Stakeholder Meeting Notes
Eden Area Watershed Restoration Plan
September 17, 2015 – 10:00 a.m.
City Hall, Eden, NC

Participants:	Shari Bryant – NC Wildlife Resources Commission	Paul Clark, NC DWR
	Jenny Edwards – Dan River Basin Association	Malinda Ford – Piedmont Triad Regional Council
	Tiffany Haworth – Dan River Basin Association	Brooke Massa – NC Wildlife Resources Commission
	Kevin Moore – Rockingham County Soil & Water Conservation District	Judy Ratcliffe, NC Natural Heritage Program
	Cy Stober – Piedmont Triad Regional Council	Rickie White – NatureServe

Purpose of Meeting

- To briefly recap the work done on the *Eden Area Watershed Restoration Plan* to date and the work all stakeholders have done in the interim
- To discuss *Plan*'s next steps – specifically the creation of a project atlas from available data and the rolling out of a public engagement campaign

Welcome and Self-Introductions

Paul Clark is on the Watershed Restoration & Improvement Team (WRIT) and the Use Restoration Team at DEQ, and his purpose is to facilitate projects such as this, ideally ensuring their implementation and recovery of waters to "supporting" status

Brooke Massa is at the meeting to get an update on project progress, and her role with the WRC's Green Growth Toolbox is to work with groups like this one to protect and improve natural resources for the public good.

Jenny Edwards is attending as the only representative of both the local and environmental stakeholders groups. She was involved throughout the prior planning effort and has a personal and professional interest in implementing the plan effectively.

Kevin Moore has been a stakeholder throughout this planning project, representing the agricultural community. He has been key staff in applying USEPA 319 funds on the ground to reduce non-point sources of pollution to the Dan River Basin and Jordan Lake watershed in Rockingham County.

Shari Bryant is there as an expert on aquatic biology and a long-term project stakeholder. She wants to ensure that the project includes all of the available updates on species listed to the endangered, threatened, and "of concern" lists.

Judy Ratcliffe works to track wildlife throughout North Carolina, and wants to see plans like this one that can protect and improve their habitats put to work. She specifically wants to make sure that the expanded presence of the Roanoke log perch is integrated into the plan and that it is a priority within the project atlas. She also recommends that the PTRC include TR Russ, the NHP's new wildlife biologist for the Dan River Basin into this process, as he can focus more energy and time on this effort than she can.

Eden Area Watershed Restoration Plan

Cy Stober discussed the prior 30-month planning project and what its results yielded. These finding are the foundation of all next steps, but chiefly the creation of a project atlas that the stakeholders can use this winter to apply for projects that can improve conditions in the watershed. Central to these discussions were the findings of NCSU's Cooperative Extension team, which was contracted to use a GWLF model in this watershed to determine where and what its priorities should be. It was highlighted that, for under $0.5 million, the model estimates fecal inputs could be reduced to levels that would no longer impair the Dan River and its tributaries.

Kevin noted that nearly all of the cattle in Rockingham County are kept on smaller farms and, therefore, on feedlots. They rarely get to feed in a pasture, so the presumption that restoring stream buffers and placing fences along streams would be directly related to fecal inputs is probably too bold. Rather, the cattle and their waste are concentrated at these feedlots.

Judy observed that this effectively makes these feedlots point sources of fecal pollution. She asked if there are any strategies to feed cattle to reduce their water quality impacts and/or any best management practices to treat this waste before it enters local waters.

Kevin responded that the farmers generally simply don't have enough land to move cattle around and spread out their manure. He also said that he hasn't had a farmer take him up on direct treatment of the waste downhill of the feedlot. Nor was he aware of research that shows the value of buffers even under these more concentrated situations.

Brooke observed that on the 2014 303(d) list of impaired waters, the Dan River has been removed as an impaired body of water. She asked if DEQ or anyone else has information on why.

Paul replied that the DEQ is using a new vetting process to determine water quality impairment – enough data is collected to inspire a 90% confidence level and that 10% or more of these data exceed the North Carolina water quality standards. This standard is more scientific than the one previously applied to the state's waters – the Dan River does not have

enough data to inspire enough confidence by DEQ to make a use support decision.

Judy stated that she is aware of a substantial amount of citizen data collected within the Dan River that could be used.

Tiffany Haworth stated that DEQ has not accepted the data that DRBA collects for this very purpose… even though VA DEQ accepts data collected using an identical methodology in the same river basin.

Paul replied that two individuals may be able to assist her in this matter – Cam McNutt and Pam Behm.

Cy responded that these staff have actually been resistant to accepting data, to the frustration of many throughout North Carolina. He also stated that there will be a workshop on October 29 to discuss this matter and hopefully begin opening the state to being more receptive to accepting citizen data and applying it for the purposes of use support decision making.

Rickie White is co-organizing this meeting and offered to share information with anyone interested in attending.

GIS and Watershed Priorities in the Eden Area Watershed

Malinda Ford presented a recap of the GIS data that the PTRC has available to prioritize projects in this watershed – especially that generated by the NCSU model. She also detailed the ways the PTRC has done this in other watersheds and other data – including that resulting from recent work – that will be unique to the Eden Area Watershed. (*see attached copy of presentation*)

Cy noted that the PTRC has organized project atlases using different scales and lenses, and is open to doing so for this watershed. It can prioritize individual parcels, hydrologic catchments, or stream reaches. He noted that Sarah McRae from the US Fish and Wildlife Service has voiced a preference for reaches, but is willing to work with the stakeholders on developing an agreed upon scale.

Kevin noted that the data will be easily integrated into his annual SWCD work plan, which is ideal.

Paul noted that catchments will include parcels, and catchments are easier for DEQ to monitor. If progress is managed at the catchment scale, multiple parcels can be accounted for and the contributions of individual projects can be determined.

Judy would like to prioritize catchments and identify parcels with priority projects on them in the project atlas.

Cy observed that the project atlas will feature a cost-benefit analysis of priorities, however they are organized. Conservation priorities will be assessed according to their avoided costs, using the tax records to determine the value of riparian buffers and other area measurements.

The stakeholders then discussed how to best represent existing BMPs as versus recommended BMPs in the project atlas and *Plan*, as well as what additional data should be incorporated into the prioritization assessment of the watershed.

Judy wants to make sure that the NHP Managed Lands layer is represented and accounted for separately beyond just the NHP Biodiversity layer that includes it – these are properties that are already publicly-owned or serve a conversation purpose and could be hubs for conservation and recreation planning in the watershed.

Paul requested that the DENR dataset of stream conditions to prioritize – especially – potential habitats for restoration

Judy also wants the expanded log perch habitat included so that these reaches can be identified as potential or existing endangered species habitat and eligible for dedicated grant funding.

Cy then asked about how the stakeholders would prefer to weight the data inputs for the watershed model(s)

Paul has more interest in prioritizing existing sites of impact and restoration for monitoring rather than potential sites so that he can begin baseline monitoring and track any progress of water quality conditions in the catchments. He has to report annually to US EPA on progress in at least 12-digit HUC

Judy wants to highlight the use of forestry management plans as a non-structural BMP so that any landowners considering logging their parcel will use a consulting forester and receive tax benefits for the timber harvest.

Paul is concerned about over-emphasizing riparian buffer restoration. He believes that a well-supported and strategically-targeted outreach and education program can lead to buffer restoration, allowing those grant funds to be spent instead on engineered solutions that the watershed needs.

Next Steps:

- PTRC will use this feedback to develop prioritization models with outputs in October.
- The group will reconvene to review the preliminary results of these models.