

June 2008

Southeast RCAP Board of
Directors Meeting

Progress in North Carolina

NCRCAP: A Contractor for Southeast
Rural Community Assistance Project, Inc.



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Statistics in North Carolina

Technitrain
12 projects
5 workshops conducted

OCS
6 projects
1 workshop conducted

EPA SMARTAbout Water
1 project in planning
2 workshops in planning

Recent Project Highlights in North Carolina



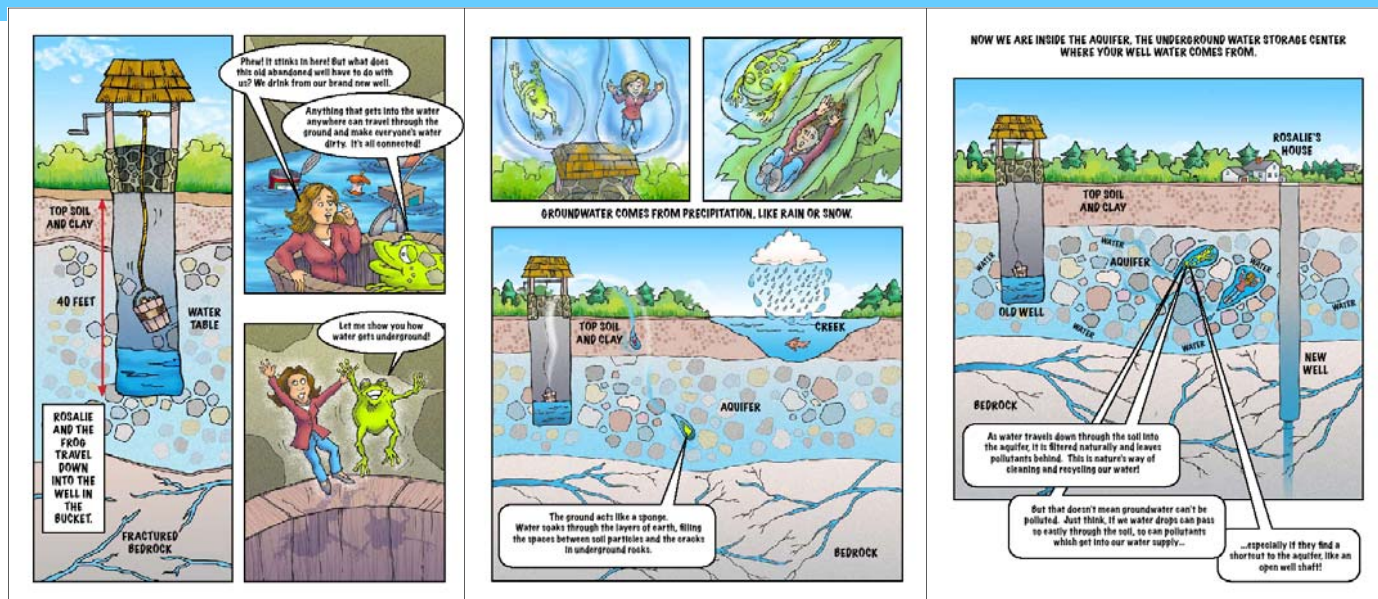
NCRCAP's Rich Holder (center) stands with NCRCAP Board Chairman, Zack Hamlet, (right) to receive the 2008 Steve Steinbeck Award at the 24th Annual On-Site Wastewater Treatment Conference from Andy Adams (left), Orange County Environmental Health Supervisor.

Rich Holder Receives Prestigious Award for Work to Get Safe Wastewater Disposal to Western NC Households.

Although the calluses on his hands have softened since the 2007 summer season of the Western NC Septic Repair program, Rich Holder was recently recognized for his hard work and innovative approach to solving some of the most challenging onsite wastewater problems in the mountains by being awarded the Steve Steinbeck Award. The Steve Steinbeck Award was established just a few years ago to recognize people, like Rich, who make an extraordinary effort in our on-site wastewater field. Rich was the 3rd recipient of this award which was presented to him during a luncheon drawing the state's entire on-site wastewater community at the 24th Annual NC On-Site Wastewater Treatment Conference in April 2008.

