

**REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION
HENDERSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

MEETING DATE: SEPTEMBER 6, 2005

SUBJECT: ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE –
ANNUAL REPORT

ATTACHMENTS: Yes

SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

Attached is the Annual Report from the Environmental Advisory Committee.

COUNTY MANAGER RECOMMENDATION/BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:

No action is required on this item.

Environmental Advisory Committee FY 2004 Annual Report

First of all I would like to thank those EAC members who are retiring from the service: Bill Harper, Katie Breckheimer, Art Hudson and Hall Waddell. Each person brought their own perspectives and sincere interest in enhancing the environment of Henderson County. In addition, I would like to make a special mention of Dennis Honnold who died suddenly in August. Dennis contributed very much to our committee and to many other local environmental activities. He was particularly involved in the VWIN water monitoring program and the "Big Sweep" stream cleanup. Dennis is missed by many.

In addition, I want to recognize Amy R. Brantley, Deputy Clerk to the Board of Commissioners, for her consistent high level of professionalism and tireless support.

Our efforts concerning the Flood Damage Prevention ordinance and the TVA public forum were the most significant activities in the past year. These efforts directly address two of the most important environmental concerns of Henderson County: water and air quality.

We appreciate the briefing from the Henderson County Planning Department concerning the draft Flood Damage Prevention ordinance as well as their follow-up to our questions. We discussed this ordinance at length and developed consensus advisory comments to the Board of Commissioners and included all individual comments. There are numerous factors that contribute to flood issues. These include development activities throughout the drainage basin and downstream restrictions as well as development activities within the flood plain. We unanimously supported the environmental aspects of the ordinance as finally enacted as a balanced position respecting public and private interests.

Unlike water quality, which is primarily a local issue, regional pollutant transport is very important to local air quality. Air emissions from electricity generating facilities are widely discussed topics at the local, state and national level. Due to questions raised in our meetings, we decided to invite a representative from the Tennessee Valley Authority to discuss their emissions with particular emphasis on their impact on Western North Carolina and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Many North Carolina residents attribute much responsibility for significant air quality issues in our state to regional transport from the nearby western states and particularly to the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). TVA is the largest utility in the United States and is approximately 50% larger than Duke Power. We were very pleased that Mr. Bill Baxter, Executive Director of TVA agreed to participate in a public forum. In order to provide the greatest opportunity for public participation, ECO and the Greater Hendersonville Chamber of Commerce agreed to cosponsor this event at the Henderson County Public Library. Mr. Baxter and Mr. John Shipp, Vice President of Environmental Affairs presented information about TVA's coal fired electricity generating facilities, their previous emission reduction projects and their future commitments. In addition, they presented information about additional sources of pollutants such as automobiles and industrial facilities. Approximately 75 people attended this public forum and all questions were answered. We thank Mr. Hall Waddell and Mr. Henny Wysinger for assistance in arranging this visit by TVA.

In addition to these special topics, our committee conducted a number of other important duties.

In the last year, we have been able to implement the sediment and erosion control information program in conjunction with the Inspections Department that our committee began in the previous year. Stream sedimentation is an important issue in Henderson County, and there are many contributing factors. The State of North Carolina administers sediment and erosion control regulations that require everyone to control their activities on their property to address these issues.

This program requires projects that disturb more than one acre to get a permit. These regulations exempt highway construction, agriculture and established properties from the permit program. Nevertheless, each property owner is responsible for their own activities regardless of the size of their construction project. In this regard, we have obtained Sediment and Erosion control manuals and placed them in the Henderson County Library. Each person applying for a building permit in Henderson County is given an information package that contains a summary of the regulations and sources for additional cost-free information.

Mr. Bill Eaker, Director of Environmental Programs for the Land-of-the-Sky Regional Council provided information to our committee in relation to the regional air quality and the Early Action Compact. Due to reduced ozone levels, our region is not required to participate in the Early Action Compact. Most activities are continuing on a voluntary basis.

Ms. Marilyn Westphal, UNCA Environmental Quality Institute, presented information about the Voluntary Water Information Network (VWIN) which monitors water quality in 14 WNC counties in cooperation with ECO. Mud Creek downstream of the Hendersonville wastewater treatment plant continues to be the most significantly impacted stream segment in Henderson County. Sediment, mainly from construction activity, also has a noted impact to water quality.

Our committee visited the Hendersonville water treatment plant in Mills River to learn how this facility produces the water used by the majority of the citizens and businesses in Henderson County. The consensus of the Committee was that the treatment plant did a good job with respect to monitoring and production, and that high quality water was sent out from the plant.

Ms. Diane Silver, NC Cooperative Extension Service, provided information about Mud Creek Watershed Restoration project and storm water management programs.

Mr. Bill Eaker also provided information about grant money available to Henderson County schools to retrofit additional emission controls for school buses. In previous years, the school board has elected not to request this funding. Following discussion and information collection, the committee wrote a letter to the Henderson County School Board recommending that this grant be requested. Subsequently, the County School Board applied for this money.

Representatives from our committee participated in the storm water management demonstration program conducted by LOS in the Mills River area. These voluntary efforts are demonstration significant benefit for traditional dairy and row crop farms as well as the newer greenhouse activities.

Mr. Gary Tweed presented information about the solid waste management activities in the county. Our committee also supported the electronic recycling event conducted by Henderson County and other organizations.

Ms. Angela Fernandini presented information about the recently implemented stream biomonitoring program, which is conducted twice a year at several sites in the county. Biomonitoring examines the number and diversity of macro invertebrate organisms in the stream. These organisms are a major food source for fish and they are a direct indicator of stream water quality over a seasonal cycle. Biomonitoring supplements the VWIN reports that focus on short-term physical and chemical parameters.

I would like to thank all our committee members for their support and hard work throughout the year.