

AS FEDS MANDATE WATER QUALITY UPGRADE..

Tough Decisions, More Controls Ahead, Symposium Speakers Say

BY LYNN CARLSON

The formula for solving the coast's water quality problems?

Governments must:

■ integrate their approaches to treating "point" and "nonpoint" sources of pollution (wastewater and storm-water runoff in local parlance);

■ address water quality needs in state-required land use plans;

■ and think regionally.

That was the consensus of academicians, politicians, government officials and other speakers participating in the first symposium on integrated coastal wastewater management in North Carolina, held Dec. 2 and 3 at Coastline Convention Center in Wilmington.

Coordinated by the N.C. Coastal Federation and sponsored by 11 entities, including Brunswick County, the event was attended by numerous local people, including elected officials and concerned citizens from Holden Beach, Shallotte and Sunset Beach and the surrounding areas.

Wrapping up the session Friday were the chairmen of the state's Environmental Management Commission and Coastal Resources Commission, who said the two appointive boards will be working closely to establish coastal water quality standards and recommend to the General Assembly ways to enforce them while protecting a beachfront economy heavily dependent on real estate development and tourism.

EMC Chairman David Moreau, who is also director

of the Water Resources Research Institute of the University of North Carolina, said over the next few years his board will be working with staff of the Office of Coastal Management to adopt maximum daily loads of pollutants entering river basins which drain into coastal areas.

"We'd be looking at caps on pollutant loads from all sources," he said. "When they're reached, no further pollution-generating activities would be allowed."

One barrier to that approach is that no mechanisms currently exist to manage growth, he said. "What if the existing loads already exceed what a cap would be? Would we ignore it and continue to issue permits? Would we declare a moratorium, an option I think most would find unacceptable?"

CRC Chairman Eugene Tomlinson of Southport, who also serves on the Governor's Coastal Futures Committee, said improving coastal water quality makes it necessary to deal with "many important and stressful issues. It is increasingly apparent that wastewater is of paramount importance to our protection efforts."

Tomlinson said the CRC should have a future role in coastal wastewater management in North Carolina. "We'll be taking the technical information gathered and correlating it with various expertise to develop sensible rules and attain the goal of managing wastewater. Our approach will be proactive, not reactive."

He said he is "firmly convinced" that local land use plans "are the base of proper wastewater management on the coast of North Carolina."

Tomlinson was quick to add that care must be taken to protect the coastal economy in the process of controlling growth and managing water quality. "Coastal North Carolina is a major asset, and tourism is a major economic factor in North Carolina," he told the gathering.

He called for the General Assembly to grant increased authority to the CRC to "require and enforce the requirements for land use plans to adequately address wastewater treatment needs under the Coastal Area Management Act," taking into account the carrying capacity of individual areas.

"As unpalatable as this may be, failure to adequately address wastewater treatment needs should result in serious penalties and the withholding of grants."

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency contends that water quality remains one of the most serious environmental problems in the United States.

According to the most October issue of "Coastal Comments," a publication of the N.C. Division of Coastal Management, "In coastal areas, shellfish bed closures, loss of biological productivity, and beach closures are evidence of water quality problems. Experts agree that polluted runoff—known as nonpoint source pollution—is a major cause of declining water quality."

Coastal waters are affected by both point and nonpoint pollutants. Point sources include the discharge from municipal sewage treatment plants and overloaded or malfunctioning septic tanks. Nonpoint source pollution happens when rainwater does not drain; it can include such contaminants as agricultural and industrial

chemicals as well as fecal coliform from animal waste and from leaching septic tanks.

In 1990, Congress voted to require coastal states to clean up nonpoint source pollution when it reauthorized the federal Coastal Zone Management Act. States with federally approved coastal zone management programs, like North Carolina, were required to begin developing coastal nonpoint source control programs.

North Carolina must submit a coastal nonpoint source program to the federal government by July 1995.

Moreau said a study of the Cape Fear River basin is due to be completed next year. "I think we'll see that there won't be much water quality resource left to allocate. This poses a serious challenge as to how we would live under a cap."

