

## **PenderWatch Pushes to Protect Coastal Water Quality**

Where water meets the land, plant life protects the water from pollution. These areas are called “vegetative buffer zones.”

PenderWatch & Conservancy has urged the North Carolina Coastal Resources Commission to strengthen regulations governing vegetative buffer zones.

At a recent CRC meeting in Wilmington, PenderWatch vice president Jack Spruill spoke out for protection of existing native plants in what is generally called the “CAMA buffer.”

“Without healthy native plants in the buffer, the already narrow 30-foot buffer makes only a token contribution to preserving water quality,” he said. “This is a serious deficiency. Existing native plants are not only effective at filtering runoff from human activities, but over the years have self-selected for living in what is often a tough environment of tides and occasional floods.”

He presented a letter to the CRC urging it to “assume strong leadership” to meet its legal mandate, according to State regulations, to “preserve and not weaken or eliminate natural barriers to erosion.”

Spruill pointed out to the Coastal Resources Commission members that Pender County “is home to hundreds of acres of primary oyster waters.” PenderWatch, he noted, is “trying to make sure that rapid growth in eastern Pender County is done as environmentally responsibly as feasible.”

Destroying buffer zones has “recently become more threatening,” Spruill went on, warning that a new, heavy-duty drum grinding machine is replacing the traditional bush-hogging equipment. This heavy, tracked machine “cannot avoid disturbing at least the upper levels of the soil and damaging root structures,” he said, “even if it does not deliberately cut below the surface.” He urged the CRC to “review their regulations to take account of this new technology.”

“If that requires legislative action,” he added, “please provide that leadership.”

*PenderWatch is an all-volunteer environmental advocacy group centered on Pender County issues. For further information on PenderWatch or to become a member, call 270-3839, or sign up for the PenderWatch e- list by e-mailing [vufinder@charter.net](mailto:vufinder@charter.net).*