



# Watershed Education For Communities and Local Officials

*Building Consensus for Watershed Solutions*

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WECO was originally funded in 1997 by a grant from the USDA-CSREES Water Quality Program. Where is WECO now?

## WECO Pilot Project: White Oak River Watershed

- Funded 1997-2000 by USDA CSREES Water Quality Program
- Initial guidance provided by NEMO Program, University of Connecticut
- White Oak River Watershed Advisory Board (WORAB) convened to address degrading water quality in a near-pristine coastal NC watershed
- WORAB received official advisory status from the 3 counties within the watershed
- Direct Results of funded project:
  - NC Dept. of Transportation bridge design was changed to better protect the river;
  - Congressional approval of a US Army Corps of Engineers study of the river, and
  - Recommendations to address stormwater runoff through education, research, and demonstration projects
- EPA 319 Grant for \$295,000 obtained to implement stormwater recommendations in 2001-2004

## Continued Progress

Since the grant ended in 2000, an EPA 319 grant has provided the means to protect and improve shellfish areas through stormwater management and education. The White Oak River Watershed Advisory Board continues to oversee watershed management activities with the assistance of WECO. Activities have included:

- A research project that identified bacterial loading "hot spots"
- Three stormwater Best Management Practices on municipal property
- Two stormwater Best Management Practices on private property
- Public educational workshops and presentations
- Improving recreational access in the river

## Some WECO Partners Include

- NC Sea Grant
- Duke University
- Local Governments
- NCSU Water Quality Group
- County Cooperative Extension Services
- NCSU Dept. of Biological and Agricultural Engineering
- NC Natural Resources Leadership Institute at NCSU
- UNC Coastal Studies Institute
- UNC-Wilmington
- NC Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources
- UNC-Water Resources Research Institute

## WECO Today

A demonstrated need for involving stakeholders in watershed planning and management has sustained WECO beyond the White Oak River pilot project throughout North Carolina



## Secondary Impacts of Original USDA CSREES Project

- Six additional local watershed groups formed by WECO at request of state agencies since 2000
- WECO has leveraged approximately \$1 million for watershed projects across NC since USDA pilot project was funded in 1997
- In-ground best management practices
- Stream and wetland restoration projects
- Local policy changes
- Partnerships between citizens, local governments, state agencies, private and non-profit organizations
- Increased capacity for local leadership at watershed level
- Guidance documents for local governments and watershed managers
- Training video, guidebook, and CD-ROM for collaborative watershed planning
- Public education and outreach workshops

[www.ces.ncsu.edu/WECO](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/WECO)

## WECO Program Objectives

To improve water quality through the education and involvement of citizens and government officials who live and work in the watershed.

This is accomplished by :

1. Delivering scientific and technical information on water quality
2. Empowering citizens through collaborative partnerships with local and state government
3. Facilitating local stakeholder recommendations to improve water quality
4. Coordinating watershed management activities based on recommendations

## WECO Project Principles

1. Develop methods for sustainable, collaborative, community-based solutions
2. Partner with other state and local agencies to foster watershed-based solutions
3. Develop methods for the synthesis, integration, and application of scientific and technical information to support policy-making
4. Examine the sustainability of policy alternatives by estimating economic costs and benefits

## WECO Program Activities

- Fostering partnerships between government agencies, businesses, non-profits
- Conducting watershed issue assessments
- Designing public involvement processes for environmental decision-making
- Establishing links between citizen watershed groups and local governments
- Training stakeholders in collaborative problem-solving and team-building skills
- Identifying local water quality issues
- Providing scientific and technical information in accessible formats
- Collaboratively identifying and developing strategies to address issues
- Involving the greater public in outreach and educational activities

