



2008 USDA-CSREES National Water Conference
Sparks, NV

Downtown Clean Water Community Park

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Abstract Text:

The Southern Appalachian Mountains are not typical in its cultural and biological diversity when compared to the rest of southeastern United States. This area embraces the Appalachian heritages and the sensitive ecosystems while supporting the many small towns that dot the rural landscape in this region. Most of these towns are under development pressures the mass migration of second homes, retirees, vacation homes and the large number of folks moving to the area as full time residents. The High Quality and Outstanding Resource Waters as defined by the NC Division of Water Quality are under stress from non point source runoff. The unique influences of local Appalachian mountain people and the "newcomers" who have come to the area create a dynamic that gives opportunities to develop strategies to improve and protect the natural resources.

This is the story of how a small rural town in Appalachia is working with the state and local government to improve the quality of life for its residents, human and aquatic. A parcel of floodplain land in downtown Newland was purchased by the Town of Newland for community green space development; bike trail, boardwalks, playground, and bath house. Currently all of the stormwater from the downtown streets either sheet flows onto this 10 acres, or is ditched and piped to the North Toe River that runs through downtown. The main objective of this collaborative grant project is install a stormwater wetland system collecting and cleansing stormwater before entering the river, and to restore the stream to its natural dimension, pattern, and profile. These best management practices will improve water quality, instream and riparian habitat, and reduce the amount of sediment and other pollutants from entering the headwaters of the North Toe river.

This site incorporates educational and recreational benefits by providing an excellent resource for students to get hands on experience in the field of water quality and environmental management. The NC Cooperative Extension "Kids in the Creek" program will utilize this site for watershed, water quality, and stream ecology education. The Clean Water Community Park will also have handicap accessible ramps and boardwalks for children and adults to fish for trout in the newly restored river.

Impact Statement:

This site is a model for landowners in the county to learn how they can implement BMP's on their land to protect and restore their streams. Agencies will have demonstration workshops and tours at the project site to educate on watershed management.