

April 2005

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

2nd Quarter Project Totals

Technitrain
11 projects
3 Board Trainings

EPA Wastewater
3 projects

EPA Safe Drinking Water
2 projects

OCS
3 projects

Recent Highlights in North Carolina

Bathroom Addition Moved to Family Living Without the Basics

On Wednesday, February 16th, 2005 a bathroom unit was transported from the Central Carolina Community College Siler City campus to a family near Seagrove in Randolph County living without indoor bathroom facilities.

NCRCAP's Safe Housing Initiative (SHI) program is designed to address the severe housing needs of very low-income households in Chatham and Randolph counties. Our primary focus is to work with families currently living without indoor plumbing, a protected water source, and/or an appropriate means of wastewater disposal. To this end, NCRCAP provides services such as housing rehabilitation, construction of bathroom additions, installation of septic systems and wells,

and assistance with accessing federal low-interest loans and grants. Since the start of the program, NCRCAP has assisted almost 30 households and is currently working with eight families to eliminate the health and safety hazards posed by substandard housing.

The Safe Housing Initiative began in 1998 when NCRCAP recognized the need of rural residents living without basic services and teamed up with a group of volunteers from the NC American Water Works Association/Water Environment Federation to build a bathroom for a Chatham County family. NCRCAP was also assisting households with tapping into county-administered Community Development Block Grant Funds for housing repairs. NCRCAP then began to look for ways to expand our housing rehabilitation/bathroom construction program to begin to



From Left: Gaby Fornari, NCRCAP Construction Coordinator; Cladie McSwain, recipient of the new bathroom; and Listeen Headen, McSwain's daughter

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meet the obvious need of rural area families.

With limited funding sources available to address housing rehabilitation in rural areas, NCRCAP created a network of partners and resources to further expand the capacity of the Safe Housing Initiative program. Primary funding for completing the rehabilitation work comes from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Housing Preservation Grant Program. Other key partners include: Central Carolina Community College, Chatham County, Joint Orange Chatham Community Action, Randolph County, Regional Consolidated Services, Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, and numerous professionals and companies who have provided donations of materials, charged reduced rates for services, or have volunteered their time. The need for this type of renovation program is crucial, as evidenced by our current list of families waiting to enroll into the SHI program. As a result, NCRCAP is already making plans to continue the program next fall.

Step-wise Progress in Hollister

Hollister, an unincorporated community in Halifax County, is unique in that the majority of its population is comprised of a minority community made up of African Americans and Native Americans. Hollister is also one of the poorest communities in North Carolina, where decent housing, clean water, and safe wastewater disposal are major needs. However, the community is one step closer to addressing their wastewater concerns as Halifax County was recently awarded a \$40,000 Capacity Building Grant from the North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center. The grant application, prepared by NCRCAP, will fund a project to develop a wastewater feasibility study for the Meadows Sewer District. This award, combined with a previous award Hollister REACH Community Development organization received from HUD's Rural Housing and Economic Development grant program, will assist the community in addressing problems with failing on-site septic systems and evaluating feasible options regarding the wastewater issues that have continued to plague Hollister.

During the first half of the 2004-2005 program year, NC RCAP has met major milestones while working with Hollister REACH. NCRCAP placed an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer within the community to assist with the organization's Alternative Wastewater Systems Campaign project, was integral in the formation of the Meadows Sewer District, and has recommended the community form an advisory committee that would represent the community's interests to the Halifax County Board of Commissioners that also acts as the

Meadows Sewer District Board of Directors. NC RCAP will work closely with the newly identified sewer advisory committee to establish its organizational structure, both within the community and with the county.

NCRCAP anticipates playing a strong advisory role in Hollister as the community moves to contract with the grant award. NCRCAP will also refine the data collected under the HUD RHED Alternative Wastewater Systems project and apply this information appropriately with the forthcoming feasibility study. As a result, NC RCAP will continue to assist Halifax County, Hollister REACH, and the Meadows Sewer District Advisory Committee as they work to resolve the wastewater concerns of this community.

West End Partnerships

The West End Revitalization Association (WERA) formed in 1994 to address environmental justice issues in subdivisions within the City of Mebane's Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction. These neighborhoods had been denied water, wastewater, and solid waste services, along with other city-wide services such as street paving and school bus routing.

During this program year, NCRCAP has been assisting WERA and local units of government to identify and obtain the resources necessary to extend services to its constituent neighborhoods. Public drinking water system research and case studies were examined so that community members may be proactive in ensuring they have safe water to drink. NCRCAP also collaborated with partners from the UNC Environmental Finance Center and the UNC School of Public Health on demographic delineation issues. As a partner in WERA's Collaborative Problem Solving Partnership grant program, NCRCAP has participated in meetings to help the Association develop obtainable milestones so they may reach their end goal of obtaining basic services.

NCRCAP will continue to be a project partner to the West End Revitalization Association in the coming months. In an effort to help the community better cope with the on-going processes of protecting their water supply, NCRCAP will host a septic system maintenance training and conduct a 'ground-truthing' to identify faulty septic systems and other identified threats. These efforts will not only help improve the immediate living conditions of residents, but should also contribute towards funding programs to minimize or alleviate environmental health risks.