



... the newsletter of the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuarine Study

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Public meetings scheduled to discuss CCMP

The second draft of the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuarine Study's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) is now out for public review.

This draft incorporates many comments and suggestions that were made by the public during meetings on the first draft last September. Continued public input will help further sharpen the CCMP's focus and ensure that it deals fairly and effectively with environmental concerns. (See inside pages for discussion of the recommendations which have generated the most interest.)

Following this round of public meetings, CCMP revisions will be made by the Study staff. Once those changes are made, the A/P Study's four major committees -- Policy, Technical, and two Citizen Advisory -- will review the CCMP again for any final amendments. After that, it will be the Policy Committee's job to recommend forwarding the document to the Governor and the Environmental Protection Agency for their approval.

The CCMP should be sent to the Governor and the EPA in March. If they accept the plan, then implementation of its recommendations will begin.

The schedule for the public meetings is as follows:

Tuesday, January 19 **Manteo**
Roanoke Island Aquarium, Airport Road

Wednesday, January 20 **Morehead City**
Crystal Coast Civic Center, 3505 Arendell St.

Thursday, January 21 **Raleigh**
Archdale Building, 512 Salisbury St.

All meetings begin at 7 p.m.

These meetings are not intended to be formal hearings, but rather to be dialogues where specific questions can be addressed and points of concern can be discussed. Public understanding of the plan is crucial to achieving the goal of long-term protection for the Albemarle and Pamlico sounds.

For a copy of the Executive Summary of the CCMP, call the A/P Study main office in Raleigh at (919) 733-0314, or the Public Involvement Office in Washington at (919) 946-6481.

THE ALBEMARLE-PAMLICO ESTUARINE STUDY

Initiated in 1987, the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuarine Study is a five-year program of research and education on the Albemarle and Pamlico sounds and the rivers that feed them. The Study is charged with developing a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) to help guide long-term environmental protection of the estuary. The projected schedule for the drafting, review and publication of the CCMP is as follows:

PROGRAM GOAL

First draft of CCMP to committees
 Public review of draft
 Public meetings on CCMP draft
 Second draft to committees
 Second draft to public
 Second series of public meetings on CCMP
 Revisions based on comments
 Final document to committees
 CCMP approved
 Implementation Kick-off

SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 1993

.....Completed
Completed
Completed
Completed
Out for comment
January 1993
February 1993
February 1993
February 1993
March 1993

Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success

Some changes, clarifications in new CCMP draft

Significant changes in wording and substance of some recommendations in the CCMP have been made from the first to the second draft. Below is a synopsis of selected recommendations, including attention to how they may have changed from the first draft:

Develop a statewide comprehensive wetlands stewardship program to complement existing regulatory protection with acquisition strategies, private conservation incentives, public education efforts, restoration projects, and mitigation.

Wording of this recommendation was clarified to show that it is not proposing another regulatory program for wetlands. It is intended to promote a regionwide effort to conserve wetlands through extensive mapping of wetland areas, private agreements with landowners, voluntary public acquisition of particularly valuable areas, and restoration of degraded wetlands.

Require the maintenance of a minimum undisturbed 20-foot buffer strip of endemic vegetation along all perennial streams, rivers and tidal water bodies in all new land disturbing activities.

Buffer strips are known to be an effective and relatively simple way of reducing nutrient and sediment loading from nonpoint sources. Studies indicate that on average, 20% of the nutrients and 40% of the sediment washing off the land can be trapped by a 20-foot buffer. The deep root system of a buffer also filters nutrients from shallow ground water which seeps into streams.

The buffer would apply only to new land uses and land disturbing activities; existing non-disturbing uses could remain intact. Tilling, grazing and planting new lawns are not felt to be compatible with buffers.

Institute a cost-share program for non-agricultural nonpoint source control measures for existing urban, suburban, industrial, and silvicultural areas.