Holder coordinates NCRCAP's Western NC Septic Repair Program and brings together non-profit partners, volunteers, material vendors willing to donate supplies, and state water quality agencies to eliminate wastewater straight pipes and failing septic systems which pose health threats to household members and contribute to water quality degradation in surface waters of several mountain counties. With strong backs and a commitment to assisting families with limited resources, groups of volunteers travel from around the country to work with Rich Holder to hand dig septic systems, fix roofs, and repair rotting out floors for households in Buncombe, Madison, Haywood, Jackson, Yancy, and Henderson Counties. During the summer of 2007, Holder worked with close to 500 volunteers (groups of 40 individuals come for a week at a time) who logged close to 20,000 hours of donated labor to complete work with nine households. He anticipates a similar effort this summer to repair systems for at least seven households.

During the past nine years the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Wastewater Discharge Elimination (WaDE) program along with local County Health Departments have surveyed their communities to locate failing septic systems and straight-pipes to streams and have identified over 2,500 outstanding violations in 26 western North Carolina counties. These failing systems contribute to nonpoint source pollution of surrounding surface waters and pose a public health risk to families. According to Rich, "Many of the homeowners with these violations have low incomes and can not afford to repair their systems." NCRCAP piloted the Western NC Septic Repair program in 2005 and worked with volunteers and partner funding agencies to install septic systems at two households at a significant cost savings. Rich states, "Based on the success of the pilot program and the enthusiasm of the volunteer students, we expanded our efforts to repair nine systems in 2007 and we plan to repair at least seven this summer."



NCRCAP's Rosalia Demonstrates that Source Water Protection Begins at Home

While you won't be greeted by Rosalia when calling the NCRCAP office or encounter her conducting a field visit in a NC community, she will be vital component to NCRCAP's efforts to improve source water protection in rural areas. In a 20 page color comic book style novela, NCRCAP staff will take Rosalia's story with them when working in rural communities to provide training and develop planning strategies to better ensure long term water quality and quantity. This innovative educational tool addresses the need to educate water users — from grade school children to grandparents — about some of the basic ideas to protect groundwater sources from potential contaminants and to conserve water resources. An informed public will only help water system owners and operators when it comes to adopting regulatory and nonregulatory strategies needed to achieve source water protection goals. This comic book is just one of the new initiatives NCRCAP staff will be using to accomplish the goals of the RCAP/NESC SMART about Water program. NCRCAP plans to print copies in both English and Spanish which will be available later this summer.

Water Quality Concerns addressed for NC's Private Well Users

Legislation passed in 2006 will require all NC's 100 counties to have new well construction, inspecting, and testing programs in place by July 1, 2008 for any new well or reconstructed well. Prior to this legislation, only 35 counties had any well construction programs in place and only 14 counties tested new wells for anything other than bacteriological contamination. This legislation accomplishes two important things. First, all NC health departments will soon be able to ensure that wells are constructed according to state well construction standards and determine that the initial water quality meets drinking water standards. Second, the requirements allow the state to monitor groundwater quality for a range of contaminants. Any new or reconstructed well will have its water sampled and analyzed for biological contamination as well as a number of naturally occurring contaminants that are the result of the underlying geology in some parts of the state (i.e. radon, arsenic, and radium) and chemical contaminants if historical landuse information indicates that these might be a problem. It's important to note that this legislation only affects new wells and that there are many pre-existing wells out there that are currently contaminated with naturally occurring or humanmade contaminants that will continue to go undetected unless the homeowner regularly tests their well.

Another piece of legislation passed in 2006 establishes the Bernard Allen Memorial Emergency Drinking Water Fund. This fund addresses the need of current well users who have contaminated water by providing grant funding to get clean water to these well owners. Typically this is done by extending municipal water lines. The legislation also requires notification of well users within 1500 feet of a known contamination site and assistance with getting their well water tested. With more than 2 million North Carolinians dependent on private wells for drinking water, these pieces of legislation are important to ensuring water quality and addressing problems for well users.