Tomlinson said one option being considered by coastal regulatory boards is "transboundary planning" to ensure that one community's problems don't diminish another's water quality. He said the state's coast includes four general regions—the Brunswick County coast; the area from Cape Fear through Topsail Island; the Crescent Coast from Emerald Isle to Atlantic Beach; and the Outer Banks from Cape Lookout to Virginia.

Tomlinson praised North Carolina's 20-year-old coastal management program and encouraged the symposium participants to follow the work of the Coastal Futures Committee. "I encourage each one of you to spread the word, to watch what we're up to and the recommendations that come out. Let the General Assembly know what you want to come out."

Vereen Urges Action, Not Words To Stop Proposed Limestone Mine

BY ERIC CARLSON

Despite hearing advice from the county attorney that it would do no good, Brunswick Commissioner Wayland Vereen wants the county board to adopt a resolution banning all deep quarrying operations like the one Martin Marietta Aggregates plans to open near Southport.

"We're all saying we don't want it, but we're not doing anything about it," Vereen said at the county commissioners regular meeting Monday night. "It's time we took a stand for something."

Vereen, who represents the district where the proposed quarry would go, said he plans to consult with County Attorney Michael Ramos and the N.C. Institute of Government at Chapel Hill for help in drafting a local regulation to stop the company from mining.

Martin Marietta has applied for a state permit to extract and process limestone on a 1,000-acre site off N.C. 211 near the Brunswick Nuclear Plant and the Sunny Point military ammunition terminal. Last week about 350 people, nearly all opponents, showed up for a public hearing to hear comment on the permit application.

Vereen on Monday first asked the commissioners to reconsider a previously defeated resolution that would have prevented Martin Marietta—and anyone else in the county—from getting a building permit pending consideration of a proposed change in the zoning ordinance that would prohibit any mining operation that requires blasting. That proposal is under consideration by the county planning board.

When the other commissioners showed no inclination to support Vereen's motion, he suggested several others aimed at stopping the mine, including one that said "any mining that starts down at 90 feet should not be permitted" in Brunswick County.

"You can put it any way you want to," Vereen said. "We can come back tomorrow night or the next night or the next if we have to. So far we're doing a lot of talking and not doing anything."

Ramos cautioned that any local move to prohibit the mine is almost sure to be overruled if the state grants Martin Marietta a permit.

"If the state approves it, you can't ban it," Ramos said. "It's like an ABC permit. A lot of places have tried to stop them. But if the state authorizes one, it can't be prohibited by local government."

Ramos agreed to help Vereen come up with a narrowly defined regulation targeted at some of the environmental concerns raised by mining opponents.

"Instead of a shotgun approach, you might be able to get them with a knife point," he said.

Commission Chairman Don Warren said he would call a special meeting to consider Vereen's proposal if necessary.

In other business, the board voted unanimously to cancel the county's contract with Service America for meals at the Department of Aging nutrition sites and its meals-on-wheels program. Recipients have complained loudly about a drop in food quality since last August, when the board voted to pay a private contractor for ser-

vice formerly provided by the county cafeteria.

The board agreed to advertise for bids on the service and to have the cafeteria submit a new proposal. If the cafeteria wins the contract, the county will probably have to reinstate a full-time position eliminated from the budget after the August vote.

As required in the contract, Service America will be given 60 days notice before termination.

The board also heard an explanation from former county commissioner Benny Ludlum about the recent trash clean-up on his property authorized by County Manager Wyman Yelton. A county employee with a backhoe spent an eight-hour day Nov. 9 removing debris from a strip of Ludlum's subdivision lots on Lakeside Avenue, off Oxpen Road.

Ludlum told the board that the old burnt building, rusted car parts, wooden crates and other items removed in the clean-up were illegally dumped there because of the land's proximity to the county's Oxpen solid waste convenience site, located about a half mile away. After becoming dissatisfied with the county's response to his complaint about the dumping, Ludlum said he met with Yelton and requested the clean-up.

Warren asked Yelton to prepare a report on the matter for the board's next meeting.

In the board's annual reorganization, Democrats again used their three-vote majority to name Warren chairman. Former Vice Chairman Tom Rabon nominated Vereen to assume his post and the three voted to approve the change. Commissioner Donald Shaw nominated fellow Republican Jerry Jones to be chairman, while Jones reciprocated by suggesting Shaw for vice chairman.

