

**Orange County  
Commission for the Environment**

**DRAFT Meeting Summary**

**June 10, 2013**

**Southern Human Services Center, Chapel Hill**

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MEMBERS PRESENT: David Neal (Chair), Jan Sassaman (Vice Chair), May Becker, Loren Hintz, Jeanette O'Connor, Steve Niezgoda, Gary Saunders

ABSENT: Lucy Adams, Terri Buckner, Peter Cada, Tom O'Dwyer, David Welch, Sam Yellen

STAFF: Rich Shaw, Tom Davis, Malcolm Munkittrick (DEAPR Research Associate)

GUESTS: Donna Lee Jones (CFE prospect), Pat Davis (OWASA), Ruth Rouse (OWASA)

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- I. **Call to Order** – Neal called the meeting to order at 7:34 pm.
- II. **Additions or Changes to Agenda** – None
- III. **Introduction of New CFE Members** – Neal welcomed three of the four new CFE members appointed by the BOCC on May 21 (Jones, Niezgoda, O'Connor; Enoch was absent). Each member described his or her background, training, and interest in serving on this advisory board. Jones pointed out that she has yet to receive authorization from her employer so she remains a guest and will not yet participate as a voting member.
- IV. **Approval of Minutes** – Neal asked if there were any comments on the draft summary. Becker clarified some of the statements attributed to her in the discussion of food waste collection and composting. Saunders motioned to approve the April 8 meeting summary as amended; seconded by Sassaman. Motion approved unanimously.
- V. **OWASA Forest Management** – Shaw provided a brief overview of the written materials in the meeting packet for this item: summary and photos from the May 2 tour, and a thank you letter to OWASA on behalf of the CFE. He recognized Pat Davis and Ruth Rouse were in attendance to observe and answer any questions from members.

Hintz asked what improvements to wildlife habitat were expected from the forest management activities. Ruth Rouse said OWASA was required to acquire the so-called mitigation tract property to help compensate for the loss of wildlife habitat due to the creation of the Cane Creek Reservoir. She said the Corps of Engineers 404 permit also required there be a forest management plan for the property. OWASA hired David Halley (True North, forestry consultant) to prepare a plan in consultation with the NC Wildlife Resources Commission, the NC Forest Service, and others. She noted there was no expertise on the OWASA staff so they relied on the guidance of experts.

Sassaman said Tom O'Dwyer could not attend tonight's meeting, but he had contacted CFE members in advance to suggest the CFE express its satisfaction with the forest management plan for the Cane Creek Mitigation Tract and to ask OWASA for a land stewardship plan or policy for its other properties, such as those lands that surround the Cane Creek Reservoir. Pat Davis said OWASA has no management plan or stewardship policy for its other properties. He said a draft plan was prepared and

circulated for comments in November 2010, but OWASA staff has not yet received direction from its board of directors to revise the plan. Davis said OWASA staff intends to respond to the comments received from the CFE and several others, but won't do so until authorized by the OWASA board.

Becker said she is concerned with active forest management on land in water supply watersheds, and asked why water quality experts were not used to development the forest management plan. Davis explained OWASA consulted natural resource agencies with staff having expertise in water resources. He noted the planned buffer widths far exceed those recommended by the State of North Carolina. Becker said she is also concerned by the planned use of herbicides and the potential for chemicals entering ground water. Davis said herbicides will be applied by licensed people that will target certain unwanted species using backpack sprayers. Spraying will occur infrequently.

Niezgoda asked for clarification on insect infestation and invasive species removal. Davis explained what types of unwanted species can and do occur on these sites.

Sassaman asked Davis and Rouse what the CFE could do for OWASA, if anything, to support its desire to manage its forestlands responsibly. They said had already received comments from the CFE and intend to respond to those comments and consider them in revising the forest management plan for the other OWASA-owned properties. Davis said he would welcome any further statement from the CFE that would identify specific concerns and what safeguards the CFE would like to see before it could support a plan.

Neal and Sassaman recommended continuing this discussion and considering the OWASA staff's request at the August meeting. They noted O'Dwyer and Buckner were absent and would likely want to participate in any CFE decision to take further action.

