

## Management plan approved; will soon go to Governor

After 14 months of review on three public drafts, the APES comprehensive management plan, called "A Guide to Environmental and Economic Stewardship of the Albemarle-Pamlico Region," has been approved by the Study's Policy Committee. The Committee voted unanimously at its meeting in Manteo on November 30 to forward the plan to Governor Jim Hunt and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Carol Browner, pending minor changes.

The schedule now is for the Plan to be formally presented to the Governor and Administrator later this winter. Their acceptance of the plan would serve as a signal for the Legislature, state and federal agencies, and others to examine ways the Plan's 50 recommendations can be integrated into existing management programs.

Speaking at the Manteo meeting, N.C. Department of Environment, Health and Natural Resources Secretary Jonathan Howes called the Plan "an historic leap forward" for environmental protection in North Carolina. Howes said that the Plan's emphasis on management at the river basin level -- as opposed to statewide standards -- represented a significant and scientifically appropriate shift in North Carolina's approach to dealing with environmental issues.

Reaction to the Plan has been mixed since announcement of its approval. Some environmental groups have said the Plan is not strong enough and lacks specifics, while

### Management Plan Highlights:

- \*\* Expand funding for cost-share programs that control nonpoint source pollution for agriculture and other land uses.
- \*\* Establish total daily pollutant limits for all impaired streams in the A-P region by 1999.
- \*\* Strengthen enforcement of water discharge permits.
- \*\* Strengthen regulatory programs to protect vital fisheries habitats by 1995.
- \*\* Implement a management program for the state's public trust waters by 1996.
- \*\* Support local planning by providing funds and economic incentives to local governments.

others have said it will take environmental programs in a new and positive direction.

Several local governments have endorsed the Plan's goals, feeling they accentuate the fundamental interdependence between environmental protection and economic growth. Agricultural groups have also endorsed the Plan, praising its emphasis on cooperative programs that help farmers control nonpoint pollution.

Other county governments have officially expressed opposition to the makeup of a proposed "Coordinating Council" which would oversee plan implementation, believing it should have more representation from local government.

*(See page 2 for answers to some of the questions raised most often about the Plan.)*

## Management Plan Q and A:

### *Answers to questions often heard from the public*

*With the completion of the APES Guide to Environmental and Economic Stewardship in the Albemarle-Pamlico Region, several questions are being asked frequently about the Plan. The following is a response to some of these questions:*

**Q:** How would the Plan improve the environmental protection structure already in place in North Carolina?

**A:** Protection would be improved in four primary ways:

(1) By adding momentum to the state's new emphasis on environmental protection strategies that focus on individual river basins. There is now a consensus that water quality protection strategies should be set on river basin levels, not on a statewide level as has been the accepted practice for years.

(2) By providing the staffing and funding necessary for existing programs to meet their respective mandates, which are widely seen as sufficient if they are fully achieved.

(3) By enhancing communication between state and federal agencies, several of which have overlapping responsibilities. Better communication between agencies will help better coordinate the activities of existing programs.

(4) By promoting a sense of stewardship among citizens in the region. This would be accomplished through educational efforts and by continual reinforcement of the relationship between a healthy environment and a healthy economy.

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**Q:** What happens once the Governor and EPA Administrator approve the Plan?

**A:** Their acceptance will serve as a signal for the Legislature, pertinent commissions and agencies, and other groups affected by the Plan's recommendations to examine ways the recommendations can be integrated into management programs. Also, the Plan recommends that a 24-member Coordinating Council made up of local elected officials, citizens, state environmental commission members, and representatives of federal agencies be convened to review the progress of its implementation. Implicit in the implementation effort would be attention to the potential cultural, legal and economic impacts of new programs.

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**Q:** Does the Coordinating Council have regulatory authority?

**A:** No! The Council's purpose is to ensure that the Plan will not "sit on a shelf" and that there will be a full deliberation of its recommendations. Also, the Council would enhance general communication and interaction between state agencies, federal agencies, user groups, and the public.

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**Q:** How will the focus on river basin management be promoted?

**A:** The management plan recommends that a Regional Committee be established in each of the five major river basins of the Albemarle-Pamlico area (the Tar-Pamlico, Roanoke, Pasquotank/Alligator/Currituck, Chowan, and Neuse/Bogue/Core). These Committees would each be comprised of at least 15 citizens, with each county in the

basin having at least one representative involved. Local governments, interest groups, and citizens would be asked to nominate members to the Committees. The Committees would then review and recommend priorities for environmental programs in their respective basins.

