

Etowah Regional Habitat Conservation Plan
October Steering Committee Meeting
October 16, 2003

Present:

Present: Jeffrey Boring, *UGA*; Steve Bradley, *Bartow County*; Tom Brook, *Cherokee Ledger-News*; Melissa Casteel, *City of Canton*; Derick Corbett, *Office of John Linder*; Jennifer Corcoran, *Cherokee County (filling in for Ron James)*; Erin Dreelin, *UGA*; Patty Durand, *Forsyth Forest Conservation Group*; Kevin Flanagan, *Lumpkin County*; Laurie Fowler, *UGA*; Bud Freeman, *UGA*; Beth Gavrilles, *UGA*; Curt Gervich, *HCP Outreach*; Bruce Goldstein, *Virginia Tech Urban Affairs & Planning*; Mike Harris, *GA DNR*; Mike Hobbs, *US FWS*; Mark Hutcheson, *City of Woodstock*; Susan Kidd, *The Georgia Conservancy*; Holly Martin, *City of Kennesaw*; Louise McPherson, *USDA – NRCS*; Eddie Mitchell, *City of Cartersville*; Larry Morris, *GA Forestry Commission*; Ron Papaleoni, *LAPA*; Norman Pope, *Pickens County*; Chris Quinn, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*; Julia Reed, *UGA*; Charles Richards, *City of Roswell*; Candace Stoughton, *The Nature Conservancy*; Rog Taylor, ; Sandy Tucker, *US FWS*; Michael Tuller, *Cobb County*; Lynn Tully, *Dawson County*.

PhD student Erin Dreelin presented information on “Better Site Design” for stormwater management. The premise is to adapt stormwater management techniques to local site conditions (topography, hydrology) with the goal of maximizing infiltration on-site. She is conducting a review of stormwater ordinances and development regulations of the Etowah counties and cities to identify impediments to BSD. Examples of impediments she discussed include building setback requirements and parking requirements. Parking space requirements are generally higher than necessary (e.g. Cherokee requires 4.5 spaces per 1000 square feet of retail space, while 3.5 spaces is adequate to meet peak use demand.) Parking regulations should state a minimum and maximum number of spaces, and require that overflow parking areas be pervious. Stormwater programs can be funded through permit review fees, performance bonds, maintenance bonds, or stormwater utilities. Priority funding programs (*i.e.* providing incentives for developments that meet certain criteria) could be used to encourage BSD. Other incentives would include clear regulations, financial savings, and that the value of lots rises with proximity to greenspace (a typical feature of BSD). In a Maryland community lots in a subdivision designed with BSD sold better than those in a comparable conventional subdivision; the developer saved \$300,000 because he didn’t need to install detention ponds, and there was a drastic improvement in the quality of water leaving the site.

Steering committee members mentioned examples of opposition to smart growth, local regulations actually inhibiting adoption of smart growth tools, for example developers claim that strict street guidelines require clearcutting of sites. Laurie said that this was exactly the kind of impediment Erin is looking for in her code review with an eye toward making recommendations to remove such obstacles.

[Note: her powerpoint presentation is available online at <http://www.EtowahHCP.org/http://www.etowahhcp.org/meetings.html>]

Several members commented on the issue of steep slopes, which make it hard to cluster homes and to provide sewer. They have also found opposition from EPD, as well as citizens, to approving package septic systems. Laurie said that EPA and EPD are both interested in promoting alternative septic systems now; using such systems to accommodate clustering should be addressed in the HCP.

Laurie reported that the judicial training on erosion and sedimentation that E&S officers in the Etowah requested will take place in January. It will be part of the statewide judicial training conference to be held in Savannah. As soon as the brochure is available we will get it to you so you can encourage your local judges to attend the E&S workshop session.

