

Public Meeting Gives Gills Creek Watershed Residents a Voice

Columbia, SC, December 7, 2007--Approximately 100 local citizens attended a public meeting on Thursday, December 6, 2007, to mobilize a citizen-led coalition for better water quality in the Gills Creek Watershed.

The Gills Creek Watershed Association (GCWA) was formed with the intent of developing a vision for the watershed, as well as defining goals and action steps necessary to improve water quality. The public meeting allowed watershed residents to identify areas of concern in their neighborhoods, and find out how they could get involved.

GCWA Interim-Chair Elliott Powell presented an overview of the environmental concerns in the watershed, with an emphasis on water quality. "Water quality in the Gills Creek Watershed has been jeopardized by excessive storm water discharge, erosion and sedimentation, litter, and poor development standards," explained Powell. Located in Richland County, the area of concern includes parts of Columbia, Forest Acres, Fort Jackson, and Arcadia Lakes. The watershed's headwaters start on Fort Jackson and flow southeast into the Congaree River, and the area contains nearly 90 acres of stream miles and 943 acres of lake waters. The watershed covers over 50,000 acres of land, and is home to 150,000 people.

The GCWA developed a strategic plan and created a vision that includes a restored Gills Creek watershed by the year 2018. Initial funding has been secured via Richland County to develop a watershed plan with corrective actions for water quality improvements.

A watershed plan will also be used to apply for federal and state grants. Over twenty organizations and agencies have pledged their support to the GCWA in an effort to improve and protect the watershed. "Our ultimate goal is to make the Gills Creek Watershed a national model for watershed protection. We want to be an example of how locally-led conservation can really improve quality of life and protect and improve soil and water resources. Based on the support and feedback that we got at our first public meeting, I believe that we can save our watershed before it's too late.

For more information, and to find out how you can get involved, visit www.gillscreekwatershed.com, or call Powell at (803) 799-5020.

