

CONSERVATION WORKING GROUP UPDATE

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OVERVIEW

- ❑ **Conservation Working Group (CWG) is an interdepartmental initiative that seeks to bring together and promote collaboration among Chatham County departments/agencies whose work addresses the County's environmental goals**
- ❑ **Discuss progress on existing projects, collaborate on ideas for new projects, and connect our work with outside organizations**
- ❑ **Provide semi-annual updates to the Board of Commissioners (November to June 2026)**

SOLID WASTE & SUSTAINABILITY

Climate Action Plan

- Climate Retreat on October 17, 2025 & November 6, 2025 to discuss:
 - Current climate science and its implications for Chatham County
 - Establishing a common framework for a county climate action process
 - Clarity around roles, timelines, and expectations for climate action planning
- Climate Change Advisory Committee met and discussed a scope of work framework to create a Climate Action Plan, which was presented to the BOC at their budget retreat in January.
- The BOC approved moving forward this fiscal year with developing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the development of a Climate Action Plan. The RFP was released in early June and proposals received on June 29, 2026.
- Contract approved with Blue Strike during July BOC. Project estimated to be one year.

SOLID WASTE & SUSTAINABILITY

Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant

- Energy audits were completed at two buildings in late November & reports for these were received in January.
- The remaining audits were completed in May & the report received in June.
- The remaining grant funds will be spent on projects and strategies recommended by the audit reports.
- Collaboration between Facilities and Solid Waste & Sustainability Departments.
- Awarded through Central Pines Grant Assistance Program with CWG.

SOLID WASTE & SUSTAINABILITY

Electric Vehicle Charging Data

- Currently four County-owned stations:
 - Smithfield's in Siler City
 - Agriculture and Conference Center
 - Goldston Library
 - Performance Building
- From November 2025 through June 2026, these stations dispensed 18.7 megawatt-hours (MWh) of electricity.
 - This is a 34% increase compared to the same time-period a year before, illustrating a trend of continuous growth in use since the stations were installed.
- This is equivalent to over 2,000 gallons of gasoline → 750 round trips from Pittsboro to Raleigh (30 mpg).

SOLID WASTE & SUSTAINABILITY

Solar Data

- The solar systems on the Agriculture and Conference Center and the Solid Waste Building combined to generate over 160 MWh of electricity from November 2025 to June 2026
 - Equivalent to powering 13 NC homes a year (12,180kWh annually).

Food Waste Drop Off Pilot

- Solid Waste began a food waste drop off pilot at four County Collection Centers in November.
- Data shows that through mid-May, a total of over 19,000 pounds of food waste has been dropped off at the four centers.
- Diverting food waste from the landfill space and reduces the production of methane from landfilled waste.
- The diverted food waste is taken to a commercial composting facility in Chatham County, where it is used to create compost.

PARKS, RECREATION, & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Parkers Ridge Park in Moncure:

- Ribbon cutting held April 29th.
- Construction begins summer 2026 & opening expected summer 2027.
- Future amenities include:
 - Pump track,
 - Playground,
 - Picnic shelter with an observation deck, and
 - Scenic walking trails around the pond - designed for everyone to gather, play, and connect with nature.



George Pauly Nature Trail (Northeast District Park):

- Completed in May & a ribbon cutting ceremony was held to celebrate its opening.
- The new 0.6-mile trail traverses upland forest & wildflower meadow.
- Made possible through a donation from the Haw River Assembly in recognition of George Pauly's dedication to protecting Chatham County's natural environment.



PARKS, RECREATION, & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Pokeberry Trail (Park at Briar Chapel):

- Trail construction is underway.
- Completion expected by winter.

Deep River Trail Feasibility Study:

- RFQ posted in March.
- Contractor selected and negotiations underway.
- Kickoff expected late summer/fall.

Stewardship Work:

- Planted new pollinator-friendly flowers at The Park at Briar Chapel to provide food and habitat for bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, and other important species.
- Park techs continue invasive species removal across multiple parks.
- All Park techs participated in a six-hour invasive species “Whack Attack” with NC State Parks and Friends of the Lower Haw on March 17th, 2026.
 - The work was done on NC State Parks Pegg Tract property upstream of the 15-501 bridge.
 - Some invasive species were removed from the DOT property that P&R maintains.



ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Farm to Early Care and Education Program

- This spring, Health Department staff Savannah Overman and Dorothy Rawleigh are implementing the Farm to Early Care and Education Program with eight Chatham County childcare facilities.
- Through training, technical assistance, gardening support, and educational materials, participating programs are:
 - Starting vegetable gardens at their facilities;
 - Teaching children where food comes from;
 - Encouraging children to try healthy food.
- Moving forward, Health Department staff will collaborate with Chatham Agriculture Extension staff to connect childcare programs with local farms to purchase local foods for meals served to children.



ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Heat Awareness Week

- Chatham Health Department recognized Heat Awareness Week in May with press release on steps to stay cool.
- They also collaborated with Chatham Transit to offer free rides to cooling centers.

Combata el Calor!

¿Sabía que puede combatir el calor extremo con los viajes de Chatham Transit a centros de enfriamiento locales?

*¡Chatham Transit ofrece **viajes gratis** a centros de enfriamiento locales durante los días de calor extremo!*

Para solicitar un viaje gratis:

- Llame a Chatham Transit (919-542-5136) para reservar su viaje*

Visite tinyurl.com/ChathamHeat para suscribirse a las alertas de salud relacionadas con el calor o escanee el código QR:

*Aunque se recomienda avisar con 48 horas de anticipación, se pueden aceptar solicitudes para el mismo día según la disponibilidad.



**Centros de Enfriamientos**

- Biblioteca del Condado de Chatham (Pittsboro)
- Biblioteca Wren Memorial (Siler City)
- Biblioteca Pública de Goldston (Goldston)

Beat the Heat!

Did you know you can beat extreme heat with Chatham Transit rides to local cooling centers?

*Chatham Transit is offering **free rides** to local cooling centers during extreme heat days!*

To request a free ride:

- Sign up for Heat Health Alerts
- Get an alert on hot days
- Call Chatham Transit (919-542-5136) to reserve your ride*

Visit <https://epi.dph.ncdhhs.gov/oe/climate/heat.html> to sign up for Heat Health Alerts or scan the QR code:

*While a 48-hour notice is recommended, same-day requests may be accepted based on availability.



**Cooling Centers**

- Chatham Community Library (Pittsboro)
- Wren Memorial Library (Siler City)
- Goldston Public Library (Goldston)

GIS

Farmland Prioritization Matrix

- Collaborative effort between Soil and Water Conservation District, GIS, and the Triangle Land Conservancy.
- Assist with determining what land to preserve under the Farmland Preservation program.
- The rural model emphasizes soil quality and conservation clustering while the urban model emphasizes proximity to development and infrastructure.

