

AT HEALTH DEPARTMENT

New Supervisor Sees Staff And Programming Needs

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN
Andrew Robinson likes work that lets you see how you can make a difference.

In his new position as environmental supervisor in Brunswick County's Environmental Health Department, he can gauge his effectiveness in many directions. "It's good to see pollution abatement programs and safer and cleaner water and air," he said, "and the means of preventing communicable disease."

Robinson, who succeeded John Crowder on April 4, supervises six environmental health specialists, three program specialists and three clerical staff members, as well as the animal control center.

"My job, specifically, is to oversee what all these people do, plan programs and do lots of paperwork," he said.

The scope of the department includes soil evaluation for sewage disposal systems, food and lodging inspections, control of infectious diseases and oversight of mobile home parks.

"I think Brunswick County has the second highest number of mobile home parks in the state," Robinson observed. "Cumberland County, where I just came from, is first. I think I was told Brunswick has more than 200 parks."

The 49-year-old Cumberland County native had worked in that county's health department for the past six years and prior to that position was with the Chief Environmental Coordinator for Fort Bragg and all sub-installations throughout the state. His career began with a one-year stint in South Vietnam in 1968 as a combat field medic with the 9th Infantry Division.

His earned a bachelor's of science degree at North Carolina A&T University, and a master's degree in public health at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Special training since then includes workshops on public health pest management, environmental law, soil morphology and leaking underground storage tanks management, on which he wrote his master's thesis.

After less than a month on the job, Robinson already has some idea of the most pressing environmental issues in Brunswick County.

"We need an ordinance on mobile home parks," he said. "Cumberland County has one that identifies as a park every tract with three or more mobile homes on it. Mostly here you have mobile subdivisions."

He pinpointed sewage disposal systems for individual lots as the top problem in the county.

"This land has such a high water table," he said, "and if the water is

12 inches or less from the surface, that's unsuitable for on-site sewage disposal."

Already he has encountered a public relations problem in connection with lot evaluations.

"People here are often insistent on a second opinion when the environmental health specialist does an evaluation and finds a water table that's too high," he said. "The owner feels he can get a second opinion

and we've been providing that, but usually it's just a factual matter that the table is too high."

Robinson said that Robert Uebler, Ph.D., state soil scientist for the N.C. Department of Environmental Management is often called from Washington, N.C., to render these opinions.

"There's no sense in wasting his time on most of these evaluations," Robinson.

Besides a mobile home park ordinance, another of his goals is to secure passage of a seafood ordinance already being developed when he arrived. "This would help control the vendors who sell seafood out of the back of a truck," he said.

A specialist to administer this ordinance has been included in the new positions requested by the health department in its recent budget. Robinson stressed the need for

every one of the five new positions proposed.

"We're terribly understaffed," he said. "I've never seen such a hard-working group of people. The work they put out is way beyond what they did in Cumberland County."

In addition to the already extensive services demanded of this department, Robinson said the state has mandated two new responsibilities effective July 1, creation of a

management entity for on-site alternate sewage disposal systems and assuming management of 60 wastewater treatment systems in the county now under state management. The new director is married and has three children, one of whom is still at home. His wife is a public school principal in Robeson County and will join him this summer. He is presently living in Southport but anticipates a move to Bolivia.



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