

Crossroads

COASTAL STORMWATER RULES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

By now, everyone is familiar with the Stormwater Rules saga—and it is a sad one! Scientific consensus agreed that our old rules were not protecting water quality, so the Environmental Management Commission (EMC) worked to improve the protection of our estuarine waters. Because it is known that stormwater runoff is a major contributor to pollution and that runoff is directly related to impervious surface, the new rules aimed to reduce impervious surface or, as an alternative, provide for Best Management Practices that would treat the runoff. After a lot of consideration, the rules were adopted for public hearing. During these hearings, both pro-development anti-rules and pro-environment pro-rules groups had ample opportunity to present their respective arguments. The discussions were overwhelmingly for the rules and the EMC moved to adopt them.

Those opposing the rules moved quickly to the legislature and introduced legislation to block the rules from coming into effect. This resulted in the formation of a “stakeholder” group by the legislature where both sides argued the points again and compromises were reached. Since the rules were designed to rectify a bad situation, any compromise inevitably would be bad for clean water. But several compromises were made in an effort to obtain some increased protection for our waters and were then passed by the legislature. As another example of the power of the pro-development lobby, the law was amended to prevent the EMC from considering any changes to the stormwater rules for two years.

There are benefits in the new rules. We believe that they will do a better job of protecting the environment than the present rules. They will not do as good a job as the proposed rules. If you would like to see an analysis of the new rules and comparison with the proposed rules, you can go to: <http://h2o.enr.state.nc.us/su/coastal.htm> for all the details

There are several important points to be learned from all this.

First, the Legislature is wrong in appointing a respected citizen committee to study and make rules to accomplish an objective—clean water in this case—and then take it upon themselves to ignore their own expert commission and write rules about which they know little except what lobbyists are telling them.

Second, our local government spent large amounts of citizen taxes to lobby for an outcome which is not justified by science.

Third, an arm of that government—the Economic Development Commission (EDC)—spent county funds on lobbying which is not in the long-term interests of either the environment or economic development!

What can we do about it?

If you know someone on the Board of Directors of the EDC ask them to justify the actions of the EDC. It is difficult to believe that they all approved the actions of the EDC in this case.

We can vote this fall for local and state government officials who will respect scientific and public opinion concerning the environment and the water-based economy on which this County depends for its prosperity.

SUSTAINABILITY

We hear a lot about sustainability these days. Just what does it mean? The UN Commission on Environment and Development defines it as: “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. A simpler way to see it is as “learning to live off the sun in real time”. For most of human existence, we did live off the sun. It also simplifies discussion if we realize that sustainability is largely

about energy. The productivity of the last century has been fueled by “fossilized sunshine”—coal, oil and natural gas. It is inevitable that petroleum resources will decline. Although there is lots of energy in coal, oil shale and tar sands extracting these resources will take a terrible toll on the earth. And there is always the huge problem of climate change caused by the enormous amounts of carbon dioxide pumped into our atmosphere by our use of fossil fuels.

There are many approaches to helping solve this problem. It would be of enormous help in solving these problems if all the costs of producing, consuming and disposing of an article were included in the cost of the article. But what can we do? The following article by Penny Hooper, former Board member of Crossroads and teacher at the Community College tells us what some students and faculty at the College are doing.

Sustainability at Carteret Community College and Beyond

Thanks in part to monetary support from Crossroads, a group of students from CCC attended a national conference on Global Warming at the University of Maryland last fall. From this grassroots beginning, the college has undertaken a closer look at our practices to see how we can reduce our CO2 footprint and become a better role model for sustainability in our community. The College had already recognized that energy conservation measures will save both money and the environment and so we already had in place things like fluorescent light fixtures, low flush toilets, timer switches on the classroom lights, and new buildings constructed to Leed’s bronze standards. This fall semester we have added “Watt-Watcher” volunteers to every campus building to encourage folks to turn off their computers at night at the power strip and to live with the thermostat set just 1-2 degrees above the usual for air conditioning and below the usual for heating. The electric bill for CCC and CMAST this past fiscal year was \$342,000 and our goal is to reduce the number of Kilowatt-hours used by 2% every year until 2020. With the rising cost of gas, the Student Government Association has set up a new Ride Board in the Student Center to encourage carpooling and many of our classes are taught online which reduces the amount of student travel significantly. Also, new block scheduling allows most classes to be taken on Monday, Wednesday or Tuesday, Thursday, with Fridays saved for only a few labs.

The newly formed Sustainability Committee has added a CCC Board Policy that all new appliances purchased will have a high “Energy Star” rating and we are also increasing our recycling efforts on campus. Through a nation-wide student program called “Recyclemania”, aluminum cans collected by campus clubs in October will be sold with the proceeds going to the new Green Initiative Fund through the CCC Foundation. This Fund has already purchased composting bins for conversion of scraps from the Culinary Program to be used by the Horticulture Program. If sufficient funds are raised during the January 2009, Bogue Sound “Polar Plunge” the next purchase will be a solar water heater for the McGee Building, as the payback time is quickest on this form of alternative energy.

These same ideas and this level of awareness can easily be applied to your own home or business and we can all move towards a more sustainable future...one small step at a time!

CROSSROADS NEWS

New appointees to our Advisory Council are Dave Eggleston of CMAST and Mike Street, recently retired from Marine Fisheries. Our Board meetings are the 2nd Thursday of each month at 7:30 pm in the Conference Room at Duke Marine Lab. Members are always welcome.

Remember the problem with SONAR off our coast? The new web site concerning the proposed sonar range is up and running. The web address is www.ncrus.org which stands for North Carolinians for Responsible Use of Sonar. Many people in Carteret County contributed pictures and information to the web site.

Please check your mailing label to see if you are current in your support. We depend on you.