

**Gills Creek Watershed Association**

**Annual Report**

**June 11, 2008- June 10, 2009**

**I. Goals and Objectives:** The goals of the Gills Creek Watershed Association according to our strategic plan are as follows.

**A. Develop a comprehensive master plan for management of the Gills Creek Watershed.**

The Gills Creek Watershed Association, in partnership with the City of Columbia and Richland County, contracted with BP Barber and Tetratch to complete a Gills Creek Watershed Management Plan. The Gills Creek Watershed Association arranged several meetings throughout the year to receive updates on the plan. A draft of this plan was presented to the public on April 30<sup>th</sup> at the Forest Acres Council Chambers. This meeting was a chance for the public to understand more about the Gills Creek Watershed and the Association as well as make comments about the management plan. The management plan was finalized in June 2009.

**B. Establish a management body and formalize a coalition to oversee development and implementation of the master plan.**

The GCWA organized a technical committee that is chaired by Hugh Caldwell. This committee is made up of city and county representatives, interested citizens, private consultants, and engineers. The committee met during the year to provide input on the Gills Creek Management Plan and will continue to meet to identify projects and oversee implementation of the plan.

**C. Develop a budget and fundraising strategy to implement the master plan.**

**1.** GCWA was instrumental in obtaining the \$28,000 SC Competitive Grants award received by Richland County. The GCWA/Richland County partnership resulted in receipt of the award. This award was given by the State to help fund the management plan and initial projects that came out of the plan. The grant award letter was sent July 10, 2008 and the project has been extended to October 31, 2009. It is helping to fund the pilot Cary Lake project.

**2.** GCWA obtained County Council support for the \$50,000 leadership grant for the program coordinator. The program coordinator assists in communication between the different entities involved in the watershed management plan and looks for future funds.

**3.** GCWA secured a grant from the Richland County Conservation Commission of \$8,000 for field work that will allow the GCWA to partner with the University of South Carolina to identify specific projects in the watershed.

**4.** GCWA developed a membership policy in April 2009 and began recruiting members the same month. Fees for membership will help the

GCWA to keep up with operating expenses. As of June 10, 2009 the GCWA had recruited 29 members.

5. GCWA leadership has contributed to the current plans by City of Forest Acres to construct a Gills Creek walking trail behind Trenholm Plaza. Plans and engineering drawings are complete.

D. Inform the public through an effective public outreach program on the importance and impacts of watershed management.

1. Refer to Section II for a list of events, presentations, newsletters, and clean-ups that the GCWA has led or been involved in.

2. GCWA secured a Richland County Discretionary Funds Grant for 09-10 fiscal year for \$5,623 to make a short video about the watershed and the association. This video will be shown to audiences to increase awareness of our organization and water quality issues.

3. Carol Kososki alerted Richland County and City of Columbia authorities of substantial sedimentation from a construction site on Forest Drive into Forest Lake in April 2009 and followed up again in July 2009 on the problem. Earlier public attention was drawn to runoff from Olde Towne construction that flowed into Eight Mile Branch of Gills Creek and from there into Lake Katherine. These efforts resulted in publicity that engaged neighborhood participation in watching for sedimentation events

4. On March 17, 2009, Carol Kososki organized a meeting with members of Cary Lake Association, Richland District 2 School Board and staff, Richland County staff, and others to discuss sedimentation into Cary Lake from Dent Middle School. As a result of the meeting, a review of the Dent Middle School grounds was undertaken and efforts made to minimize sedimentation into Cary Lake.

## **II. Outreach and Education Events**

A. March 16, 2009 – Forest Lake Presbyterian Church clean-up event  
The Forest Lake Presbyterian Church group cleaned up a portion of Gills Creek that they have adopted through Keep the Midlands Beautiful Adopt-A-Waterway program. They picked up ten bags of trash and lots of debris from the creek.

