

Crossroads

THINKING AHEAD

In this newsletter, we would like to discuss planning—making decisions about how land should be used to accomplish the most good for the most citizens. Although some folks equate planning with loss of private rights, we consider planning as a tool for improving the community for everyone.

Soon two decisions will be made concerning planning that will affect most of our citizens. We are certain that the choices we recommend will result in positive benefits to a larger fraction of the population than the choices being sought by some in county government and the Economic Development Council (EDC). **Why? Because we believe that for long term economic benefit, we must have the healthiest environment possible. Any environmental degradation will result in economic loss in the long run.** With this background, we will discuss these two items.

COASTAL STORMWATER RULES

Although the Clean Water Act mandates preservation of water quality, our estuaries and sounds have steadily declined over recent years. The Environmental Management Commission (EMC) recognized this fact and, working through the Division of Water Quality (DWQ), proposed new Stormwater Rules for the coastal counties. After extensive public hearings and review, the new rules were adopted by the EMC and were approved by the Rules Review Commission. Because objections were raised to the rules, they now go to the Legislature for approval, modification or disapproval. Currently, they are being considered by a Coastal Stormwater Rules Working Group (CSRWG) which is considering every detail of the rules before they go to the legislature for final action.

Meanwhile a vigorous campaign has been mounted by the EDC and some of the County Board of Commissioners to defeat adoption of the rules. Unfortunately, this has involved spending taxpayer money in a lobbying campaign marked by distortion and half-truths. Let us look at a few of these misleading items.

Opponents of the new rules say that pollution comes from upstream. **False.** Just look at the shellfish closures at the mouths of some of our creeks that are completely within the county. This degradation **must** be due to contamination arising within the county. Most of the upstream metropolitan areas are already under federal or state stormwater controls.

Scare tactics are being used about the economic impact of the new rules—lots unbuildable, no affordable housing, etc. **False.** Staff engineers with DWQ have thoroughly analyzed this concern and determined that a 3,600 square foot home with associated driveway and patio within ½ mile of shellfishing waters could meet the most stringent requirements in these rules with an appropriate rain garden that would cost approximately \$3,000 to construct. These rules will not even affect individual lot owners with lots of less than 10,000 square feet.

They say the science is not there. **False.** Many of our most distinguished marine scientists have testified at public hearings and committee meetings—universally supporting the new rules.

The campaign to block the rules is in the legislature where a bill to do so has been introduced. It is extremely important that citizens counter this attack on our environment by lobbying the legislature. We ask you to contact your state legislators, asking them to oppose the legislation. The simplest way to contact them is by e-mail. A site that allows you to easily write to selected members of the state legislature is. <http://www.congress.org/congressorg/home/>. Mailing addresses are:

Sen. Jean Preston, NC Senate, 16 W Jones St. Room 1121, Raleigh, NC 27601-2808

Rep. Pat McElrath, NC House of Representatives, 300 N Salisbury St. Room 603, Raleigh, NC 27603-5925

THE COUNTY LAND USE PLAN

We have discussed the County Land Use Plan (LUP) in detail many times in recent years. Two revisions of the LUP ago, about 1991, a citizen advisory committee was set up to recommend changes to the existing LUP. That committee added several policies aimed at protecting and enhancing water quality in our estuarine waters because, even then, there was concern about declining water quality. These policies were adopted and largely remained intact in the next revision.

The most recent update of the LUP began in 2004 with the County Planning Commission doing the revision, with public input encouraged. In general, the good features of the older plan were retained and some improvements, such as encouragement of Low Impact Development practices and living shorelines were added. The plan then was examined by the County Commission, who removed many environmental safeguards, instead allowing practices which “meet local state or federal guidelines”. This might sound reasonable except that LUPs are supposed to address local situations. In our County a serious problem is water quality degradation. The policies weakened in this way include dredging through shellfish waters, marina construction in wetlands, limits on docks in primary nursery areas, parking lot setbacks from the waterfront and limitation of estuarine shore line development to water dependent activities—all of which are protective of water quality.

The revised plan was submitted to the Division of Coastal Management (DCM) which had several objections, none of which referred to the points above. The objections were addressed by the Planning Commission and sent back to the Commissioners who scheduled a Public Hearing on April 21, 2008. A few days before the Hearing, the meeting was canceled.

Eventually, there will be a Public Hearing. We hope that there will be a good citizen turnout and that citizens will express their displeasure at the weakened plan. Then it will be up to the Board of Commissioners to adopt the plan and the Coastal Resources Commission to approve it, although there may be opposition. We think it is a poor plan and hope that a future board will take a more pro-environment view of the LUP, which is one tool for protecting water quality.

CROSSROADS NEWS

Wonderful news: we have learned from the North Carolina Coastal Federation that “**Carteret County Crossroads has been selected to receive our annual Pelican Award for 2007 Central Citizen Action for efforts to protect and preserve North Carolina's coast**”. Crossroads will be awarded this honor in Raleigh on June 4th, during the Clean Water Lobby Day. It is gratifying to receive this honor from the premier coastal environmental organization in our state!

We welcome Clark Callaway as our newest board member, returning to the board after several years. He has provided the following information:

I was born and raised in Elizabeth City, NC and educated as a Food Scientist at NCSU. I came to Carteret County in 1975 as a Sea Grant Project Leader for the NCSU Seafood Lab. After 2 years I started a seafood business, Clark's Seafood, which specialized in local seafood for restaurants and grocery chains across NC. The business grew rapidly until 1989 when the seafood industry was damaged by the Red Tide event. I sold the business in 1992 and tried other ventures in the seafood industry, including helping to develop the Seafood Market at the Farmers Market in Raleigh. In 1993 I went to Harkers Island and ran a Seafood Packing Plant for six years. During this time I made lifelong friendships, packed millions of pounds of product and was a part of the daily life and death struggle with nature—part of a dying culture. I had recently married a local girl with deep roots here and had to reinvent myself. I found my niche as a financial advisor with MetLife in financial and retirement planning and helping small businesses address benefits issues.

As always, we ask that you look at your mailing label for the current status of your membership in crossroads. If it states “Dues are Due”, you have not paid dues since 2006. We send five free newsletters to folks we think might be interested in joining. This is also noted on your label.