



CARTERET COUNTY

CROSSROADS

www.carteretcrossroads.org

PO Box 155, Beaufort NC 28516 | 252.729.2521

September 2010 | NL #134

Welcome to the Carteret County Crossroads Fall 2010 Newsletter!

Carteret County Crossroads strives to gather information and create a platform for informed discussion about environmental issues affecting our county. One way we achieve this is by periodically hosting free, informal public forums featuring local experts presenting information on specific topics. We feel fortunate to live in a community with such a wealth of expertise across a range of disciplines, and we are grateful for the generosity of all those who make these public events possible.

This newsletter reviews two such events: our annual meeting last March, and a Crossroads Public Forum held in May. In addition to the speakers at those two events—mentioned in the articles below—we'd like to thank **Bill Zaist**, Carteret County Engineer. Mr. Zaist was the featured speaker at a Crossroads Public Forum on Carteret County's recycling program, held last fall. It is only through the generosity of these local experts that we achieve our goal of deepening public understanding of the sometimes complex but vital issues that affect the natural environment and quality of life in Carteret County.

Also in this newsletter is an opinion piece by Crossroads Director Dick Bierly on the debate over whether to allow construction of terminal groins at NC barrier island inlets. As with our volunteer presenters, we appreciate Dick's generous efforts to promote informed discussion on critical issues.

Crossroads 30th Anniversary Annual Meeting Redux

Thanks to everyone who came out for our 30th Annual Meeting back in March. Thanks, too, to our guest speakers **Pete Peterson**, UNC-CH Institute for Marine Science, and **Don Field**, NOAA Center for Coastal Fisheries and Habitat Research, who gave lively—although sobering—presentations on the general health of our local environment over the past 30 years, and a look ahead. The good news is we have a lot of healthy seagrass beds—a vital part of the coastal marine ecosystem. Only recently, with improved methods of aerial mapping, have we learned where and how extensive these beds are.

A more sobering topic was the decline in water quality this county has seen, as illustrated by a series of Shellfish Closure Maps from the last few decades. These maps show an increase in permanent shellfish closures over the years, due primarily to polluted stormwater runoff from adjacent developed land. Not that this decline in water quality was news. For years Carteret County has been developed using 'old school' stormwater engineering and land use practices that favor vast expanses of impermeable surfaces, a disruption of the site's natural vegetation and hydrology, and the rapid removal of stormwater into receiving water bodies. All of these practices, we now know, intensify the harmful effects of stormwater runoff and therefore degrade water quality.

What can we do to improve? As citizens, we can show a strong preference for the wide array of large and small-scale Low Impact Development (LID) practices that have emerged recently as attractive, cost effective, environmentally responsible alternatives to 'old school' development. We can hold elected officials and other public figures accountable when they make decisions without adequate regard for environmental consequences. And certainly, it is essential that we identify, elect and support those local government officials and other power brokers who understand that sound environmental planning is a vital key—not a hindrance—to our community's long-term economic health.

Find us on Facebook! Carteret County Crossroads has recently launched a Facebook page. Please check it out; it's a great forum to easily find and share information about current local environmental issues. Spread the word!

*Carteret Crossroads is an all-volunteer, member supported non-profit organization dedicated to protecting our coastal environment since 1979. We respect your privacy and do not share our mailing list. We are shifting towards mostly email--rather than snail mail--newsletter distribution. **If you would be satisfied to receive this newsletter by email only, please let us know by emailing carteretcrossroads@gmail.com. Thank you!***

Carteret Crossroads 2010 Board:

Mark Hooper, *President*
John Merriner, *Vice President*
Nancy Veitch, *Secretary*
Irv Hooper, *Treasurer*
Dick Bierly
Clark Callaway
Bob Coles
Jess Hawkins
Gabriele Onorato
Mike Street
Ron White
Stephanie Miscovich, *NL Editor*
Our webmaster is Debra Callaway
Crossroads IRS Number is 56-1442357

We invite you to join Crossroads. Tax-deductible dues are per year:
Individual \$15, Family \$20, Patron \$50 or \$200 for a lifetime membership.
Please return this form to: Crossroads, PO Box 155, Beaufort, NC 28516.

