The Resource

A Publication of the City of North Augusta
Stormwater Management Department

North Augusta
Brick Pond Ecological Park Under Construction

The North Augusta Brick Pond Ecological Park is currently under construction (see the Fall 2006 *Resource*). The East Pond design (nearest 13th Street Bridge) includes constructed wetlands for stormwater treatment. Stormwater that enters the East Pond wetlands will flow through thick wetland vegetation. The plants will filter and draw contaminants out of the stormwater as it passes through the system. The West Pond, located on the opposite end of the park near Crystal Lake Drive, includes open water with islands of vegetation and trees. The wetland park is designed so that water will flow from the East Pond to the West Pond.

East pond dam under construction.

From the future Center Street (under construction) back to the bridge, East Pond will be the primary education center and the working end of the wetland. The design includes two waterfalls that will provide a soothing atmosphere for park visitors. Both Brick Pond Park waterfalls will direct cascades of water from the upland areas along the Greeneway Trail and new Municipal Center down into the East Pond.

Once the wetland cell development is complete, 3000 wetland plants will be planted. Construction of walking trails will allow safe access for visitors of the park. Visitors can stroll through the park from the North Augusta Greeneway on to boardwalks that cross over waterfalls leading to wildlife viewing stations. There they can visit the education center to study and learn about wetland processes and wildlife that live in the park.

The West Pond area will be left nearly as it is today with the exception of small constructed wetland pockets. A public dock will be available in West Pond for visitors to launch canoes, kayaks and other non-motorized boats. Currently, a portion of the North Augusta Greeneway Trail is closed during construction of the park, Center Street, and the Municipal Center. To learn more about the park, please visit www.northaugusta.net or email us at stormwater@northaugusta.net.

Freezing January Weather Perfect for Infrared Thermographic Aerial Survey

Infrared Image of Pretty Run "hot spot"

On January 29, a low flying plane may have been heard buzzing the treetops of North Augusta and the Horse Creek Valley. The plane, piloted by members of Stockton Infrared Themographic Services, was aloft on a dry cold night to take infrared images of Pretty Run Creek, Horse Creek and the feeder streams that lead to them.

Pretty Run Creek and Horse Creek are listed on the South Carolina 303d list of impaired streams due to high concentrations of fecal coliform bacteria. Fecal coliform bacteria are present in the environment from animal and human wastes and can be found in stormwater, wastewater and wash water. The City of North Augusta teamed with Clemson Extension and others to help identify and resolve problems that are causing fecal coliform impacts to these streams. To learn more about water quality in Horse Creek and Pretty Run, visit the stormwater construction pages at www.northaugusta.net.

With infrared photography, you can actually see where warmer water is entering the stream channels. If water entering the stream is a warmer temperature, it shows up as a brighter image or "hot spot". These hot spots could mean trouble. Each location that shows warmer water entering the stream could be a leaking sewer line, septic tank drain, or other discharge. In many cases, it is simply a non-polluting groundwater seep that appears warmer than the surface water.

Aerial surveys such as this have become very popular because they save time and money. Normally, to find leaks (illicit discharges) city or county workers have to inspect lines and look for problems by walking an entire stream and its adjacent creeks. This takes a lot of time and workers can easily overlook problems hidden by vegetation. The results of the January 29 aerial survey are currently being reviewed by North Augusta and Aiken County stormwater management department personnel. All residents that live along Horse Creek in Aiken County or Pretty Run Creek in North Augusta will be eligible to receive money to repair septic tanks. If you have questions or would like to discuss a leaking septic tank that needs repair, please contact Suzanne Holmes at 803-649-6297 or email us at stormwater@northaugusta.net.

City personnel inspected the "hot spot" and found no problem.

Species profile American Alligator

Alligators in North Augusta?

Photo: Brennan Mulrooney

The Stormwater Management Department has recently received numerous calls from citizens and the media concerning the sighting of alligators in the old "brick ponds" adjacent to the Hammond's Ferry development (future home of the Brick Pond Ecological Park *see story on page 1*). The presence of alligators in these ponds is certainly not new. Sightings of these reclusive reptiles have simply increased with the population of people in proximity to their environment. Alligators currently populate the brick ponds and also the ponds in and around the River Club Golf Course, the wetlands within River North subdivision, and of course, the Savannah River.

