

Annual Report to the North Carolina Chapter of the American Fisheries Society

Activities of the Environmental Concerns Committee

February 2005

The Environmental Concerns Committee (ECC) has the following to report:

1. The ECC convened at the Progress Energy facility near Raleigh on September 9, 2004 to discuss planned and developing activities and issues. Issues identified for near-term action included: (1) a comment letter on a proposed rule by the U.S. Forest Service to regulate off-highway vehicle use on the National Forests, (2) a resolution or similar product regarding the need for appropriate and accurate classifications of waters in North Carolina by the Division of Water Quality, and (3) a letter to Division of Land Resources with concerns about floodplain mining in the mountains and western piedmont. Also discussed at length were follow-up efforts on the Resolution on Reduction of Sediment Contributions to Surface Waters of North Carolina, which was approved and distributed in 2004, and coordination and information gathering for possible future action on the Coastal Habitat Protection Plan process and the issue of beach renourishment. Other activities discussed included authoring an article in a popular periodical on the plight of native fish resources in North Carolina and involvement with Stream Watch or a similar environmental stewardship/monitoring program to, in part, expand the public visibility of the NCAFS and its environmental concerns.
2. A letter with comments on the proposed Draft Policy on Off-Highway Vehicle Use in National Forests and Grasslands (released July 7, 2004) was sent from the ECC on September 12, 2004 in coordination with the NCAFS President. The proposal would formally establish nationally consistent procedures for the establishment of OHV roads, trails and areas and prohibit OHV use in areas not designated. The ECC letter, recently submitted for posting on the NCAFS website ECC link, supported the expected conservation benefits of the proposal and encouraged the application of fisheries and other biological information in the selection and management of OHV areas.
3. A letter was sent on January 30, 2005 to the Division of Water Quality in which the ECC, in coordination with the NCAFS President, encouraged the timely classification and reclassification of waters in North Carolina to the most appropriate level. The ECC identified this as an important issue because many waters are misclassified or in need of reevaluation to reflect the aquatic life they support. Accurate classifications are critical to the conservation of existing resources in our State.



David McHenry, ECC Chair