*[At this point Neal excused himself, noting that he needed to leave this meeting for another appointment. Sassaman took over as chair of the meeting.]*

VI. **State of the Environment 2014** – Shaw provided a brief overview of the written materials in the meeting packet for this item: memo with 2014 SOE report draft timeframe and initial ideas for changes from the 2009 report, and 209 table of contents. Shaw introduced Malcolm Munkittrick, a UNC graduate student and DEAPR research associate who will work on the State of the Environment report over the summer.

Munkittrick explained what he has worked on thus far, including a review of the 2009 environmental indicators, updating the data through 2013, and identifying potential improvements to the graphics and layout. He reviewed some of the potential changes to the document outlined in the memo—among them his interest in including references to relevant goals and objectives in the Orange County Comprehensive Plan.

Munkittrick asked CFE members for initial feedback and guidance on what they would like to see in the 2014 report. The following were among the suggestions provided:

- Include an executive summary at front of the report [Sassaman]
- Include specific recommendations in the “What You Can Do” section; not just links to other websites (e.g., list of native plants) [O'Connor]
- Include “What You Can Do” information as part of the executive summary (rather than waiting until end of report) [J. O'Connor]
- Consider including trend data on local bird, amphibian, and mammal populations, rather than including just the rare plants and animals; See ebird website [Hintz]

- Recognize County's landfill methane gas capture and reuse at UNC [Sassaman]
- Speak to Blair Pollock about environmental indicators for solid waste; see also recycling data contained County's solid waste plan, available on line [Sassaman]
- Acknowledge the recommendations at front of the 2009 SOE; indicate whether there was any progress for each [Niezgoda]
- Include potential effects of fracking on Orange County [Sassaman, others]
- Consider including info./restrictions about owning exotic animals [Niezgoda]
- Consider including a summary scorecard of some kind in the execute summary

CFE members discussed their role as the steering committee for developing this report, and asked how they could help prior to the August CFE meeting, given Munkittrick's internship ends in late August. Munkittrick said he has already gathered a lot of the data for updating the 2009 report and is now ready to add new information and improve the report format and contents.

CFE members asked Munkittrick if he could prepare a draft 2014 SOE report outline by mid-July. Munkittrick said he would do his best, and in the meantime he will solicit further guidance and feedback from CFE members via email.

VII. **CFE Liaison to the OUTBoard** – Shaw reported the CFE has been asked for a representative to serve as a liaison to the Orange Unified Transportation Board, also known as the OUTBoard. He described the charge of this group and noted that new CFE member, Susie Enoch, was also a member of the OUTBoard. Saunders noted his long-term interest in this subject and offered to serve on this board. Hintz motioned to recommend Saunders be considered for appointment to the OUTBoard as the CFE representative; seconded by Niezgoda. The motion was approved unanimously.

VIII. **Updates and Information Items** – Information on the following subjects was in the meeting materials and acknowledged: a) a film about industrial hemp production, b) community solid waste forum, c) "The Nature of Orange" photography contest, d) revised Orange Co. energy, water & fuel conservation policies, e) the County's energy, water & fuel performance report for 2012, and f) recent UNC Sustainability newsletter.

Sassaman provided a brief summary of the May 30 community solid waste forum, which was co-sponsored by the CFE and the Chapel Hill Sustainability Committee.

Shaw called attention to information provided by O'Dwyer and his request that the CFE consider co-sponsoring a screening of a film promoting the benefits of growing industrial hemp. Shaw said O'Dwyer would like the CFE to collaborate with other advisory boards, such as the Agricultural Preservation Board and the Economic Development Commission to show this film and invite the board of county commissioners. CFE members recommended waiting for more information from O'Dwyer in August.

Finally, Shaw reported on the results of this year's photography contest ("The Nature of Orange"), which was co-sponsored by the CFE. He said there were 71 entries, which was up 40 percent from last year. Shaw said the contest winners will be announced the following week and he will send the winning photos to the CFE by email.

IX. **Adjournment** – Sassaman adjourned the meeting at 9:34 pm.