In other matters:

■ Ramos reported that the N.C. Supreme Court has reversed an appeals court decision on which the duPont Company based its protest of the county's attempts to collect millions of dollars in back taxes through a private collection firm. "Hopefully that will be the end of their appeal," Ramos said.

■ State Senator R.C. Soles introduced the board to Leo Mercer, who is Gov. Jim Hunt's newly named special assistant for eastern North Carolina.

■ Henry Tonn of the Old Towne subdivision in Leland complained about the need for a county ordinance to regulate barking dogs. He said his neighbor's dogs bark constantly, forcing him to sleep in his living room. "I'm a prisoner in my own house," he said.

■ No action was taken on the scheduled appointment for the nurse position on the Brunswick County Board of Health. The sitting member Patricia Nutter was not nominated for re-appointment. In bringing up the agenda item for consideration, Warren, who is also a member of the health board, commented, "I don't have anybody at this time."

■ Robert Black of Shell Point was appointed as an alternate to the zoning board of adjustment.

■ Debbie Barthlow of Long Beach and Ronald Williams of Leland were appointed to the Aging Advisory Council.



STAFF PHOTO BY LYNN CARLSON

New Terms Begin

Taking the oath of office at Sunset Beach Monday were (from left) new Councilman Herb Klinker, incumbent Councilmen Julia Thomas and Ed Gore, and Mayor Mason Barber. They were sworn in by Town Administrator Linda Fluegel, at right. Council later elected Gore to continue as mayor pro tem and Thomas to continue as finance officer. Council passed a resolution thanking outgoing Councilman Bud Scramton for his four years of service to the town.

NINE MAKE FIRST COURT APPEARANCE

Tenth Suspect May Be In Bahamas

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If convicted of murder, the 16-year-old faces a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. They are being held in lieu of a \$250,000 cash bond. The older suspects could face the death penalty and are being held without bond.

A tenth warrant has been issued for the arrest of Byron Henry Knowles, 24, whose current address is listed as an apartment on St. Andrews Drive, Wilmington.

Records at Brunswick Community College list Knowles as a student in the air conditioning, heating and refrigeration curriculum. The college directory lists Queen's College in Freeport, Bahamas, as the most recent school Knowles attended.

Investigators say Knowles could be extradited to the U.S. for prosecution if he is found in the Bahamas.

Although few details of the murder have been released, Miller confirmed that the killing "may have been drug-related." However, he disputed a report quoting him saying that Davis went to a mobile home on Randolphville Road to buy crack cocaine.

"I don't know where they got that," Miller said. "We don't know why Davis went there."

It was at the Randolph Mobile Home Park that Davis and a friend reportedly got into an argument with one of the murder suspects on the evening of Sunday, Nov. 29, Miller said. After the two men left, Davis dropped his friend off and drove home.

Local Weather Expected To 'Feel Like Christmas'

Seasonable weather is in the immediate forecast for the South Brunswick Islands area, cool enough to "feel like Christmas" but not too cold, says Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady.

He expects that trend to continue in the near future, with no major weather swings.

Canady anticipates temperatures averaging from the upper 30s at night into the upper 50s during the daytime, with about a half-inch of

Two cars carrying the 10 murder suspects were waiting for Davis when they arrived, investigators say. They aren't saying what happened next—only that Davis was found dead lying on his back in the driveway Monday morning.

Miller said that if all 10 went to the Davis home knowing that some kind of crime was about to be committed, all 10 could all be prosecuted for murder.

"It just goes to show that you need to watch who you get into a car with," Miller said.

One by one, each of the six new suspects was brought into district court in orange jail jumpsuits and handcuffs Thursday afternoon. Some had their parents in the audience. Others faced Judge Ola Lewis alone as she considered bond and chose court-appointed attorneys to represent them.

Named to defend the six were Sheila McLamb for Mitchell, James Payne for Randolph, Dennis Worley of Tabor City for Anthony Smith, Benedict Del Re for Nicholas Smith, Craig Wright of Columbus County for Stancil and Joseph Causey for Williams. Earlier last week, attorney Michael Ramos was appointed to defend Ford.