Laurie reported that UGA has received a grant from USDA to explore controlling Phosphorous through a trading program between point and nonpoint sources. It will focus on agricultural BMPs. Nanette Nelson of the Institute of Ecology will act as a liaison between this project and the HCP. It was suggested that the encouragement of grass roots efforts, such as community composting, will be an important component of controlling nonpoint sources of nutrients.

Jeffrey Boring reported on his Masters thesis research into the likely impacts of different development patterns on the Etowah watershed. He looked into three scenarios: 1. the “Scattered” scenario, in which current development patterns would continue; 2. the “Environmental Areas” scenario, in which environmentally-sensitive areas such as riparian buffers, steep slopes, and wetlands would be placed off-limits to development; and 3. the “Compact” scenario, in which development would be focused on town centers with traditional, mixed use, architecturally diverse, and historically-based planning. He gave examples of the expected change, by 2015, in impervious cover and protected rural land. Impervious cover was projected, under the various scenarios as: Scattered, 13.8%; Environmental Areas, 11.8%; Compact 7.9%. Water quality begins to degrade when impervious cover is above 8%. Currently there is 4.9% impervious cover. Protected rural land was projected as: Scattered, 63%; Environmental Areas, 67%; Compact, 97%.

Several committee members suggested that a TDR or PDR program would be needed to make this level of growth management possible. The perception of property rights will be impossible to change. Roads and other infrastructure that will tend to attract development are already in place in some of the environmentally-sensitive areas. Counties need to be careful about where they place infrastructure while the HCP is being developed.

Candace Stoughton announced a Low-Impact Development workshop on Nov. 12.

Laurie gave an update on the riparian buffer discussions. Seth Wenger met with HCP Steering Committee members from Dawson, Lumpkin and Pickens Counties – the counties not covered by the North Georgia Metro Water District Plan – and they agreed that they could implement a 50 foot buffer. There was some question of whether 50 feet was adequate, given the amount of

slope in the three counties. Laurie explained that the NGMWDP defines the buffer as starting from the top of the stream bank, not the edge of the water. The Steering Committee agreed that the 50 foot buffer zone for the rural counties and 75-foot buffers adopted by the NGMWD will be written into the HCP. Steering Committee members advised that there will have to be outreach about buffers, to make sure that they're implemented correctly. New E&S certification requirements (for anyone involved in land disturbing activities) should help.

Laurie also reported that the Advisory Committee is making progress on the "how" to develop (e.g. BMPs) question. She expects that this part of the research will be done by 2004. The "where" to develop is more difficult, partly because the scientific research is ongoing. It will also need to take into account real estate trends, infrastructure, and politics. She asked whether the Steering Committee would recommend splitting the HCP into two stages, completing the "how" portion first, and then moving on to the "where" stage, with interim protections put in place until the second stage is complete. The general consensus of the Steering Committee was that it would be better to keep the two parts together. Most of the counties will be redrawing their Future Land Use Plans in the next year or so, and it was suggested we ought to put together information for those counties to incorporate into their Plans.

It was suggested that we look at what kind of regulatory relief the counties get as they implement the different HCP strategies, such as buffers.

Laurie introduced Curt Gervich, the new Outreach Coordinator for the HCP. He presented a stakeholder involvement plan. He will contact the Steering Committee members in the next few weeks to set up meetings in each of the counties and cities with key stakeholders including the planners, managers, mayors or Commission chairs. Curt's contact information is: 678-801-4013; curt@etowahhcp.org.

Laurie introduced Bruce Goldstein, who just completed his PhD dissertation on HCPs, and is now at Virginia Tech (loud cheers for the Hokies at this point...) and is interested in having some involvement in helping develop the Etowah HCP.

Laurie requested that Steering Committee members suggest people to appoint to an *ad hoc* Technical Committee on stormwater/BSD

At the next meeting, a full day retreat to be held in February, we will discuss:

- Recommendations of Ad Hoc Technical Committee about stormwater/BSD
- Issue of how to treat water supply in the HCP
- Public involvement.