

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

ITEM NO.: E(3)

AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT

MEETING DATE: MAY 14, 2002

TITLE: A Request to Endorse a Memorandum of Understanding with NC Division of Water Quality Wetlands Restoration Project

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING DEPARTMENT	PUBLIC HEARING: Yes ____ No <u>X</u>
ATTACHMENTS: A. Resolution B. Memorandum of Understanding C. Description and Map of Target Sub Basin	FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: PHILIP PRETE, 918-7326 PATRICIA MCGUIRE, 918-7327

PURPOSE:

The North Carolina Wetlands Restoration Program has invited the Town to participate in a local watershed planning project. A memorandum of understanding has been prepared. A Resolution authorizing the Mayor to endorse the MOU is recommended for Board adoption.

INFORMATION:

The North Carolina Wetlands Restoration Project (NCWRP) is a non-regulatory agency of the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Division of Water Quality, which administers the Wetlands Restoration Fund. The NCWRP stated mission is to restore, enhance, and preserve wetlands, streams, and riparian buffer areas throughout North Carolina's 17 major river basins with the overall goal of improving water quality. The NCWRP has identified the New Hope Creek Drainage area (which includes the Town of Carrboro – see ATTACHMENT C) as a target sub-basin for utilizing Wetlands Restoration Fund money for assessing, restoring, and protecting the wetlands, creeks, streams and unnamed tributaries within. These water bodies are experiencing impacts from increased development including loss of buffers, channelized streams, flooding, and degraded water quality.

As part of this restoration effort, the NCWRP has invited the Town of Carrboro to actively participate in Local Watershed Planning within watersheds in the Town's jurisdiction. The overall goal of Local Watershed Planning is to identify projects that can improve water quality, floodwater retention, and aquatic habitat. This initiative will involve the Town, and outside professionals, as well as some other local stakeholders. NCWRP hopes to identify locally owned sites for wetland, stream, and riparian buffer restoration. In addition to wetland, stream, and buffer projects, other innovative techniques to reduce pollution such as stormwater best management practices and stormwater control retrofits may be identified.

This Local Watershed Planning process for the Carrboro portion of the watershed within the Upper Cape Fear River Basin is planned to begin this spring (2002). NCWRP and Town Staff have prepared a MOU (ATTACHMENT B) that would formally include the Town as a partner in this effort and specifies the responsibilities of each party. There is no cost to the Town for proceeding with this project other than very limited staff commitment to providing already existing information, reviewing information and

proposals, and serving as a Liaison on behalf of the Town. This project has the potential to provide long term improvements in habitat and water quality within the Town watersheds, and to contribute to water quality protection in Jordan Lake. Additionally, it is anticipated that the Town will derive enhancements to the ongoing NPDES Stormwater planning process.

In addition to this proposed cooperative effort with DENR, there are other initiatives within the watersheds comprising Carrboro that are related and complementary.

The Watershed Assessment and Restoration Project administered by the Division of Water Quality and funded by the Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF) began in 2000 to evaluate eleven streams on the EPA list of 303(d) impaired waters. The Little Creek Watershed, which includes Booker, Bolin, and Little Creeks, is one of the areas under assessment by this program. The Project staff conducted an informational public meeting in Chapel Hill on April 29, 2002 attended by Town Staff. They also presented an overview of the project to the Carrboro Environmental Advisory Board on January 14, 2002, and are scheduled to present to the Chapel Hill Town Council on June 10, 2002. The project final report is due to the CWMTF in 2003. Data collected under this assessment will be made available to the NCWRP project.

Basinwide water quality plans are prepared, and updated on five year cycles by the NC Division of Water Quality for each of the seventeen major river basins in the state. The Cape Fear River Basin Plan, which includes Carrboro in the headwaters, was completed in 2000. Preparation of an individual basinwide management plan is a five-year process, which is broken down into four major phases as shown in the table below.

2001-2003	2004	2005	2005	2005
Water Quality Data Collection	River Basin Public Workshops	Public Mtgs. and Draft Out For Review	Final Plan Receives EMC Approval	Begin NPDES Permit Issuance

Legislation adopted in 1999 gave the EMC authority to use the temporary rule-making provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act to adopt rules for the protection of the TarPamlico, Catawba, and Cape Fear River Basins. DENR staff has not yet completed rules for the Cape Fear River basin.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION:

Administration recommends that the Board adopt the attached resolution (ATTACHMENT A) authorizing the Mayor to endorse the attached Memorandum of Understanding between the Town and the NC DENR Division of Water Quality Wetlands Restoration Program.