



North Carolina Coastal Federation | 3609 Hwy 24 (Ocean) | Newport, NC 28570
Phone: 252-393-8185 | Fax: 252-393-7508 | Email: nccf@nccoast.org | Web: <http://www.nccoast.org>

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 8, 2009

Contact: Sara Jean Hallas

Phone: 252-473-1607

Email: sarajh@nccoast.org

Eighth Graders, Coastal Federation Plant ‘Living Laboratory’ Rain Garden on School Grounds

Columbia, N.C.- Thanks to a generous donation from the Carlson Family Foundation, students, teachers and community volunteers planted a rain garden this week at Columbia Middle School.

The garden was planted in an existing bioretention basin behind the gymnasium, in an area that is highly visible during sports games. It will catch stormwater runoff from the new gym, which was added to the school’s campus in 2008. Polluted stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces is the number one source of pollution of waterways in North Carolina. Rain gardens are one of the ways to treat stormwater, known as best management practices, or BMPS. Other BMPS include cisterns and vegetated swales.

About 21 eighth grade students spent Wednesday, May 6, learning about native plants and getting their hands dirty putting hundreds of plants in the garden. On Friday they showed off their hard work to parents who attended the end of year 8th grade luncheon. Local volunteers also helped with the garden construction, including Sue Spivey, Doris Van Dorpe and Jack and Sandy Donoghue. Coastal Federation board member Midge Ogletree helped coordinate the volunteers.

The garden covers 3,600 square feet and contains more than 300 native trees, shrubs, grasses and flowers that can live in water but can also withstand periods of dry weather.

As part of their hydrology curriculum, science teacher Pat Armstrong’s eighth grade class has been working with North Carolina Coastal Federation Outreach Specialist Sara Jean Hallas. Hallas has taught the students about N.C. river basins, including their own watershed, the Scuppernon River. Classes included information on stormwater runoff, the pollution it causes and ways it can be eliminated.

“The students were hugely helpful in completing this project. They should take great pride and ownership in the results of their work, which will benefit the school and the community,” said Hallas.

"My eighth graders have benefited greatly with the special lessons presented by Ms. Hallas and the chance to contribute in creating the rain garden for their school," Armstrong added. "We are especially grateful to the N.C. Coastal Federation and the Carlson Family Foundation for helping provide real-life applications to our curriculum."

NCCF staff members are looking for opportunities for more stormwater BMP installations in Tyrrell County and the Albemarle region. Please contact Sara Hallas for more information.

###

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

The North Carolina Coastal Federation (NCCF) is the state's largest nonprofit organization working to restore and protect the coast. 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