Percent Slope

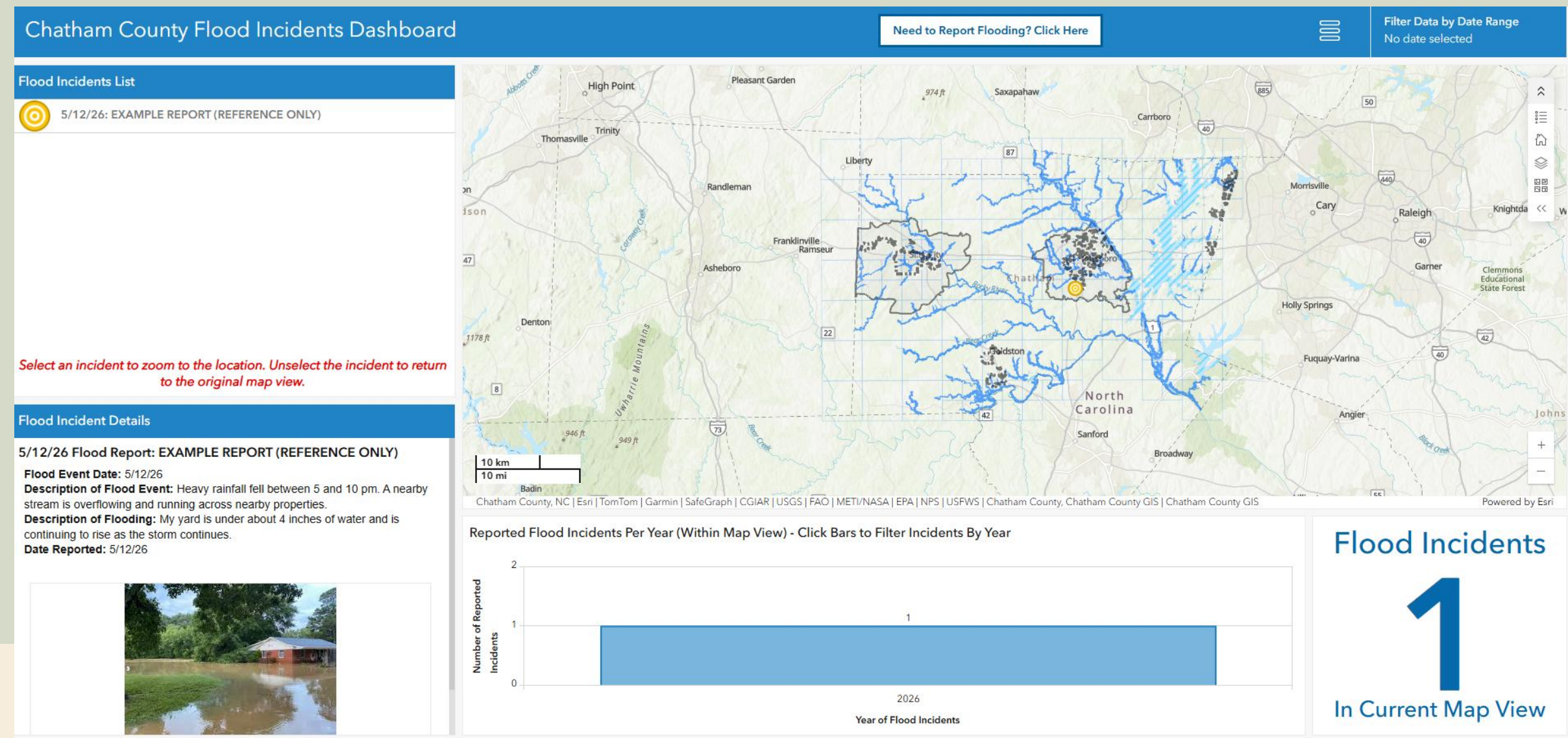
- Comprehensive Plan - Natural Resources Policy 5 Improve outreach & access to environmental data.
 - Strategy 5.1 Website Updates & creation of county GIS datasets.
- Slope is important for understanding erosion, water flow, and habitat locations.
- Located on GIS Conservation Viewer.

GIS

Flood Reporting Tool

- Chatham County GIS, the Manager's Office, Emergency Operations, Watershed Protection, Planning, and other departments
- The [application](#) provides a centralized, user-friendly way for residents to report flooding and drainage concerns throughout the county.

- Residents are encouraged to use the application throughout hurricane season and year-round.



PLANNING

NC Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) Wildlife

Crossing Study – Cape Fear River Basin

- Identify roadway corridors and structures (bridges, culverts, pipes, etc.) with high Wildlife Vehicle Crash (WVC) rates.
- Determine mitigation opportunities for future infrastructure projects or retrofitting existing structures.
- BOC Presentation in the fall.

MoveChatham [StoryMap](#)

- StoryMap of the Phase I MoveChatham Map Survey comments.
- Request of Commissioner Robertson.
- Will be placed on Planning Department's Transportation page and Planning Department's Conservation page - Conservation Dashboard.

PLANNING

Conservation [Dashboard](#)

- Define metrics & measures progress toward the conservation goals established in Plan Chatham.
- Planning Department, in partnership with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission and the CWG.
- Marks the completion of Phase One of a two-phase conservation initiative.
 - Phase Two will use the dashboard's findings to identify conservation objectives that have not yet been achieved and develop a detailed implementation plan with actionable next steps.
- Located on
 - Planning Conservation Page → County Efforts
 - Planning Main Page → Links & News
 - County's Information Hub

QUESTIONS?