



# CONSERVATION WORKING GROUP

BI-ANNUAL UPDATE TO THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



# CONSERVATION WORKING GROUP

- Purpose: Bring together departments addressing the County's environmental goals on a regular basis to discuss ongoing work and find opportunities to collaborate.
- BOC Update Schedule: quarterly, alternating between written and in-person presentation.
- Q1 Conservation Updates sent to BOC in early May. Presentation focuses on Q2.

# LAND

- The Farmland Preservation Trust Fund approved the first three awards.
- The updated Farmland Preservation Plan is being finalized and will come before the BOC.
- The Farmland Preservation Workshop in June saw 80 participants.
- GIS staff have been collaborating with departments to develop new/updated public tools:
  - Parks & Recreation Viewer (filters/layers for amenities, facilities, trails, etc.)
  - Land Records Viewer (filters/layers for floodplains, zoning, cons. easements, etc.)
  - Conservation Viewer – In Progress (habitat and species data, managed land, etc.)
- Ongoing research on creating public funds for trails and land conservation.

# WATERSHED PROTECTION

- Ongoing feasibility study for Advanced Metering Infrastructure (increased data on home water usage, leaks in water utility lines are discovered and addressed faster)
- New GIS Hub subscription used to develop the “Rivers of Chatham” website, offering real-time updates on safety conditions, info on water quality, and helpful tips for trips along our rivers. “Rivers of Chatham” was showcased at the National ESRI Conference in San Diego.
- Ongoing feasibility study to address erosion at the South Bynum River Access on the Haw.

# WATERSHED PROTECTION

- Ongoing development review focused on protecting water quality as growth increases:
  - 880 Erosion Control Inspections
  - 37 Riparian Buffer Reviews
  - 4 USGS/NRCS Confirmations
  - 19 Stormwater Control Measure Inspections
- Increased focus on stormwater to account for rapid growth:
  - Developed new online forms to increase efficiency of stormwater review and streamline contact/questions between staff and developers/owners.
  - Building new tools for stormwater education and increasing overall data collection of stormwater facilities.
  - Implemented new process for ensuring adequate stormwater facilities on commercial projects.

# CLIMATE/RESILIENCE

- Chatham awarded funding from federal Climate Pollution Reduction Grant to build electric vehicle charging stations. Overall utilization of EV charging infrastructure has increased.
- Chatham County Waste Reduction & Recycling Enthusiast Program (WREP) has begun.
- The Waste Composition Study has been completed and results will be published soon.
- Ongoing collaboration to use the awarded Energy Futures Grant funds to establish the three libraries in Chatham County as Resilience Hubs.
- Signage installed to promote safety on the Haw River, project included in Regional Resiliency Portfolio from Central Pines Regional Council.

# CLIMATE/RESILIENCE

- First heat season with the Chatham County Heat Action Plan:
  - Pre-heat season kick-off meeting occurred on April 25th, bringing together various county departments, the Town of Pittsboro and Siler City staff, Chatham Hospital, and several community-based organizations.
  - Developed educational materials about preventing heat-related illnesses and ongoing monitoring of heat-related illness emergency calls.
  - Programming for assisting families with high energy bills from cooling and distributing box fans to those without AC.
  - Established cooling centers with water and seating at the three libraries.
  - Created misting stations at county parks for those unable to visit the cooling centers.

# NATURAL RESOURCES

- The ongoing county-wide Natural Heritage Program Inventory has received permission to survey over 7,000 acres of properties.
- Parks & Rec and Environmental Quality shared internship project to develop an invasive species control program for county-owned parks.
- Ongoing educational programming:
  - Chatham Conservation Partnership Webinar on Bumble Bee Conservation – 115 participants
  - Chatham Conservation Partnership Webinar on Fireflies – 120 participants
  - 13 Pollinator Garden Tours in Q2 – 330 participants
  - Landscaping for Pollinators at the Native Plant Conference in Cullowhee – 25 participants
  - Identification of North Carolina Pines Workshop – 17 participants
  - Tree Identification and Forest Ecology Walk at Carolina Meadows – 27 participants
- Chatham County being considered by NCDOT for a study on creating wildlife crossings around roadways.



# UPCOMING CWG COLLABORATION

- Conservation Goals Dashboard and Implementation Plan Project
  - Establish consensus- and equity-based metrics for Comprehensive Plan environmental goals, develop a public dashboard for tracking progress made towards those goals, and create an implementation plan for achieving remaining goals.
  - The contractor has been hired and will be presenting to the BOC in the coming months to seek guidance on the project.
- The CWG has joined the Grant Assistance Program at Central Pines Regional Council and will be engaging in a workshop to identify and prioritize projects for large funding opportunities.
- Does the BOC have any feedback on the update schedule or format?



# QUESTIONS?

THANK YOU!

