

**Orange County  
Commission for the Environment**

**Meeting Summary**

**March 14, 2015**

**Orange County Solid Waste Administration Building, Chapel Hill**

---

PRESENT: Lydia Wegman (Chair), May Becker, Lynne Gronback, Loren Hintz, Bill Kaiser, Bill Newby

ABSENT: Peter Cada, Thomas Eisenhart, Jeanette O'Connor, Rebecca Ray, Sheila Thomas-Ambat, David Welch

STAFF: Tom Davis, Brennan Bouma

GUEST: Muriel Williman

---

- I. **Call to Order** – Wegman called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm, and noted there was not a quorum of members present
- II. **Additions or Changes to Agenda** – There were none.
- III. **Minutes** – Wegman asked for comments on the February 8 meeting summary. There were none, but no action was taken due to the lack of a quorum of members present.
- IV. **Energy and Water Usage - County Buildings & Facilities** – Bouma provided an update on Orange County sustainability projects, including 2015 energy and water usage figures for County-owned buildings and facilities.

Bouma reported that each year Asset Management Services (AMS) and other departments update the BOCC on the County's progress toward meeting its goal of environmental responsibility, which was adopted in 2005. He said representatives from many departments formed the Environmental Stewardship Advisory Committee and together they developed specific objectives for environmental responsibility. The committee's name will be changed to the Environment and Sustainability Advisory Committee to reflect the role of the new Sustainability Coordinator in reconvening it.

Bouma reported that in FY14 the County's energy usage reduction (measured as MMbtu/sqft) was at 17% below the baseline year of FY 2010, which was ahead of its goal for that year. He and his colleagues will be calculating FY15 progress in the next few weeks. Bouma noted that these analyses only includes County buildings and only those funded through tax revenues, not fee-supported facilities like the SportsPlex or those of the Solid Waste Management Department.

Bouma said the County's water usage reduction goals are being met, but the fuel use reduction goals are actually trending upwards. He said part of that trend is due to the Sherriff's Office and Emergency Services vehicles having to drive more miles. Bouma said has been working with both of those fleet users since last year's numbers were reported, and is hopeful that these efforts will show up as an mpg improvement. With Emergency Services he has been using a grant to pilot the use of idle reduction technologies, and with the Sherriff's Office he has been using a grant to pilot the use of bi-fuel propane-powered vehicles. Bouma explained that propane vehicles could provide a carbon emissions reduction and operations cost reduction benefit, while using a domestically produced energy source.

Bouma reported that another sustainability project the County is involved in is trying to figure out a way to get solar panels on the roof of the Rogers Road Community Center. He said it has been a learning process and one that had built good relationships.

Bouma then introduced Muriel Williman with the Orange County Solid Waste Management Department. Bouma and Williman discussed their collaboration in support of waste reduction at County events that serve food through their Waste Wise Events initiative. This will be a voluntary program to educate and facilitate low or zero waste. Williman said she is also available to work with residents for events outside the county.

CFE members provided feedback on draft Waste Wise materials:

- If these materials will be available to county residents, providing them in paper form is an important outreach tool. Robo-calls are also in schools beyond email.
- The schools have someone police the waste stream
- Checklist
  - Encourage volunteers to bring reusable containers (e.g., Tupperware) to take home leftovers; have containers for participants to take food home.
  - Remind people several times throughout the meeting about the opportunity to reduce waste and compost
    - Add Waste Wise talking points for during the event as a separate tool or add to one of the other tools
- On the caterer list, put the “Serves in Bulk” in green as an essential item
  - Add an intro statement at top of the caterer list to let people know how those caterers were chosen
  - Also move the statement about “If you’d like to be added...”, to the top.
- On the purchasing guide, add an “Item numbers updated as of \_\_\_\_ [date]”

Wegman thanked Bouma and Williman for their information.

Davis asked to reorder the next two items on the agenda, and to discuss the CFE outreach items and opportunities first. Wegman agreed to making that change.

- VI. **CFE Outreach Opportunities / News Articles** – Davis reviewed a list of recent and proposed CFE news articles intended to educate and inform the public about issues highlighted in the Orange County State of the Environment. He noted that there is a need for identifying new topics for 2016.

Kaiser suggested the CFE produce an article about climate change and the evidence of human-caused influences on climate change. Wegman noted it will need to be limited to 600 words. Davis noted the CFE could prepare a series of articles on this topic. Bouma said the CFE could summarize information from other articles rather than writing its own.

