



North Carolina Coastal Federation | 3609 Hwy 24 (Ocean) | Newport, NC 28570  
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# Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Effort Underway to Cure the Ailing White Oak

**Ocean, NC** – The N.C. Coastal Federation has joined with two state agencies and a town in western Carteret County in a two-year project to find and control sources of pollution along portions of the lower White Oak River.

But they can't do it alone. They are recruiting volunteers along portions of the river who will collect water samples at more than 30 locations for more than a year.

The N.C. Division of Water Quality, the N.C. Department of Transportation and the town of Cedar Point are joining the Federation to study four embayments on the Carteret County side of the southern White Oak – Dubling and Boathouse creeks, the area north of the Swansboro causeway and a small bay in the middle of Cedar Point. A grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is paying for the study.

Bacteria from stormwater runoff either permanently or temporarily close all the embayments to shellfishing. In fact, more than 2,200 acres of shellfishing grounds in the lower White Oak are considered "impaired" by the state because shellfishing is prohibited or the oyster and clam beds are closed temporarily after a heavy rain.

"The main goal of this project is to find out what's going on," explained Frank Tursi, the federation's Cape Lookout COASTKEEPER® and the project leader. "We want to know where the bacteria is coming from in these embayments and then to devise a plan to control it."

While computers will do much of the analytical work, the people of the White Oak will do the heavy lifting. The project will rely on Buck Engineering of Raleigh for the computer modeling, but will call on residents along the river to help draw more than 200 water samples from 32 locations in the four embayments. The samples, which will be taken after heavy rains, will be tested for bacteria and the results fed to the computers.

"We are looking for people in Cedar Point or Swansboro who are willing to get their hands wet and want to make a difference," Tursi said. "They will be helping a river that needs all the help it can get."

Boats aren't required since most of the samples can be taken from land or from the end of a dock. An experienced kayaker, though, may be needed to sample Boathouse Creek. **The volunteers will be trained in early February, and sampling will begin later that month.** Anyone in Cedar Point or Swansboro who is interested in volunteering should call Tursi at 393-8185 or email him at [lookoutkeeper@nccoast.org](mailto:lookoutkeeper@nccoast.org).

People along the lower White Oak will have other ways to get involved. Commercial fishermen, developers, business people, landowners and others who might be affected by the project will be invited to join a stakeholders' group that will offer advice and guidance to the project team. **That group will meet for the first time on Monday, Jan. 30, at the Cedar Point Town Hall, starting at 7 p.m.** The public is invited to attend the meeting. People can also learn about the project during meetings of the Cedar Point Planning Board on Tuesday, Jan. 9, or the Cedar Point Town Council on Tuesday, Jan. 23. Tursi will give presentations at both meetings. The planning board meeting starts at 6:30 p.m., and the town council meeting begins at 7 p.m.

"I invite everyone in the Cedar Point and Swansboro areas to come to one of these meetings and find out what's going on and how they might help," Tursi said.

***Reporters, editors note: Boat tours of the project area and interviews with members of the project team and volunteer samplers can be arranged after Jan. 1. If interested, call Frank Tursi or Christine Miller at 393-8185.***

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***About the North Carolina Coastal Federation:  
"Citizens Working Together for a Healthy Coast"***

*The North Carolina Coastal Federation (NCCF) is the state's only non-profit organization focused exclusively on protecting and restoring the coast of North Carolina through education, advocacy and habitat restoration and preservation. NCCF headquarters are located at 3609 Highway 24 in Ocean between Morehead City and Swansboro and are open Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 5 pm.*

*The headquarters include NCCF's main offices, the Cape Lookout Coastkeeper office, a gift shop, Nature Library, Weber Seashell Exhibit, ShoreKeeper Learning Center, and adjoining nature trail. The NCCF also operates field offices in Wilmington and Manteo. For more information call 252-393-8185 or check out NCCF's website at [www.nccoast.org](http://www.nccoast.org)*