

June 2007

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  
8 projects  
5 Board Trainings

EPA Wastewater  
3 projects  
1 workshop

EPA Safe Drinking Water  
3 projects  
1 workshop

OCS  
3 projects  
1 Board Training

## Recent Project Highlights in North Carolina

### NCRCAP's Rich Holder Digs Deep to Forge Broad Coalition

The Western NC Septic Repair project promises to keep Rich Holder knee deep, in some cases shoulder-deep, in tank holes and trenches most of the summer. Rich will be coordinating the efforts of some 70+ volunteers who will travel to a multicounty region in the mountains of NC to hand dig septic systems for seven to ten very low income households. Rich takes his experience as a registered sanitarian and couples it with his desire to create innovative solutions to some of the regions worst instances of failing systems and straightpipes. The result is a project that will bring together funders, regulators, housing agencies, material manufacturers, and volunteers who are willing to spend a week of their summer doing hard labor. This broad partnership works roughly like this: Rich works with local Health departments and the Wastewater Discharge Elimination program of NC Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources to identify some of the most severe wastewater violations in targeted watersheds in western NC, housing and watershed protection agencies provide funding for materials or materials are donated from manufacturers, and then Rich works with volunteers from Emanuel Lutheran Services and ReCreation Experience to dig where no back hoe could easily dig. Rich



will ensure that each system is installed according to applicable onsite wastewater and plumbing regulations and review maintenance requirements with homeowners. The result is much needed assistance to households who would be unable to pay for such repairs and elimination of water quality impacts and public health threats. Due to Rich's efforts, this project is garnering some national attention and will be highlighted in the July issues of the journal *On-site Installer*. To supplement Southeast RCAP's support for this effort, NCRCAP was awarded funding from the Pigeon River Fund and the Community Foundation of Western NC. For a full list of partners visit NCRCAP's website at [www.nrcap.org](http://www.nrcap.org).

*Read profiles of two households participating in the Septic Repair Project this summer on page 2*

### NCRCAP's Wastewater Management Workshop Draws Diverse Audience

On May 22nd, approximately 55 attendees including residents, town and county commissioners, regulators, system operators, and funding agencies learned about decentralized wastewater options for rural NC communities. Extension specialists from North Carolina State University, private sector system designers, and NCRCAP staff presented information on the technology options, operation and maintenance requirements,

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Dave Lindbo (on septic tank) with NC State University prepares to bring participants into the field.

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and strategic planning necessary to consider decentralized wastewater systems as a viable community wide solution. The workshop took place at the NC State University Vernon James Research Station in Plymouth. This facility has demonstrations of available technologies so participants could see in-the-field examples of on-site wastewater technologies complimented with presentation material on management options and cost comparisons. NCRCAP plans to repeat this workshop in the fall at a similar NC State facility in Fletcher, NC. This workshop will be geared toward the decentralized wastewater issues faced by western NC communities.

**“Need a repeat performance of the workshop. There are additional staff from my community who should attend!”** — evaluation from local government participant

**“I’ve been trained to think ‘one house at a time’. Now I’ve broadened my mindset to entire communities.”**  
— evaluation from local government participant

### NCRCAP Plans Expanded Scope of its Healthy Homes for All Program

Healthy Homes for All provides environmental health and housing information to the rural Latino community through outreach events and education. With a recently awarded 2 year grant from the U.S. EPA, NCRCAP’s Latino Outreach Coordinator, Marcia Perritt, will expand this program to develop a pilot Environmental Health Promotora and comic novella project. Promotora programs are based on the model of peer education and are a common model for lay health advisor programs. Marcia will work with approximately eight community volunteers to complete training on fundamental environmental health knowledge and leadership skills. The trained volunteers would serve as well-informed community guides able to link others to relevant resources to address safe drinking water and other environmental health issues. Comic novellas use drawings and dialogue ‘balloons’ (much like a comic strip) and are a common media form to Latin American immigrants. Comic novellas are becoming an important educational tool used by organizations to convey information to a population with low literacy levels. NCRCAP is excited about the potential created by this additional EPA funding to supplement Southeast RCAP’s OCS program support.

### Western NC Septic Repair >>> Two Household Profiles

The Wilson’s of Yancy County are ready to welcome the 15-20 volunteers from Recreation Experience this summer to connect their home to a functioning septic system and renovate their deteriorated bathroom. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson, who are in their eighties, struggle to safely maneuver around their bathroom because of a weakened floor and physical challenges. They currently straight pipe all their wastewater which quickly finds it’s way to a nearby stream.



Through the Western NC Septic Repair project, NCRCAP and its project partners eliminates wastewater straight pipes like this one.

Rich Holder, NCRCAP’s Community Resource Coordinator, explains, “The bathroom upgrade will really help the Wilson’s a lot and the septic repair will clean up the stream.” This repair may be the most straight forward of the summer, as the volunteers can simply connect the Wilson’s plumbing to an abandoned septic system on an adjacent piece of property. The work will still be challenging, however, since it involves digging a 200 ft trench through very rocky soil.

Ms. Howell, a 91 year resident also of Yancy County, explained to Rich Holder that she’s, “really looking forward to having that mess out of her front yard.” The mess she refers to is the surfacing effluent from her failing drainfield. The failure happens to lie with twenty feet of the swing set for the Bald Creek Elementary School posing a clear public health threat to students. In fact, Rich witnessed during his first visit to Mrs. Howell’s house, children standing in the failure attracted by butterflies which tend to light upon patches of effluent and sewage.

The Wilsons and Ms. Howell are two of the seven to ten households who will receive assistance through the Septic Repair program this summer. In the next state report, you will read about the experiences of the volunteers who will have completed these challenging projects and more about Rich Holder’s role in ensuring that all the pieces to this multi partner effort come together just right.