Gronback said as a school teacher she often wonders about the effects of poverty on the environment. She said she has noticed increased littering along certain roadsides and perhaps the disparity of income among different parts of the community influences how certain neighborhoods care about the protection of natural resources. Gronback said she does not know yet what kind of article might be suitable but she wants the CFE to be mindful of this going on in our community.

CFE members agreed it would be good to change the frequency of news articles to quarterly, but will wait for a quorum to vote on this matter.

Bouma suggested other outreach opportunities, such as the Last Friday events in Hillsborough and the upcoming Earth Evening event on April 29 in Hillsborough. Hintz suggested that CFE members volunteer at these events. Wegman and Hintz said better signage is needed to direct people to the Earth Evening venue because last year it was not easy to find due to the other things going on in downtown Hillsborough. Bouma said he would reiterate that request to Marabeth Carr and other Earth Evening organizers.

Davis said this year's Earth Evening will include tables with information from DEAPR, Eno River Association, Solid Waste Management, 4H, and several other entities. He said there will be a display about the new Hollow Rock Nature Park that will open in May. Davis also noted a Movie in the Park will occur immediately following the Earth Evening. CFE members discussed the possibility of showing worthwhile environmental documentaries in the future, which might help draw people to the event.

Davis asked for volunteers to help at Last Fridays and Earth Evening. Kaiser said he would like to help out and suggested this be on the April meeting agenda.

Wegman thanked Davis and Bouma for the information and asked that this matter be discussed further at the April meeting.

- V. **Impaired Streams in Orange County** – Davis presented a draft list of “impaired” rivers and streams in Orange County that was released recently by the State of North Carolina. He first showed a map of the impaired surface waters across the entire state, noting how these rivers and streams tend to be concentrated around urban areas.

Davis explained that the NC Division of Water Resources assigns a designated use to surface water bodies (such as drinkable, swimmable, or fishable), and then assesses each water body using a variety of standards to determine if they are meeting that use. If a river or stream is not meeting the designated use they are included on the “303d list” of impaired waters. Davis said after the State releases its list and receives public comment, the list and methodology goes to the US EPA for approval. The US EPA will usually focus on reviewing methodology, and will rarely challenge specific State findings.

Davis reported that all the waters in the state are considered “impaired” for fish consumption due to mercury from coal fired power plants, however that is not a reason to include them on the 303d list.

Davis said over 1,200 waterways in the state were identified as impaired under Category 5 assessments, which require a determination of the TMDL (Total Max Daily Load, or how much of a particular chemical a water can body assimilate and still function). He explained that a TMDL caps pollution allowed in that watershed. This total is then split among the known sources of that pollution and fines can be levied if those sources exceed their allotment. Davis said short of a TMDL, under Category 4 a waterway might be covered by a nutrient load restriction like Jordan Lake Rules. Category 4 waters are impaired, but (by definition) are not included on the 303d list. They do not need the development of a TMDL because they are “covered” by an alternative to a TMDL, such as the Jordan Lake Nutrient Management Strategy.

Davis said a lack of healthy populations of benthic macroinvertebrates is often the reason why a stream is designated as impaired. Assessments occur no more than once every five years in selected waterways. Monitoring does not always occur in the same season, which can lead to varying results. Droughts also impact the results significantly.

Also there are usually only one or two samples for long stretches of a waterway, which doesn't account for varying conditions along the length of the waterway.

Davis reported on the Orange County waterways on the 2016 draft 303d list of impaired waters. A segment of the East Fork Eno River from Halls Mill Road to Dry Run was added to the 303d list due to benthos, but a segment of the main stem of the Eno River above Corporation Lake was removed. A small segment of Morgan Creek below confluence with Meeting of the Waters Creek was added to the list due to the degraded quality of the fish community present.

Davis was asked whether OWASA gets involved in protecting drinking water source quality. He said OWASA likely gets involved with managing the algae that grow in its reservoirs as they can impact the taste of drinking water.

Wegman thanked Davis for his presentation.

- VII. **Updates and Information Items** – Information on the following subjects was provided in the meeting package; selected items were discussed: a) CFE membership roster, b) CFE Committee priorities (revised draft), c) Eno River hydrilla management update, d) coal ash dump in Chapel Hill, e) “The Nature of Orange” photo contest 2016, f) Solarize the Triangle campaign, g) green schools cost assessment, and h) widespread problems caused by a natural gas leak in California.
- VIII. **Adjournment** – Wegman adjourned the meeting at 9:30 pm.

Summary by Rich Shaw, DEAPR Staff