

UPPER NEUSE RIVER BASIN ASSOCIATION
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE AND EXAMPLES
OF EXPECTED BENEFITS TO THE ASSOCIATION'S MEMBERS
(February, 1998)

BACKGROUND FACTS ABOUT THE UPPER NEUSE RIVER BASIN ASSOCIATION

Date Established: March 22, 1996 (By-laws approved)

Geographical Area: 770-square mile watershed above the Falls Lake Dam (Figure 1)

Organizational Partners: 14 Local Governments With Local Planning and Zoning Control County Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD)(Table 1)

Board of Directors: 14 Directors appointed to represent each organization partner with planning and zoning control; 1 Director appointed to represent all six SWCDs; Each partner also appoints one Alternate Director.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSOCIATION

The mission of the Upper Neuse River Basin Association is to preserve the water quality of the Upper Neuse River Basin through innovative and cost-effective strategies, and to constitute a forum to cooperate on water supply issues within the Upper Neuse River Basin by:

1. Forming a coalition of units of local government, public and private agencies, and other interested and affected communities, organizations, businesses, and individuals to secure and pool financial resources and expertise;
2. Collecting and analyzing information and data and developing, evaluating and implementing strategies to reduce, control and manage pollutant discharge and to manage water resources; and
3. Providing accurate technical, management, regulatory and legal recommendations regarding the implementation of strategies and appropriate effluent limitations on discharges into the upper portion of the Neuse River.

SOME ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

1. Building Strong Working Relationships/Developing a True Local-State Partnership. The Association has evaluated the current framework under which the State makes water resources management decisions, and concluded that a stronger local and state partnership is needed to protect water resources. Following this evaluation, the

Association developed a legislative proposal to establish a framework for cooperative local and state water resources planning and management in river basins and sub-basins. This proposal was introduced by local legislative delegates representing the Upper Neuse River Basin area, and was subsequently passed by the General Assembly and signed into law in September of 1997 (Senate Bill 114). Under the new law, a coalition of local governments may develop and implement coordinated water resources management plans as an alternative means of accomplishing water resource goals and objectives in a more cost-effective and environmentally-effective manner. The State Environmental Management Commission would have to approve the coalition's proposed management plan.

2. Improving Information Base for Decision-Making/Building Strong Working Relationships. The Association completed a detailed evaluation of the Environmental Management Commission's draft rules for implementing the Neuse River Basin Nutrient Sensitive Waters Management Strategy and submitted extensive written comments to the State during the rulemaking process. Several major concerns were expressed regarding the draft rules: (a) they do not adequately take into account a party's relative contribution to the nitrogen loading problem; (b) they are inequitable; (c) they will not result in cost-effective solutions to the nitrogen loading problem in the Neuse River Estuary; (d) they represent another major unfunded mandate, and will require that local governments incur substantial costs to comply with the rules; and (e) it is very unclear how the State will implement and enforce the proposed rules.
3. Increasing Cost-Effectiveness/Developing Integrated Solutions. In partnership with Triangle J Council of Governments (TJCOG), the Association requested grant funding from the North Carolina Clean Water Management Trust Fund for development of a comprehensive strategy for protecting and restoring riparian buffer areas and streambanks in the Upper Neuse River Basin. The grant was approved by the Trust Fund, and the project is now underway through TJCOG. The study is expected to (a) assist local governments, land trusts and others in developing grant proposals for riparian buffer protection efforts, and (b) help funding agencies target the use of funds that may be available for riparian buffer protection efforts.
4. Improving Information Base for Decision-Making/Developing a True Local-State Partnership. The Association has undertaken an evaluation of local and state sediment and erosion control programs, and is now studying recent proposals for strengthening the State's sedimentation pollution control program. The Association's Technical Advisory Committee is currently preparing a draft position statement on these proposals.
5. Increasing Cost-Effectiveness. The Association, in cooperation with Triangle J Council of Governments, has provided local governments with information and assistance concerning the development of grant proposals to the North Carolina Clean Water Management Trust Fund. One Association member, the Town of Hillsborough, has received tentative approval for a \$254,000 grant from the Trust Fund for acquisition of riparian lands along the Eno River.

