



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Party in the Park to Celebrate Oak Island Clean Water Projects**

WILMINGTON – The N.C. Coastal Federation and the Town of Oak Island are sponsoring a community party in Waterway Park on Oak Island on Saturday, June 15, to celebrate several clean water projects.

The Party in the Park will start at 10 a.m. with volunteers planting a rain garden and restoring a salt marsh. The afternoon will feature a party to celebrate all the efforts of the town, its residents, other volunteers and the federation have done to reduce stormwater pollution, restore coastal habitats and raise awareness of our vibrant coastal waters. There will be lots of fun activities, food, educational exhibits and giveaways. The festivities will end at 2 p.m.

The volunteers will be planting salt marsh plants along the shoreline of Waterway Park as part of a living shoreline project. Volunteers built two oyster reefs totaling 200 feet in length in March. The reefs and salt marsh will work to slow down erosion while providing important habitat and water quality benefits.

Volunteers will also be planting native flowers, grasses and shrubs in a rain garden at Arboretum Park that Oak Island and the federation created. The rain garden will slow down stormwater runoff, allow it to soak into the ground and absorb the pollutants. Rain gardens are created shallow depressions containing native plants and mulch that collect rain water and enable it to soak into the ground instead of entering our coastal waters.

The garden is just one of many projects that the town completed to reduce stormwater runoff. Its Citizen Environmental Committee and Stormwater Department are helping with both projects to promote the benefits of living shorelines and stormwater reduction projects.

At the party, there will be education displays on stormwater including an interactive model, and demonstrations on how to set up a rain barrel and reroute a downspout. Experts from the Sea Biscuit Wildlife Shelter will talk about sea turtles, blue crabs, oysters and other animals. People will be able to see some of these animals alive in a touch tank. Commercial fishermen from Brunswick Catch will be on hand to talk about local fish. People will also be able to get information on native plants and I buy products from the nearby Greenland's Farm. Kids could enter a cast-net throwing competition, pull seine nets and print fish on t-shirts. There will also be a raffle prizes and giveaways available.

These water-quality and habitat-restoration projects are part of a plan to restore the Lockwoods Folly River that the federation, local residents and state and federal agencies completed in 2007. The plan focuses on reducing stormwater flowing into the river and restoring important natural habitats. Bacteria from stormwater have closed more than half of the river to shellfishing.

Since the plan's completion, the communities of Winding River, River Run and Oak Island; Brunswick County; the state Department of Transportation; and numerous individuals have built rain gardens and employed other techniques to reduce stormwater in the Lockwood Folly watershed. Oak Island, St. James Plantation, the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries and the federation have also implemented projects to restore oyster reef and salt marsh habitat in the river.

The Waterway Park event is suitable for all ages. People can find out more about the event and register for the morning volunteer planting at the federation's web site [www.nccoast.org](http://www.nccoast.org) or they can contact Ted Wilgis, education coordinator, at [tedw@nccoast.org](mailto:tedw@nccoast.org) or 910-509-2838.

The event is being sponsored by the federation, Oak Island, the N.C. Division of Water Quality, the N.C. Department of Justice Environmental Enhancement Grants Program and Parrot Head Charters.