B. March 23, 2009 – Gills Creek Bus Tour  
This event included taking a group of USC students on a tour of the Gills Creek Watershed. There were approximately 20 students from POLI 121 "Green Politics" class. The bus went to five different spots within the watershed. The tour covered a variety of topics including watershed basics, impervious surfaces, non-point source pollution, stormwater, major problems within the Gills Creek Watershed and possible solutions.

**C. April 7, 2009 – Presentation**

A presentation about the Gills Creek Watershed was given to nine people as part of a series of water talks organized by the University of South Carolina's Green Quad Learning Center.

**D. April 13, 2009 – April 30, 2009 – Clean-up**

Three students from POLI 121 "Green Politics" class at the University of South Carolina decided to organize a clean-up Knot Branch, a tributary of Gills Creek, as their semester project. This was an on-going clean up effort. The students went back to the area 5 times and picked up approximately 20 bags of trash and 20 bags of recyclables.

**E. April 16, 2009 – Rooftop Rhythms**

The GCWA participated in an event called Rooftop Rhythms put on by the City of Forest Acres. The GCWA has a table set up with a display board and informational materials about the organization, stormwater, and the watershed. The organization also had an interactive stormwater model.

**F. April 18, 2009 – Nature Fest**

The GCWA participated in an event called Nature Fest that was put on by Congaree National Park. Volunteers from the GCWA attended all day Saturday and set up a table and display board with information about the watershed, stormwater, and what the GCWA is doing. The organization also had an interactive stormwater model.

**G. April 30, 2009 – Public Meeting**

The GCWA organized a public meeting to allow citizens to comment on the Gills Creek Watershed Management Plan. At this time the organization also gave a presentation about the watershed and recruited members to join the GCWA. Approximately 50 people attended the meeting.

**H. May 16, 2009 – Forest Acres Festival**

The GCWA participated in an event organized by the Rotary Club in Forest Acres called the Forest Acres Festival. The organization set up a table, display board, information, and a watershed model.

**I. May 18, 2009 – Presentation**

The GCWA Program Coordinator gave a presentation to the Richland County Conservation Commission about the Gills Creek Watershed, stormwater and non-point source pollution in general, specific problems within the watershed and the watershed management plan. Approximately 15 people attended this presentation.

**J. Ongoing- Newsletters**

The GCWA sends out monthly newsletters to a task force composed of over 200 people. These newsletters include information on current events, announcements

of upcoming events, and an educational piece about some aspect of watershed management.

**K. Ongoing- Facebook**

The Gills Creek Watershed Association created a Facebook page to post events, pictures, and create a dialog between the Association and the general public.

**III. GCWA sub-committees Activities**

**A. Technical Committee Activities**

1. January 6, 2009 – the technical committee met to provide comments and information on the draft Watershed Management Plan presented by BP Barber and Tetrattech.
2. February 19, 2009 – the technical committee met to prioritize watershed projects based on the watershed management plan. The first priority is the Cary Lake project, the second priority is dredging of Lake Katharine, and the third priority is to look for stormwater retrofit projects in the Decker Blvd/Two Notch corridor.

**B. Outreach Committee Activities**

1. Refer to section II for a list of outreach activities/presentations.
2. Established a list of homeowner and neighborhood associations that is divided up based on three different sections of the watershed and assigned sub-committee chairs to make contacts with these associations.
3. Provided training to outreach members on giving the presentation.

**IV. Enhancement of Operation Standards**

**A.** GCWA adopted by-laws on March 24, 2009 and filed them with the South Carolina Secretary of State on March 25, 2009.

**B.** GCWA hired Hamilton, McKinney & Moss to do a financial audit of the Gills Creek Watershed Association, which was completed on March 5, 2009.

**C.** GCWA adopted a membership policy on April 16<sup>th</sup> 2009 which allows community members to pay dues and be voting members of the association.

**D.** GCWA registered with the Secretary of the State as a non-profit organization on March 26, 2009.

**E.** Acquired Directors and Officers Insurance and General Liability Insurance through Adams, Eaddy & Associates effective May 28, 2009 through May 28, 2010.