

PLANNING & INSPECTIONS DEPARTMENT  
Craig N. Benedict, AICP, Director

Engineering / Erosion  
Control / Stormwater  
(919) 245-2575  
(919) 644-3002 (FAX)  
www.orangecountync.gov



131 W. Margaret Lane  
Suite 201  
P. O. Box 8181  
Hillsborough, NC 27278



April 15, 2016

Open Letter to the Residents of Orange County

SUBJECT: Concerns about Erosion & Sedimentation Control

Dear Resident,

I would like to thank you for being on the lookout for potential violations of the Sedimentation and Pollution Control Act of 1972 (SPCA). We regularly hear from residents expressing concerns about possible erosion and sedimentation control violations.

Permitting and oversight of land disturbing activities is delegated to Orange County by the North Carolina Sedimentation Control Commission (SCC). Orange County has an interlocal agreement with the Towns of Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Hillsborough and the City of Mebane to administer this Erosion & Sedimentation Control Program within the Town/City limits.

Turbid waters can be indicative of unpermitted activity, permitted upstream or adjacent land disturbance where permitted erosion & sedimentation control measures are in need of maintenance or possibly even failing, in violation of the SPCA. Because of this, we appreciate Orange County's "resident inspectors" letting us know when they suspect such may be the case. We promptly follow up on each reported concern. The Orange County Erosion Control web page is a great place to start, when you have an erosion & sedimentation control concern. There is a hyperlink in the first paragraph, complaints and unauthorized land disturbances, which should launch your e-mail client with Wesley Poole's e-mail address. Wesley is one of our senior erosion control officers that I have designated as a point person to screen such concerns. He will direct the investigation and response.

As a matter of public education (one of the many responsibilities contained in our Memorandum of Agreement with the SCC), I would like to invite you to read through the great discussion presented under Factors that Influence Turbidity, specifically Water Flow and Weather, in the well-referenced Fondriest Environmental (linked) article, which contains the following quote:

***Weather, particularly heavy rainfall, also affects water flow, which in turn affects turbidity. Rainfall can increase stream volume and thus stream flow, which can re-suspend settled sediments and erode riverbanks.***

The 1985 USGS publication, entitled Water Quality of North Carolina Streams contains some characteristic descriptions of note on Page F16:

***Sediment problems in the Piedmont province of North Carolina are particularly severe because of the nature of the soils. Soils of this region are predominantly clays. These clays are highly erodible and, once eroded, the fine clay particles remain in suspension for long periods of time.***

I believe the UNC School of Education has done an admirable job of describing the Urban Stream Problem (a good short read). This trend is more related to urban development in general than those measures implemented during construction to control erosion and capture sediment, which is the focus of Orange County's erosion control program. **I reference it here to illustrate why urban streams may experience an increase in turbidity during rain events, even though there is no construction activity nearby or when we find upstream / adjacent activity to be in compliance with their land disturbance permit.**

I and the team of highly trained staff which I supervise are proud to be in your service and in the business of protecting the environment on which we depend. I want to remind all of you that all the water on earth has been here since creation; it is all we have and there is no more being made. Treasure and care for it. Be good stewards of the earth.

Sincerely,



Howard W. Fleming, Jr., PE  
Engineering/Stormwater (Division) Supervisor  
Orange County Planning and Inspections Department  
(919) 245-2586 (W)  
(919) 357-7748 (M)  
hfleming@orangecountync.gov

