United States Environmental Protection Agency

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EPA'S TARGETED WATERSHED GRANTS 2005 ANNUAL REPORT

December 2005

Cape Fear River

NC

WHY IS THIS WATERSHED SPECIAL?

The Cape Fear River watershed, North Carolina's largest, includes 23 percent of the state's land area and many of the state's most actively growing urban areas. Home to 27 percent of the state's population, the area supports jobs in a variety of industries, including both manufacturing and agriculture. Almost 300 point source dischargers share the basin with more than five million head of swine. Growth rates currently exceed the statewide average and water usage within the basin is expected to increase nearly 95 percent by 2020.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

- Twenty percent of the basin's waters are impaired.
- Jordan Lake experiences eutrophication due to nutrient enrichment. Excess nutrients are also a concern all along the river and may contribute to the low dissolved oxygen in the estuary.
- Continued economic growth can potentially cause a variety of problems associated with urban and suburban development, such as erosion and nonpoint source pollution. Accordingly, communities are challenged with striking a balance between strengthening stormwater management requirements and supporting economically beneficial growth.

A farmer discusses a new animal waste management system that will help reduce nutrient runoff. (Bob Nichols)

RESTORATION ACTIVITIES

The Cape Fear River Assembly will launch a water quality trading program in the Jordan Lake watershed of the Upper Cape Fear River Basin. Specifically, they will:

- Design a trading program that will identify pollution control responsibilities, control options, types of management practices that should be considered for defining credits, and protocols for debiting and crediting transactions
- Examine combining traditional land management practices with nonstructural management practices, such as land banking, riparian buffers, and wetland restoration
- Create economic incentives for developers to adopt conservation development techniques such as low impact development, clustering, and other approaches that preserve open space and provide more permeable surfaces

A STRONG PARTNERSHIP FOR CHANGE

Formed in 1973, the Cape Fear River Assembly is a nonprofit organization governed by a 39-member board of directors with equal representation from industry, agriculture, public utilities, elected officials, and environmental and conservation interests. They are further supported in this project by six organizations:

- Upper Cape Fear River Basin Association
- Middle Cape Fear River Basin Association
- Sampson County Friends of Agriculture
- Fayetteville Public Works Commission
- Yarborough Law Firm
- Lower Cape Fear River Program

Sunset at the entrance to the Cape Fear River. (Capt. Albert E. Theberge, NOAA Corps (Ret.)

"Watersheds are waters shared, a shared resource and a shared responsibility. Accordingly, this resource can be best managed as a team effort. If the rivers were the circulatory system in the body called North Carolina, then the Cape Fear River system would be the coronary artery."

– Don Freeman, Cape Fear River Assembly