

## **CWSEC: History, Goals and Strategic Planning Process**

*Written by Karen Fuss (May 2011) to be included in 2010-2011 CWSEC Annual Report*

### *Initial Planning*

From its conception in May 2004, CWSEC set out to fulfill new federal Clean Water Act requirements associated with the NPDES Phase II Stormwater Program. Six small municipal separate storm sewer systems (SMS4s) located within the Myrtle Beach Urbanized Area unanimously endorsed a coordinated approach to regional stormwater education. They charged the educational service providers with developing a Regional Stormwater Education Strategy\* and a Phased Education Work Plan\* based on a formal needs assessment. This needs evaluation also allowed the SMS4s to identify and prioritize target audiences and educational activities as well as create a Year 1 activity plan. The educational strategy document was approved at the Consortium's second meeting held in October 2004. The Consortium also agreed to develop a resolution\* to be signed by the participating municipalities pledging their support for a regional stormwater education effort and to provide salary support to hire an environmental educator housed at Coastal Carolina University. At the third meeting of CWSEC, held in June 2005, the Year 1 activity plan was approved and a set of operating procedures, e.g. meetings twice a year, was adopted. A press conference was held at the end of this meeting during which municipal officials signed the resolution formally establishing the Consortium. The Consortium's first staff member, Karen Fuss, began work in October 2005.

\* These guidance documents can be found at <http://cwsec-sc.org/doku.php?id=business:documents>.

### *Goals of the Coastal Waccamaw Stormwater Education Consortium*

The Consortium's goals for stormwater education that were approved in January 2005 included the following: (1) maximize efficiency of stormwater education efforts using a regional watershed approach; (2) help local SMS4s meet NPDES Phase II Stormwater Program permit requirements for public stormwater education, public involvement, and illicit discharge detection by providing educational resources and services such as public education, outreach and community involvement; (3) develop a comprehensive stormwater education plan for the region that capitalizes on local training resources to meet the needs of local SMS4s; (4) foster collaboration among local service providers to best meet the educational needs of local SMS4s and their constituents; and (5) serve as a model for collaborative stormwater education.

### *Structural and Regulatory Changes for CWSEC at Commencement of First Permit Cycle*

Karen Fuss became the Coordinator of CWSEC in the summer of 2006 moving CWSEC into a more formal organizational structure. This filled need to establish a central point of contact to better coordinate communication amongst the SMS4s and education providers. CWSEC members and educators met with SCDHEC staff in March 2007 to discuss coverage under the revised NPDES Phase II Stormwater Permit. Following this meeting with SCDHEC, the core education providers developed a document for the SMS4s discussing the Consortium's current and proposed activities relating to each requirement within Minimum Control Measures 1 and 2. Within this document, it was stated that CWSEC has chosen to concentrate its initial permit-cycle educational message on those pollutants contributing to 303(d) listed sites in the Myrtle Beach Urbanized Area. Since the initial development of the SCDHEC reporting document, CWSEC education providers have submitted subsequent SCDHEC Annual Report Forms to the SMS4s to aid the local communities with their reporting of educational outreach and involvement activities. Another change to the Consortium occurred in December 2007, when the Town of Briarcliffe Acres and the Town of Atlantic Beach signed resolutions to become CWSEC members.

### *Annual Cycle of Planning, Implementation and Assessment*

The education providers host biannual business meetings in December and June, which often include topic-specific training for stormwater managers and associated staff. During the summer meeting, SMS4s receive an annual activity report that is generated from a searchable, interactive database updated by the education providers. CWSEC members are also asked to help formulate the upcoming year's activity plan at this meeting. Monthly CWSEC E-News keeps recipients informed with stormwater-related announcements, events and activities. Additionally, the Consortium maintains a website ([www.cwsec-sc.org](http://www.cwsec-sc.org)) to provide a wide range of stormwater educational materials for each of the target audiences, i.e., general public, elected and appointed officials, county and municipal staff, students and teachers, contractors, engineers and developers.

### *Preparing for the Second 5-Year NPDES Phase II Permit Cycle*

Education providers tailor their activities to each community's needs with guidance from the local governments to help meet or exceed the NPDES Phase II permit requirements. As a result, educational programming for the member SMS4s has greatly diversified and grown since the Consortium began in 2004. A second needs assessment in December 2009 elicited feedback from stormwater staff and appointed officials to guide future educational programming during the second 5-year NPDES Phase II permit cycle. Overall, satisfaction among stormwater managers and staff and appointed officials with the educational services provided by the core educators was high. This satisfaction reassures educators that their services are positively addressing the needs of the SMS4s; however, the findings also stress the fact that each community has unique needs and priorities that vary for target audiences and related activities. In other words, one size does not fit all. Therefore, it is crucial that education providers coordinate, communicate and involve each SMS4 to continue to serve their needs for minimum control measures 1 and 2 in their respective communities.

### *Strategic Planning in 2010-2011*

The core education providers participated in two strategic planning sessions during the fall 2010 to aid with future planning of the Consortium as it moves into the second phase of the NPDES Phase II permit. Through this process, a new set of goal statements were developed and approved by the SMS4s at the December 2010 biannual meeting. Strategies under each goal were also decided and will be presented to Consortium members at the June 2011 biannual meeting for review and approval. The updated goals include the following: (1) maximize efficiency and effectiveness through coordinated and collaborative stormwater education activities; (2) using a regional watershed approach, help member SMS4s meet NPDES Phase II stormwater permit requirements for public education and outreach and public involvement/participation; (3) provide and exchange technical information and expertise on innovative stormwater best management practices and supporting funding opportunities; (4) improve watershed and stormwater awareness in target audiences that informs decision-making and promotes behavior change to address water quality impairments; and (5) serve as a model for collaborative stormwater education and involvement throughout the state of SC and beyond.

Because the next NPDES Phase II permit is currently in draft form and SCDHEC has extended the public comment period on the document, CWSEC will continue to work with the local SMS4s to meet the requirements of the current Stormwater General Permit. Strategic planning will continue to evolve once the second phase of the permit is approved and changes to the requirements relating to educational outreach and involvement are made.