

Greenprinting: Upper Neuse Clean Water Initiative, North Carolina



Photo: Courtesy The Conservation Trust for North Carolina

“Raleigh supports this conservation plan because ...preserving land around waterways protects public health and is more cost effective than building new water treatment facilities. Conservation also protects well water supplies and reduces flooding. And, this strategy provides the public with the added benefits of cleaner air, increased recreational opportunities, and preservation of our area’s most treasured open space.”

Charles Meeker
Raleigh Mayor

TPL Services

With funding from the city of Raleigh, the Conservation Trust for North Carolina hired The Trust for Public Land (TPL) to assist them, together with local government, watershed association and land trust partners, in creating a regional plan for protecting drinking water sources in the Upper Neuse River Basin. After creating a model and parcel selection criteria that identifies lands that best reflect the conservation priorities of stakeholders, TPL developed a public report, which promotes land conservation, and incorporates the model’s results. TPL then transferred the model to a local partner and trained them on how to use it.

Project Highlights

There are nine water supply reservoirs supplying eight municipalities in this 770 square-mile Piedmont basin in North Carolina. Two of those municipalities—Raleigh and Durham—are among the top five fastest growing cities in the state. With the inevitable growth in population comes a dire threat to water quality. Fortunately, the municipalities in the watershed region recognize that water throughout the basin is a shared resource, which requires a unified approach for its protection.

TPL facilitated a public forum through which community leaders and stakeholders confirmed water quality protection as their primary conservation priority. Protecting working lands, aquatic habitat connectivity, and terrestrial habitat connectivity were identified as secondary priorities. Working with local partners, TPL assembled a team of regional experts to develop a Greenprint, a customized Geographic Information System (GIS) model, to identify parcels of land that the partnership might conserve to best meet their goals.

Results

Using the Greenprint’s computerized parcel investigation capabilities, the partners are now working with landowners and local governments on voluntary acquisition. Within six months of completing the Greenprint plan, TPL’s transactions team facilitated the transfer of the highest value parcel for protecting water quality from a private developer to Wake County and the City of Raleigh for use as a regional park. TPL identified the property, conducted landowner outreach, and worked with the county and city to cobble together four funding sources to purchase this critical 213-acre tract adjacent to Falls Lake. Other partners are making similar progress arranging the purchase or donation of land, or conservation agreements, to meet both primary and secondary priorities.

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