American alligators (*Alligator mississippiensis*) live in freshwater environments, such as ponds, marshes, wetlands, rivers, and swamps, as well as brackish environments. The name alligator is derived from the Spanish el lagarto which means "the lizard". An average alligator is 13 feet long and weighs 800 pounds. It is considered an adult when it reaches six feet. Juveniles eat a variety of small invertebrates such as insects, small fish and frogs. As they grow larger, their dietary range increases to include large prey. Large adults can tackle nearly all aquatic and terrestrial prey that comes within range, although they prefer fish, turtles, relatively small mammals, birds and other reptiles including smaller alligators. An alligator's lifespan is usually estimated to be in the range of 50 years or more.

Callers are often concerned for the safety of pets and children. Common sense measures can ensure the safety of both. The City of North Augusta has a "leash law" which prohibits free ranging pets thus preventing them from swimming in areas frequented by alligators. Both children and adults should maintain a safe distance from all wild animals. Conflicts between alligators and humans are rare as alligators rarely wander from their wetland environs. Most sightings occur when they are sunning on the edge of the water. They are generally timid toward humans and usually walk or swim away if approached. Unfortunately, approaching alligators (and their nests) in a way that provokes them, leads to aggressive behavior. Although there are laws against feeding alligators, some people continue to feed them, resulting in a reduced fear of humans. In the rare event that a large alligator shows aggressive behavior, it may have to be removed; however, the large scale removal of alligators is not feasible or desirable.

Nature in balance is efficient. For example, the removal of alligators would increase the beaver population, leading to more beaver dams in pipes and more trees being destroyed by their activity. The increase in the beaver population would consequently attract more alligators from the river until equilibrium or ecological balance is re-established. Learn more about alligators by downloading the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory Alligator Fact sheet located at: www.uga.edu/srel/gator-fact-sheetA.pdf.

No Grease Down the Drain!

All too often, grease (in the form of lard, shortening, and cooking oils) is drained into the plumbing system, usually through the kitchen sink. Commercial detergents that claim to dissolve grease only pass grease down the line where it can still end up clogging the system once it builds up in the pipes. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has determined that sewage spills that directly discharge to streams or are carried to them by stormwater, are the number one cause of pollution of our waterways.

Cooking grease can build up on the inside of sewer pipes. This coating inside pipes (both on your property and in the streets) can block the entire pipe. Grease buildup can cause wastewater to back up into your home. If you are connected to public sewer lines, grease can cause line blockages that may lead to Sewer System Overflows (SSOs). A sewer system overflow is the discharge of untreated wastewater into the environment. The easiest way to solve the grease problem and help prevent overflows of raw sewage is to keep this material out of the sewer system in the first place.

NEVER POUR GREASE DOWN SINK DRAINS OR TOILETS!

INSTEAD:

- *After the grease has cooled, pour or scrape used grease from pots and pans into a metal (can) or glass container that you intend to throw away.*
- *Let the container cool on the counter far from the reach of children.*
- *Cover the container and place it in the refrigerator until chilled.*
- *When chilled, throw the container in the trash.*

UPCOMING EVENTS!

Project Wet and Live Animals K-12 Teacher Workshop

October 26, 2007 9-12 p.m.
North Augusta Community Center

This workshop will involve the use of inquiry-based, exploratory hands-on curriculum and materials that will help teachers reinforce concepts from the South Carolina Science Curriculum Standards including; watershed, floodplain, ground water, point source pollution, nonpoint source pollution, best management practices, biodiversity, macroinvertebrates. There will also be an introduction to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Live Animal Program, including hands-on with live animals. Participants will receive a Project Wet Book, consisting of (91) activities for kindergarten through grade twelve, a Project Wet Curriculum & Activity Guide Student Copy Pages CD, in English & Spanish, and supplemental materials. The cost for the course is $20.00. All interested educators should contact stormwater@northaugusta.net or call 803-441-4246 to register.

For additional information contact:

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North Augusta
South Carolina's Riverfront