name _____
email _____ phone _____
mailing address _____

How would you prefer to receive newsletters? circle: email / hardcopy / both
If we provide background information, will you occasionally call or write a local or state official on important environmental issues? circle: yes / no

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Mother Nature, Human Nature and Terminal Groins! by Dick Bierly

Anyone who faithfully follows the work of Carteret County Crossroads, and other coastal conservation groups, knows there has been a big deal made of the issue of abandoning the limitation of “terminal groins” on our inlets. The Coastal Resources Commission (CRC) at the direction of the General Assembly in the last session, engaged a consulting firm to help them assess the “feasibility and advisability” of permitting terminal groins on our coast. The CRC chair, Bob Emory, did an objective job of leading this study and discussion along the way. Some CRC commissioners and Coastal Resources Advisory Council (CRAC) members seriously followed the work of the consulting firm at regular meetings providing insight and questions along the way. Having attended most of the meetings I could see all of them treated this as a serious and important issue.

North Carolina has for decades had a prohibition on hardened sea walls. It has been state law and a CRC rule. And why is that? Well, it is pretty well established that our barrier islands are dynamic, not static, and want to move. Our inlets want to, and do, move as well. It is part of the natural order of things. These movements are exacerbated by our storms, which give and take away. We also know that our sand moves up and down our beaches. The reason for the prohibition is that when action is taken to halt erosion or the movement of an inlet, there is a high probability that it will have a deleterious impact somewhere else on the shoreline, often unpredictable. You simply move the problem. In other words you shouldn't fool with Mother Nature.

Millions of dollars have been spent up and down our coast for sand to replenish our important beaches. The need is never ending and the study of terminal groins conceded that if the groins were installed, this need would continue.

Crossroads has argued for years that local governments could and should do a better job of strategic planning. Some local governments and developers see property overlooking the ocean or along the beautiful inlets as prime spots for homes. Private homeowners are enticed to invest in homes on these prime spots and are shocked when they come up against Mother Nature. They seek relief from the State, although that relief will most likely harm someone else.

At the CRC meetings there was a steady stream of homeowners and representatives of local governments asking that the prohibition on groins be relaxed so their homes could be saved. I sincerely sympathize with them but see no benefit to simply creating another set of homeowners who would be negatively impacted by this action.

Crossroads Forum, May 2010:**Water Quality & Shellfish Closures along the Beaufort waterfront & Rachel Carson Reserve**

On May 13, 2010 Crossroads held a Public Forum on water quality and shellfish closures along the Beaufort waterfront and the Rachel Carson Reserve. The forum featured presentations by **Patti Fowler**, Section Chief of NC Division of Environmental Health's Shellfish Sanitation and Recreational Water Quality; **John Young**, Director of Public Works for the Town of Beaufort; and **Paula Gillikin**, Site Manager of the Rachel Carson National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Patti Fowler presented an overview of the mission and methods of Shellfish Sanitation and Recreational Water Quality, and introduced the section's recently revamped shoreline sampling survey database. The information is now available on GIS maps that can easily be accessed online by other agencies and the general public. At the request of the Town of Beaufort, Shellfish Sanitation conducted two dye tests to determine the pattern of flow from Beaufort's Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) discharge point, and aerial photos showed the impressive extent and rate of flow. John Young joined the discussion and gave a detailed and informative description of the Town's new WWTP, pointing out its state-of-the-art features and operation. A comparison of the quality of wastewater effluent from the old and new WWTPs indicated very impressive improvement in water quality coming from the new WWTP. Paula Gillikin wrapped up the discussion with a brief summary of the major uses of the popular Rachel Carson Estuarine Research Reserve, making it very clear why water quality here is a concern. Crossroads is grateful to all three speakers for an informative overview of a complex and multifaceted subject.

Mark Your Calendar! The next **Crossroads Public Forum** will be held **Thursday, November 11, 2010**, at 7 p.m. in the Duke Marine Lab Auditorium. The forum will feature a presentation by the **NC Coastal Land Trust**. Since 1992 this non-profit organization has been helping NC coastal plain citizens and landowners protect the region's coastal habitats, significant natural heritage areas, prime farmland and other lands and waters that hold special ecological or cultural value. **Please join us** for this event to learn more about the Coastal Land Trust and specific projects currently in the works in Carteret County.