

INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES OF THE NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION CONTROL

Introduction

The N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources' (NC DENR) Division of Water Quality has identified nonpoint source pollution as the primary source of degradation of freshwater rivers and streams in North Carolina. About 8 percent of North Carolina's freshwater rivers and streams are impaired, according to the 2006 Integrated Report. The most widespread nonpoint pollution sources are agriculture, urban runoff and construction. Sediment is the most common cause of water quality degradation.

According to local water quality monitoring and national research, single-family residences, commercial developments and institutional sites can negatively impact water quality by contributing nonpoint source pollution.

The approach taken in North Carolina for addressing agriculture's contribution to the nonpoint source water pollution problem is primarily to encourage voluntary participation by the agriculture community. The N.C. Agriculture Cost Share Program (ACSP), technical and education assistance, research and regulatory programs support this effort. The Community Conservation Assistance Program (CCAP) was developed to follow the successful NC ACSP model. CCAP is a voluntary program that targets urban, suburban and rural landowners to help them reduce their contribution to nonpoint source pollution. CCAP will not be used to aid new development, nor meet the requirements of existing regulations.

Until recently, little or no action was taken to financially help small landowners in urban, suburban and rural areas control erosion and runoff on their properties. Some districts in the state, specifically Mecklenburg and New Hanover counties, have broadened their scope of resource protection and developed local community conservation assistance programs.

Mecklenburg Soil and Water Conservation District initiated the Urban Cost Share Program in 2004 as a pilot program to address nonpoint problems in the almost entirely built out Briar Creek Watershed in Mecklenburg County. The N.C. Clean Water Management Trust Fund approved a grant for \$30,000 to fund this initiative, which was matched with funds from the City of Charlotte Stormwater Services. The district continues this program and has expanded into another watershed by obtaining a Section 319 Clean Water Act grant.

New Hanover SWCD initiated the Backyard Conservation Cost Share Program in 2004 as a special Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program through the USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). This program targeted streamside landowners to install best management practices to reduce nonpoint source pollution in the residential Hewletts Creek watershed.

Encouraged by the efforts of Mecklenburg and New Hanover districts, the N.C. Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts pursued the development of a statewide community conservation program. Through the strong support of district supervisors, the N.C. Soil and Water Conservation Commission received authorizing legislation to establish the Community Conservation Assistance Program (CCAP) through Session Law 2006-78. The key to the success of the CCAP will be funding and education.

The N.C. Division of Soil and Water Conservation began this program using grant funds to show demonstrable results across the state. In July 2007, the program received its first state appropriation. Additional financial support will be needed to continue and expand the program in future years throughout the state.

Objectives

1. Reduce the delivery of residential, suburban and urban nonpoint source pollution into the watercourses of the state by:
 - a. properly managing nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorous) to make them less available to runoff;
 - b. reducing sediment delivery into streams, rivers, lakes and estuaries;
 - c. managing pesticides in an environmentally sound manner; and
 - d. reducing freshwater loading in Primary Nursery Areas.
2. Increase technical assistance in soil and water conservation district (district) offices to help landowners install best management practices (BMPs) that will improve offsite water quality.
3. Provide cost sharing to assist landowners in implementing BMPs.
4. Provide BMPs to improve water quality with secondary water quantity and wildlife benefits to improve the overall health of our natural environment.