Since nonpoint pollution is the predominant threat to the A/P region's water quality, combining a non-agricultural cost-share with the current agricultural program could provide widespread protection. Cost-share funds could be used for such activities as building retention ponds for runoff in urban areas.

Create an enforcement program which specifically targets nonpoint source violations of water quality standards.

Currently the enforcement of nonpoint violations of water quality standards is difficult because it requires great amounts of time and labor. This recommendation encourages the state to establish a program to focus specifically on nonpoint enforcement.

Increase efforts to research alternative on-site wastewater treatment systems; investigate the adequacy of the protection that current on-site wastewater regulations provide for water quality; improve maintenance inspections of existing septic systems.

Strong objections to a recommendation in the first CCMP draft to "more stringently regulate septic tank installation" prompted the refocusing of this goal. The limited access to central sewage systems in many rural areas of the watershed makes individual or small private systems for sewage a necessity. The intent of this recommendation as now worded is to give momentum to a search for effective alternatives to septic systems in unsuitable soils, and to encourage proper maintenance of existing systems.

Consider the establishment of a state marinas policy as a forum to address concerns regarding siting, maintenance, public trust rights, cumulative impacts, sewage management, public education, and permit enforcement; provide cost-share opportunities to support projects to retrofit existing docking areas with pump-out equipment.

Impacts from boating can be controlled with a relatively minor amount of additional effort from boaters. A state marinas policy could help establish a framework for dealing comprehensively with those impacts.

Require and fund land and water plans for all counties and municipalities in the North Carolina portion of the Albemarle-Pamlico region.

Misconceptions about this recommendation have caused concern among some local officials in the A/P region. The primary intent of the recommendation is for local governments to recognize the potential impacts of growth in order to help minimize negative impacts on public trust resources. The proposal does not mandate local government zoning.

Currently 33 of the 36 counties in the A/P watershed (NC) have land use plans. This recommendation would seek to standardize the environmental protection strategies in those plans, and to require water resource and water use planning as well.

Develop state comprehensive public trust legislation by 1995 which includes public compensation for private use of public trust resources to recognize and implement trust rights.

(continued on page 3)

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All navigable waters of the state belong to the public, and cannot be "owned" by individuals. Yet, clusters of piers or other structures in the water essentially take waters for private use. This recommendation seeks to establish a fee system for use of public trust waters that reduces public access to those waters. A portion of the fees collected would go to enhance public access areas.

Improve outreach to small landowners and small logging operations to increase education concerning forest practice guidelines for water quality protection.

This recommendation is changed from the first draft, which stated that an "intent to harvest" notification should be filed prior to all logging operations. Although the goal of that was simply to ensure that loggers would have access to information about best forestry practices, public concern led to rewording of the recommendation.

Develop and implement state fishery management plans for important recreational and commercial species to coordinate and provide scientific justification for fisheries management measures; consider effort control schemes where appropriate and consideration is given for economic and social impacts.

Several species of fish important from both commercial and recreational standpoints are clearly under stress, including spot, weakfish, oysters, striped bass, and herring. Other species show signs of decline. This recommendation would encourage an overall management strategy for limiting the pressure on species in trouble.

Expand development of bycatch reducing gear and practices and require their use as their practicality is demonstrated.

Gear that minimizes the catch of "non-target" fish without significantly reducing the target catch benefits both the fisherman and the fishery.

Establish a cost-share program for "Best Fishing Practices" to facilitate the implementation of required and voluntary commercial fishing practices, such as the use of bycatch reducing gear, which reduce the negative impacts on fisheries productivity.

This program would be comparable to the existing agricultural cost-share program, which pays 75% of a farmer's costs for installing pollution control measures.

Institute a license to sell fish and shellfish and a recreational saltwater fishing license to improve data collection and possibly generate revenues to support fisheries management.

Currently the Division of Marine Fisheries has very little knowledge of how many part-time commercial fishermen use the estuary, and even less on the number of recreational fishermen. By creating a comprehensive license system, DMF can better gauge the relationship between fishing effort and landings, which will help improve the understanding of which species are stressed.

