

## **PenderWatch Visitor Tells Story of Bay Restoration**

When marine scientist Pat Donovan-Potts started out on the Wilson Bay Initiative with NC State 11 years ago, the area had become what she termed an empty ecosystem.

Now Water Quality Supervisor for the city of Jacksonville , the 13 year resident of Pender County visited the PenderWatch & Conservancy December meeting, offering a presentation on the restoration of Wilson Bay and the creation of Sturgeon City , an environmental education center. Wilson Bay is in the New River between Jacksonville and Camp Lejeune , and Sturgeon City is a Jacksonville city park on the site of an abandoned wastewater treatment plant fronting Wilson Bay

" For ten years the water was closed to recreational and commercial uses," said Potts. Now they have a higher diversity of fish in the area than in some of the control sites used for comparison during the restoration, she said.

With early funding from the North Carolina Clean Water Management Trust Fund and office space and administrative funding from the city of Jacksonville , the new Land Application plant was developed to remove the effluent from the New River and 4 million oysters placed in Wilson Bay to begin the project.

Oysters, she said, have a unique filtering talent. As a next step, aeration units with baffles were added to oxygenate the bottom of the bay and to recreate the original movement of the waters. Later, the team brought in wetland plants to eight acres of adjacent land.

In this once polluted area, school children now explore and learn about the environment and community service through their program.

Looking forward, a grant from the Army Corps of Engineers for 3.2 million will provide the resources to develop a stormwater runoff filtration system in cooperation with area homeowners.

*For further information on PenderWatch or to become a member, call 270-3839, or sign up for PenderWatch e-notification by e-mailing [vufinder@charter.net](mailto:vufinder@charter.net).*