THE ASSOCIATION'S PLANNED FUTURE ACTIVITIES

1. The Association's Board of Directors has concluded that the Association should develop a comprehensive, integrated watershed management plan for the Upper Neuse River Basin. The proposed plan would be developed in partnership with the State, and would

support and build upon existing local and state government water resource management efforts. In accord with the provisions of Senate Bill 114, the plan would include:

- a. an assessment of water quality and related water quantity management in the Upper Neuse River Basin;
 - b. a description of the goals and objectives for protection and improvement of water quality and related water quantity management in the basin;
 - c. a workplan that describes proposed water quality protection strategies, including point and nonpoint source programs, for achieving the specified goals and objectives; and implementation strategy including the specified tasks, timetables for action, and implementation responsibilities of State and local agencies; and sources of funding, where applicable; and
 - d. a description of the performance indicators and benchmarks that will be used to measure progress in achieving the specified goals and objectives, and an associated monitoring framework.
2. The Association's Board of Directors has also concluded that if substantial and meaningful progress is to be made in accomplishing the Association's goals and objectives (including development of the above-referenced watershed management plan), there should be a staff person working specifically on these efforts. It is estimated that approximately \$70,000 to \$90,000 per year would be needed to provide basic operating level support to the Association. The Association's Board of Directors has agreed to pursue: (a) local funding support from member governments; (b) an appropriation from the North Carolina General Assembly during the 1998 Short Session; and (c) grant funding support.

A "Watershed Program Manager" could provide the Association's member governments with assistance in a number of areas, including but not limited to:

- a. technical support relating to watershed protection ordinances, best management practice design and effectiveness, and similar issues;
- b. consolidation, analysis, and reporting of water quality monitoring data;
- c. consolidation, analysis and reporting of land use, water supply, and wastewater discharge information;
- d. preparation of local water supply plans;
- e. development of grant funding proposals; and
- f. public education and awareness.

EXPECTED BENEFITS TO THE ASSOCIATION'S MEMBER GOVERNMENTS

1. Local governments participating in the UNRBA can expect a number of benefits as a result of continued participation in the Association. These benefits include, but are not limited to:
2. Focusing on Resource Protection: A myriad of water-related legislation, regulations, and programs affect the Upper Neuse River Basin. This has resulted in many discrete activities such as standard setting, permitting, monitoring, enforcement, management of wastewater treatment and water treatment facilities, urban nonpoint source control, and agricultural nonpoint source control. These activities are carried out by numerous

agencies at the federal, state, and local level, but are oftentimes not coordinated or integrated to achieve cost-effective solutions to our water resources goals and objectives (See Table 2). The Association will encourage stakeholders to focus on a common goal: sustainable management of our water resources to protect the public health, environmental quality, and economic vitality of the region.

3. Increasing Cost-Effectiveness: The Association will continue to examine how the Association's member governments can work together to: (a) target staff and funding resources to address the highest priority watershed management concerns; (b) pool information, expertise and resources; and (c) reduce duplication of efforts. Experience has shown that integrated assessment and management approaches foster more innovative, cost-effective solutions to addressing water quality objectives than traditional management efforts.
4. Developing Integrated Solutions: Water resources management and protection issues cross local government and program boundaries. Individual jurisdictions and agencies often lack the capability to fully address water resources problems. The Association's watershed management approach will make it easier for member governments and stakeholders to work together to address complex water resource issues in the Upper Neuse River Basin.
5. Developing a True Local-State Partnership: Many existing water resource management programs use a top-down approach driven by federal or state mandates to solve specific problems. This approach is appropriate in certain instances; however, cost-effective and environmentally-effective solutions to many of today's problems will require innovative approaches that proactively involve local governments, key stakeholders and voluntary action. The role of local government in watershed management efforts cannot be over-emphasized because local governments make major land use planning and zoning decisions that affect water supply and demands, point and nonpoint source loads, water quality, and water resource conditions.
6. Improving the Information Base for Decision-Making: Through cooperative and targeted data collection, interpretation and trends analysis, and information sharing, the Association's comprehensive integrated watershed management efforts can result in a stronger base of information upon which to base local and state decision-making.
7. Building Strong Working Relationships: Through participation in the Association, local governments will strengthen and build upon their working relationships, and work together to achieve mutually beneficial goals and objectives. The Association will continue to provide a forum to bring together multiple interests, perspectives, and disciplines to find common ground and balance multiple objectives over time.
8. Gaining Public Support: The Association's Board of Directors has determined that a targeted and coordinated water resources public education and awareness program is needed in the Upper Neuse River Basin, and plans to work with appropriate agencies and stakeholders in developing and implementing such a program. It is expected that a well-informed general public will provide stronger support for coordinated watershed protection efforts.
9. Obtain Supplemental Resources to Accomplish Local Goals and Objectives. The Association will continue to assist member governments in efforts to identify and obtain outside funding and technical assistance to accomplish water resources management goals and objectives of the Association and its member governments.

TABLE 1.

**MEMBER GOVERNMENTS OF THE
UPPER NEUSE RIVER BASIN ASSOCIATION**

COUNTIES

Durham
Franklin
Granville
Orange
Person
Wake

MUNICIPALITIES

Butner
Creedmoor
Durham
Hillsborough
Raleigh
Roxboro
Stem
Wake Forest

SOIL AND WATER DISTRICTS

Note: Six Local Soil and Water Conservation Districts Are Jointly Represented By One Director And One Alternate Director.