



# South Carolina NEMO Program

Program Initiated: **May, 1998**

## *How the Program Developed*

**As in much of the country, coastal communities in the South are under increasing pressure to develop previously undisturbed areas, with houses and roads consuming land at an unprecedented rate.**

This development pattern, tied to an influx of new residents, makes urbanization and sprawl a primary factor in water quality impairments in South Carolina.

In May 1998, the South Carolina Sea Grant Program hosted a team from the Connecticut NEMO Program to hold a scoping session for representatives of allied agencies and organizations interested in bringing the NEMO Program to South Carolina. From this session the South Carolina Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (SC NEMO) program formed, coordinated by the SC Sea Grant Extension Program. The program brings together a broad and unique consortium of partners, united in their efforts to protect the state's natural resources through responsible land use planning and development.

## *How/Where NEMO Works*

The SC NEMO Program has focused on watershed level work throughout the state. The program's first pilot project was in the Waccamaw River Basin,

which encompasses eight sub-watersheds, totalling 626 square miles. Three formal workshops were given in the study area for local town councils, town planning commissions, county councils, county planning commissions, public works officials and the local press. Additionally, 29 different NEMO presentations were given throughout the study area and the rest of the state on behalf of the pilot program. Requested talks were given to civic groups, non-governmental organizations, environmental advocacy groups and local chambers of commerce in order to generate interest and knowledge about the NEMO program.

In 2000, SC NEMO went statewide, focusing on several designated watersheds. To date, 14 different NEMO presentations have been given, reaching over 175 elected and appointed officials, advocacy groups and others in these watersheds. Several more presentations will be conducted in the Saluda and Catawba watersheds by the end of 2002.

A new effort funded by both EPA Section 319 funds and the NOAA Sea Grant Coastal Community Development Program are focusing on the South Carolina Coast. Headed by a coalition of SC NEMO and the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments, the team has conducted 21 NEMO presentations to date. Four formal presentations and



*South Carolina Coastal Community Initiative application forms.*



(from top) Bioretention area installed in coastal South Carolina to meet stormwater and landscaping requirements. South Carolina ocean front. Photos courtesy of the South Carolina NEMO Program.

**“This was a program that really accomplished its goals and should have a positive impact on nonpoint source pollution.” - Doug Fabel,**

**Section 319 Grant Coordinator, South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control**

17 briefings have been given to municipal and county planning commissions in the watershed.

Over the four years of its existence, the SC NEMO Program has reached over 600 elected and appointed officials. Surveys of this audience show that 94 percent felt that the NEMO workshops provided them with new information that will help them in their decision-making processes. One hundred percent of those surveyed indicated that they would recommend the NEMO Program to others; a result that particularly pleases the hardworking SC NEMO Team.

## Accomplishments

SC NEMO hasn't rested on the laurels of workshop participants. Rather, they have measured the success of their program through changes in land use plans and regulations in their client communities. After several years of educating South Carolina's decision makers, these changes are beginning to mount.

In 2000, the City of Conway adopted a new landscape ordinance as a direct result of NEMO (photo, top right). The City of Conway Zoning Ordinance 11.1040 requires newly constructed on-site retention ponds to utilize native wetland vegetation around the perimeter to protect water quality. In Berkeley County, the County Council adopted language in their comprehensive plan directly identifying the SC NEMO Program as having strategies they would like to use in their future ordinances.

In other counties and municipalities, SC NEMO has played an advisory role. For example, NEMO Team members have been asked to participate in the drafting of a stormwater management plan by the City of Surfside Beach. In the City of Georgetown NEMO is serving on the community's Visioning Committee, which is crafting revisions to their comprehensive plan. NEMO Team members have also been asked to review and suggest changes to the Land Use and Development Standards Ordinance for Anderson County in the Seneca Watershed. Additionally, NEMO Team members will be working with the ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve to address important planning and development issues within their boundaries.

## The Future

Wishing to further accelerate its impressive accomplishments, the SC NEMO Program has started the SC NEMO *Coastal Communities Initiative*. This initiative is roughly based on Connecticut NEMO's Municipal Initiative, and is designed to bring “focused educational programming aimed at assisting local communities in the development and implementation of land management policies and practices to reduce polluted stormwater runoff and protect local natural resources, while encouraging sustainable development.” The *Coastal Communities Initiative* is funded in part by the NOAA Sea Grant Coastal Communities Development Program.



## Program Partners

South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium

Clemson University

Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments

USC Environmental Research & Service

USC Earth Science & Resources Institute

Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control - Office of Ocean & Coastal Resource Management

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On the Web at: [www.scseagrant.org/scnemo.htm](http://www.scseagrant.org/scnemo.htm)