None of those arrested in the case last Wednesday have lengthy arrest records listed in the Brunswick County Clerk of Courts office. Randolph was given a two-year suspended sentence in a December 1992 assault case. Anthony Smith was arrested on a larceny charge in 1991. Stancil was charged with driving while impaired last October.

Ford was given two years probation in a March 1992 conviction for carrying a semi-automatic handgun into the G.F.B. Club in Ash. An as-

sault charge brought against Ford in that case was dismissed after the alleged victim did not show up to testify.

In July, a warrant was issued for Ford's arrest on a charge of selling a rock of crack cocaine to an undercover officer last February. The warrant was not served and the charge was dismissed when the district attorney's office learned that the officer was no longer available to testify.

Jones was charged with voluntary manslaughter Oct. 7, 1992, after he allegedly stabbed Jamie Levaughn Moore to death during an altercation at the Randolph Mobile Home Park. Charges against Jones were dismissed after a Brunswick County Grand Jury could not find probable cause to indict Moore.

Ford was taken to Doshier Memorial Hospital Thursday afternoon for examination after he allegedly collapsed in the Brunswick County Jail. Ford was later transferred to Central Prison in Raleigh.

"He was sent there as a precautionary measure because we believe he may be a security risk," said the jail supervisor, Capt. Douglas "Sonny" Padgett.

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Taxpayers React To Revaluation

(Continued From Page 1-A)

appraiser," Williamson said. "Our appraisers don't go inside unless there is an appeal, so they don't know about any interior problems."

LeAnne Crouch, the county's clerical supervisor for the revaluation, said the office's three telephones have been "constantly ringing" since the appraisals went out. She said most concerns seem to stem from a misunderstanding of the revaluation process.

"The comment I hear most is from people who think their property has jumped an incredible amount in value over just one year," Crouch said. "But the schedule of values hasn't changed in eight years. So last year's appraisal was still based on the 1986 schedule of values. Even if they just built a new house, it was appraised last year based on 1986 construction costs."

Williamson said the average jump in property values for this revaluation is about half what it was between 1978 and 1986, when appraisals rose 50 percent over eight years. The 1993 revaluation shows an overall increase of about 25 to 28 percent.

"That doesn't mean everyone will see that amount of increase," Williamson said. "Some will go up

200 percent. Others won't even go up 5 percent."

As in past years the average value of property and the rate of appreciation is highest along the southern beaches with amounts increasing from Long Beach to Holden Beach to Ocean Isle Beach to Sunset Beach, Williamson said. Property in the popular retirement areas of Calabash and along the Intracoastal Waterway also saw increases that were far above average.

Crouch said it was not unusual for a \$250,000 house in Sunset Beach to increase in value by as much as \$150,000.

"If someone's property value increased significantly, it probably means they are in a high-activity, high-demand area and they've made a good investment," Williamson said. "If their property went up a bunch, they should consider themselves somewhat fortunate. Isn't that what people kind of want to happen?"

Still, the question on everyone's mind is the bottom line: "How much will my property tax go up?"

"I can't answer that," said Williamson. "Nobody can until we finalize the county's total value and until the commissioners set a new tax rate next July. We always assume that the rate will be adjusted

downward to reflect the increase in values."

As of today, before any adjustments are made in response to appeals, the county's total property value is \$5.5 billion (based on the 1993 valuation), which represents a jump of about \$1.1 billion over last year (based on the 1986 valuation).

During the last revaluation transition, the county's total worth rose from \$2.2 billion to \$3.8 billion. That year the county tax rate went from 59.5 cents per \$100 valuation in 1985 to 46.5 percent in 1986, Williamson said.

Anyone who has a question about their new tax appraisal or who wants to schedule an informal hearing with an appraiser should call the revaluation office at (910) 253-7616. The hearings are held at the Brunswick County Tax Office in Bolivia and take about 20 minutes. Parking has been reserved in front of the building for those with appointments for hearings.

After the informal hearing, the applicant's property will be re-evaluated and a notice will be mailed to inform the owner whether an adjustment is recommended. Those who disagree with the findings may schedule a formal hearing with the Board of Equalization and Review.