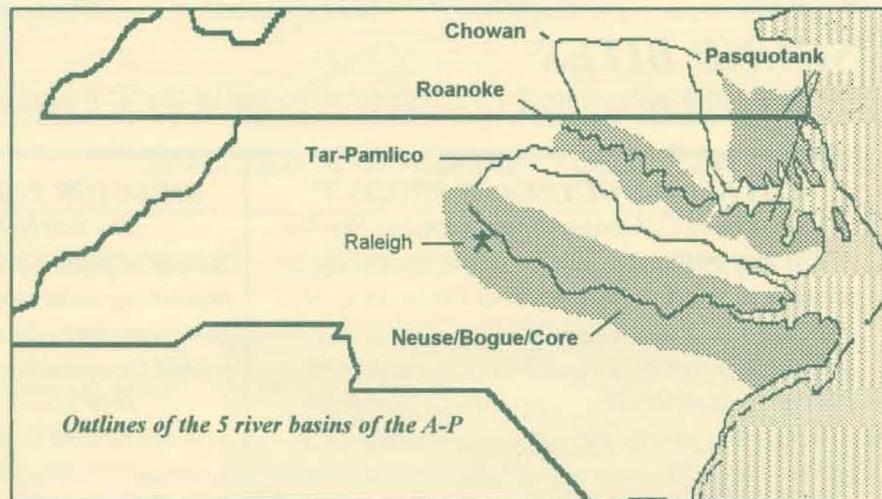
Two Committee representatives per basin would also be named to the Coordinating Council to provide input.

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**Q:** Except for some localized trouble areas, the Albemarle-Pamlico estuary is not as badly damaged as Chesapeake Bay or other major estuaries. Why put so much effort into restructuring management of it now?

**A:** From both an economic and an environmental standpoint, it is much more efficient to deal with a problem when it is manageable rather than when it has become a disaster. Ironically, the relative tractability of the area's problems makes it more difficult to convince people of the need for improving environmental programs. Given that much of the watershed will likely continue to experience intensive growth in the next 20 years, though, many of today's manageable problems will be tomorrow's disasters if environmental programs are not prepared to deal with the increasing demands on the ecosystem. If the concepts proposed in the APES management plan can be firmly established now, then both money and natural resources will be saved in the long run.

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**Q:** How much will enacting the Plan's recommendations cost?

**A:** The projected cost for funding all recommendations at one time is \$10.4 million annually. The majority of the money would go to providing increased funding to support agricultural and fishing cost-share/assistance programs and for support of existing regulatory programs.

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**Q:** What sort of impacts would enacting the CCMP have on the regional economy in general?

**A:** While a cursory analysis of impacts was conducted by the Study, no full-scale analysis was feasible given the scope of the program. However, the entire management plan emphasizes linking environmental protection with economic health, as exemplified in the ecotourism initiative that is already underway and stems from an APES-funded project. The impact of land conservation on local tax bases would be minimal because the total acreage recommended for protection is small. Also, it is worth noting that rapid development typically causes taxes to rise more sharply than controlled development does because of the intensive need for new services.

## **SOUND BITES**

news and notes about environmental issues in the A-P region



### **CES BEGINS OUTREACH PROJECT**

*The N.C. Cooperative Extension Service (CES) has initiated a new program to educate farmers in the A-P region about the impacts of agricultural activities on the environment and to promote the use of farming Best Management Practices (BMPs). The program will also work with existing county extension groups to educate students and the general public to the causes of water quality degradation, and to encourage greater participation by citizens in the development of environmental policies.*

*The program will be led by Catherine McCracken, who will work out of the Vernon James Research and Extension Center in Plymouth.*

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### **DIRECTOR FOR PARTNERSHIP HIRED**

*The newly-formed Partnership for the Sounds, a public-private organization devoted to promoting nature-based tourism and environmental education in the A-P region, has named its executive director.*

*Rick Van Schoik, who had been working with the Nature Conservancy in Long Island, NY, assumed his duties with the Partnership in January. The Partnership's office is in Columbia.*

### **DAM REMOVAL DELAYED**

*The removal of two dams on the Neuse River to open spawning grounds for migrating fish has been postponed. The project, which has been in planning for over a year, involves APES and numerous federal and state agencies. The postponement was prompted by fears that the dam removal, originally planned for mid-winter, might have some short-term adverse impacts on the annual spring migration of shad and herring. Removal is now anticipated in summer.*

#### **THE ADVOCATE**

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Jonathan B. Howes  
Secretary, NC DEHNR

Randall G. Waite  
APES Program Director

Joan Giordano  
APES Public Involvement Coordinator

Tom Stroud, Editor  
APES Public Involvement Office  
1424 Carolina Avenue  
Washington, NC 27889

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