a site walk-around by the WRC staff design engineer and Beaufort's Town Manager, Town Planner, and Water Access Committee. This was when we first saw the marks and words on paper made real by the features of the property. The nearly immediate collective reaction, once our tour got underway, was, "You've got to be kidding!" Here we saw seven mature, healthy live oaks on the site. These trees were represented by tiny circles—not much bigger than dots—on the 8 ½ x 11-inch engineer's drawing we held in our hands. Under each cluster of dots were the tiny lettered words, "to be removed." In fact, every tree on the site was slated to be removed. And because the Town does not have a tree ordinance, no permission or approval was required.

As we continued our tour with the engineer, someone asked, "I don't see a stormwater management plan on this design. Where is it?" Other recent WRC boat ramp projects in Carteret County (at Oyster Creek and The Straits) had stormwater management plans, so why not this one? The answer was that the WRC was not required by state law to have such a plan for this project because this site was "grandfathered" under the old rules. And maybe under the new rules it still would not need a plan because of the small size of the site. Plus, the waters of Taylor's Creek are already closed to shellfishing due to the nearby discharge from Beaufort's wastewater treatment plant. This reply surprised, then angered the Committee. Why would a state commission NOT want to do the best it could to make a model example of what *should* be done to protect areas of environmental concern, like this site at the edge of Taylor's Creek?

Soon afterward, the Water Access Committee triggered several ways to bring the situation to public scrutiny. Rachel Carson Reserve staff, Carteret Crossroads and various Beaufort citizen groups were alerted. The Carteret County News-Times was sent the facts. Soon it was apparent that many people were upset, concerned, outraged, and puzzled by the plan. The News-Times ran editorial page opinion pieces and letters to the editor, and, importantly, assigned a reporter to uncover the details of the story and follow its progress. The following weekend, a gathering of tree advocates assembled at the site and gave voice and artistic effort to celebrating the oak trees. After I was quoted in a News-Times editorial, I received a phone call from a Beaufort citizen who lived all her 60 plus years near the launch site. She thanked me for "giving voice to the trees, who can't speak for themselves." A citizens' movement had begun.

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Carteret County Crossroads is an all-volunteer, member supported non-profit organization dedicated to protecting our coastal environment since 1979. Please check your mailing label for membership status. As always, we appreciate your continuing support.

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

the Curtis Perry Park renovation saga, page 2:

Several months passed, during which a number of meetings took place. Wildlife quickly began to acknowledge the validity of the concerns about saving trees and controlling stormwater runoff. But the back and forth on these issues got most hung up on the trees. Stormwater control, once put clearly into the picture, was never in question and received smart advice from several experts. The tree problem, on the other hand, was tangled with the question of maximizing parking spaces. Trees were either in the way of vehicle movement or vehicle parking. An unpopular compromise was proposed: save about half the mature trees slated for removal.

In response to the objections, Wildlife proposed several design options for the renovation. The WRC leaned strongly toward the choice of asphalt for surfacing material. Though for many reasons gravel seemed the better alternative, Wildlife maintained that pervious site material, if properly done, was too expensive and/or too damaging to tree roots. Its “final” offer, called “Option 3”, was to use gravel and leave all the trees—but *only if the WRC was NOT required to do major repairs and waterside improvements on the boat ramp*. That exception was a deal breaker for Option 3, which was otherwise the preferred choice of both County and Town. There seemed no good option. Then an astonishing thing happened! The Mayor of Beaufort, Richard Stanley, refused to be held to Wildlife’s “final” offer. He sent the Town Manager, Charles Burgess, back to renegotiate with Wildlife, and ended up with a deal to regrade the site for stormwater runoff control, apply surface gravel, redo all the waterside elements, upgrade the restroom, plant buffer vegetation, install a rain garden, and leave ALL the trees!

We all should feel proud, as citizen advocates for the environment, about how this story ends!

Bruce McCutcheon serves on the Advisory Council of Carteret Crossroads

[Ed. note: This inspiring story also serves as a cautionary tale, a resounding confirmation of the need for a Beaufort tree ordinance. It became clear that to many citizens of Beaufort, trees matter—especially the stately old live oaks that lend such grace and character to the town—and it was a rude awakening to learn that the town has no strategy to protect them. The live oaks were spared this time, but the town remains without a tree ordinance. We hope the creative energy generated by the grassroots response to the Curtis Perry Park renovation will translate into an equally successful push for the town to develop a tree ordinance that adequately reflects the values of its citizens.]

more good news for the environment: Morehead City’s new wastewater treatment plant is state-of-the art

Congratulations to Morehead City on the December 2010 completion of the city’s new wastewater treatment plant. The new facility is a tremendous improvement over the previous one, which had been in operation since 1964, with a major upgrade in 1990. The new facility uses a tertiary treatment process followed by ultraviolet light disinfection, and nitrogen and phosphorous are removed before the effluent is discharged into Calico Creek. Effluent meets reuse or reclaimed water standards and will be available for irrigation and other non-potable use, thus reducing the volume discharged into Calico Creek as well as reducing dependence on underground water resources for such uses. Class “A” bio-solids produced in the treatment process have significant fertilizer value and meet standards for use as soil amendments. These bio-solids will be made available for public use in the near future. Primary funding for the \$15.8 million project came from a federally funded, state administered Clean Water Revolving Fund loan.

new! Crossroads mapping project now online

In November 2010, Crossroads launched a web-based mapping project entitled **A Sense of Place: Heartfelt Responses to the Natural Environment of Carteret County, NC**. The project, created by Josh Stoll, is a geo-referenced gallery of photos and short essays, each linked to a particular location on the map. The project is accessible from our website, www.carteretcrossroads.org. Please visit! There you’ll find more information about the project, including instructions for contributing your own content. The project is just getting underway, and we welcome content from all members and friends of Crossroads to help the project grow. As more entries are added we hope to build a unique tapestry of descriptions and images that together convey a sense of the exquisite and diverse natural wonders found in Carteret County. The goal of this project, and our organization as a whole, is to promote sound environmental policy that protects the natural environment of Carteret County. Specifically, this project aims to achieve that goal by increasing our collective appreciation and sense of stewardship toward all that makes this place special.

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