Create official designations for native submerged aquatic vegetation, shellfish beds, spawning areas, and additional nursery areas; protect designated areas through use standards, water quality criteria, local land and water plans, and targeted acquisition and private conservation efforts on adjacent lands.

The loss of submerged grasses in the western sounds and lower ends of some rivers over the past two decades has greatly reduced habitat areas for juvenile fish. This recommendation would enhance efforts to maintain existing aquatic habitats and promote the establishment of new areas.

IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

**** Establish an Albemarle-Pamlico Estuarine Council as a forum for coordinating implementation activities.**

**** Support the coordinating council with a Local Government Advisory Committee and a Citizens Advisory Committee.**

**** Review implementation progress annually in a public report prepared by the Estuarine Council.**

**** Establish a Memorandum of Agreement between North Carolina and Virginia to ensure continued cooperation and to detail Virginia's implementation strategies pertinent to CCMP management actions.**

The 22-member Estuarine Council would be comprised of members of six major state commissions, directors of the six main environmental divisions, four representatives from federal agencies, two members each from the Local Government and Citizens Advisory committees, a representative from Virginia, and the Secretary of DEHNR.

The Council would not have regulatory authority, but would instead review progress made toward implementation of CCMP recommendations and serve as a mechanism for improving communication between groups having implementation responsibilities.

Recommendations in the CCMP do not carry regulatory mandates in themselves. Their implementation would require action by the legislature, state commissions, or local governments; or voluntary participation by individuals or various user groups.

The annual report would provide public documentation of which recommendations had been implemented and progress made toward CCMP goals.

Sound Bites

news and notes about the A-P Study and other environmental issues



NEW FACES AT DEHNR, APES

The installation of the Jim Hunt administration brings news to the top slots at the Department of Environment, Health, and Natural Resources, and thus to the A/P Study as well.

The new Secretary of DEHNR is Dr. Jonathan Howes, a former professor of planning at UNC-Chapel Hill. Dr. Howes replaces Bill Cobey, who had served as Secretary since 1989. The Secretary is co-chairman of the A/P Study's Policy Committee.

ADVOCATE MAILING LIST

To get on or off the Advocate mailing list, or for a change of address, write to: A/P Advocate, POB 1507, Washington, NC, 27889.

UPCOMING MEETINGS JAN-FEB.

Public meetings on CCMP (see front page)
(All committee members encouraged to attend closest meeting)

Technical Committee January 22, Raleigh

Call Joan Giordano, (919) 946-6481, for location and agenda specifics of all A-P Study meetings.

NEW REPORTS AVAILABLE

Watershed Planning in the A/P System: Annual Average Nutrient Budget. Randall Dodd, et al, Research Triangle Institute. Pub. # 92-10

Also available:

- Individual fact sheets on:
 - the Albemarle and Pamlico sounds and Back Bay;
 - the Neuse, Tar-Pamlico, Roanoke, Alligator, Chowan, Pasquotank, Meherrin, Blackwater, Nottoway, Northwest, and North Landing rivers;
 - 10 major research efforts conducted within the A/P Study;
 - anadromous fish (e.g., striped bass, herring), and on submerged aquatic vegetation.
- A full-color poster on human impacts in the estuary.
- A booklet, Nature's Caretakers, that parents and teachers can use with young people to help understand ways to protect the A-P system.
- A booklet on citizen participation in environmental decision-making, A Citizen's Guide to Coastal Resource Water Management.

Contact the A/P Study Public Involvement Office, (919) 946-6481, for more information. All publications are free to the public.

THE ADVOCATE...

is the newsletter of the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuarine Study, a project funded jointly by the US EPA and the State of North Carolina, intended to develop an environmental management plan for the Albemarle-Pamlico sounds system and rivers. The Study is part of the EPA's National Estuary Program. It is being conducted within the N.C. Dept. of Environment, Health and Natural Resources, POB 27687, Raleigh, NC, 27611-7687.

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