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Triangle looks to keep drinking water clean

Updated: 10/23/2006 6:02:50 PM

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Becky Moser brings her three children to Falls Lake about once a week.

WAKE COUNTY, N.C. -- Community and government leaders came together Monday to announce plans to keep the Triangle's drinking water reservoirs clean. It's called the Upper Neuse Clean Water Initiative Conservation Plan.

The goal is to preserve natural buffer areas around streams and creeks that flow into drinking water reservoirs in the Upper Neuse River Basin.

Wake Forest resident Becky Moser brings her three children to Falls Lake about once a week to take in the peaceful view, but she says they know the lake provides much more than just recreation.

It's one of nine water supply reservoirs in central North Carolina's Upper Neuse River Basin. The basin provides drinking water for more than 500,000 people in Wake, Durham, Orange, Franklin, Granville and Person counties.

"You need to pay attention to the things you can't see," said Moser. "You should get your water tested regularly and we do and stay on top of that."

City, county and other community leaders are also trying to stay on top of the Triangle's water supply. They're working together to help keep drinking water reservoirs clean.

The biggest part of the plan is preserving natural areas around creeks and streams that feed into drinking water reservoirs. Supporters say increasing buffer areas will significantly reduce the amount of runoff and pollution flowing into tributaries, eventually making its way into our drinking water supply.

“There's a lot of buffer around the lakes themselves -- Falls Lake, Lake Michie -- you have these buffers,” explained Kevin Brice, Executive Director of the Triangle Land Conservancy. “But we don't have buffers around the tributaries running into them. So when you have runoff, pollution elements are getting into the tributaries and down into the lakes.”



The goal is to preserve natural buffer areas around streams and creeks.

The conservation plan requires voluntary participation from people who own private property along rivers, streams and creeks. Community leaders hope property owners will volunteer to donate or sell their land for conservation.

“In the state of North Carolina, we have a generous tax incentive for donation of land or conservation agreements,” Brice added. “But if folks are interested in selling their land for these water quality buffers, there are avenues we can go through.”

“We're asking people to step up and preserve their stream buffers,” said Raleigh Mayor Charles Meeker. “They get some money in their pocket, and the public benefits greatly by the program in terms of clean water.”

The city of Raleigh is giving \$1.5 million over three years to help buy land for preservation throughout the Upper Neuse River Basin.

Becky Moser is excited about the conservation plans. She hopes it will protect the Triangle's drinking water supply for her children and their children in the future.

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