

**Eno River Water Users Annual Meeting**  
**August 26, 2020**  
**(virtual meeting via Webex)**  
**Summary**

The meeting was commenced at approximately 10:00 am by Mr. Linwood Peele, North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) - Division of Water Resources (DWR) – Water Supply Planning Branch Supervisor. He thanked everyone for attending the first virtual meeting of the Eno River Water Users group and opened the meeting by providing a historical overview of the formation of the Eno River Water Users Management group and Operations Plan and Agreement. According to records, the first significant water project on the Eno River was a grist mill constructed in the 1700's. This project was followed by a number of similar water-intensive projects undertaken through the 1800's and 1900's. Drought conditions in the mid-1950's led to a group of landowners donating land to Orange County for a water storage project, which ultimately became Lake Orange, constructed in 1968. Similar drought conditions reappeared in the region during the 1970's, prompting additional studies by the state environmental agency. This led to an Eno River CUA investigation in 1987, and the subsequent formation of the current water users group and agreement. The Town of Hillsborough completed construction on Phase 1 of the West Fork Eno Reservoir (WFER) in 1998. Mr. Peele emphasized that the DWR considers the Eno River Water Users Group and the associated Management and Operations Plan to be successful, and that DWR uses it as a model for other similar water-resource issues around the State. Following the brief history of water use in the Eno River watershed, Mr. Peele asked that everyone introduce themselves and to identify their associated organization and role (attached).

After the introductions, Mr. Louis Murray (Eno River Water Users Group DWR Coordinator) provided detailed information on the annual operations and associated withdrawals by the three primary water users; the Town of Hillsborough, Orange-Alamance Utilities, and Resco Products (formerly Piedmont Minerals). This included a brief presentation on the annual water use report, as well as an accounting of changes in streamflow observed over the past year at the United States Geological Survey (USGS) gage on the Eno River at Hillsborough. According to USGS data, following the protocols set forth in the Management and Operations Plan, the Eno River Water Users Group spent 106 days in Stage 1 and 2 days in Stage 2 restrictions from August 1, 2019 through July 31, 2020. All the days in Stages 1 and 2 occurred in 2019. Daily flow over this 12-month period averaged 69.5 cubic feet per second (cfs), greater than the long term 30-year (1990-2020) average of 58.4 cfs. Compared with long-term averages, the past 12-month period had fewer days with flows of less than 10 cfs and 3 cfs. Mr. Murray then discussed the flow and precipitation graphic, noting the flashy nature of the Eno River discharge in response to daily rainfall events. Precipitation of 50.1 inches over the past year was greater than the long-term

average of 46.8 inches. He concluded by briefly reviewing the monthly graphics, noting significant peaks and valleys in withdrawals, especially in the first half of the reporting year. This detailed data review and analysis provided context for the topics and discussions to follow.

Ms. Marie Strandwitz (Town of Hillsborough Utilities Director) began the updates from the primary water users by reporting on the delays in finishing Phase II of the WFER expansion. Most notably, the contractor had just begun construction on the roadbed and bridges in the upper portions of the reservoir when work had to be halted in March due to concerns and complications from the Coronavirus pandemic. The contractor returned to the project site on August 12. However, due to the delay, the project is now slated to be near completion around June 2021. Ms. Strandwitz informed the members that short-term reductions in water levels within the WFER can be expected during pile installation associated with raising the roadbeds. The timing of this activity and the required reductions in water levels are unknown at this time but will be determined by the contractor.

Mr. Dale Hamby (Water Plant Manager) provided information regarding the activities over the past year with Orange-Alamance Utilities. Mr. Hamby said that they have been conducting needed long-term maintenance over the past few months on the water system's assets, including cleaning the tanks and equipment. He also noted that demand has been slightly down since the start of the pandemic in March, but that it has not been significant.

Ms. Tonya Scarlett (Plant Manager, Resco Products) provided an annual update for Resco Products. She stated that they have withdrawn very little water from the Eno River over the past several months due primarily to the high rainfall. Additionally, construction on the intake structure has seen delays since last year but is expected to commence shortly. The work will involve replacing the 40-plus year-old pump and raising the elevation of the pump house above the flood zone.

Following reports from the primary water users, Mr. Christopher Sandt (Orange County Engineer) provided an update on the management and maintenance activities at Lake Orange. He opened by informing the group that the County had recently finalized two contracts for overdue improvements to the dam and spillway structures at Lake Orange. Residents along Lake Orange have voiced concerns over the expected drawdown of the lake during these repairs and improvements; however, the water levels leading up to and during construction are unknown at this point, as they will be determined by the contractors conducting the work. This work is anticipated to commence around February 2021.

Mr. Sandt then discussed the releases from Lake Orange used to augment flow in the Eno River, per the requirements of the Management and Operations Plan. He concluded by

noting that the water users experienced a short Stage 1 period within the past month (August 2020), an event to be documented in next year's annual report.

Following the report from Orange County, Mr. Peele solicited comments and reports from other groups and stakeholders. Ms. Kimberly Radewicz (Superintendent, Eno River State Park) reiterated a message that state park representatives have provided at each annual meeting, that is, to advocate for more water flowing downstream through the state park. She noted that a healthy aquatic habitat in the Eno River requires more flow downstream of the reservoirs and intakes. In addition, Ms. Radewicz stated that since the start of the pandemic in March, the Eno River State Park, as well as the Occoneechee State Park, have observed record-breaking trail and park usage, estimated to be between 40-60% higher than normal. She also noted that there has been severe erosion observed at the Cole Mill Road crossing of the Eno River. NCDOT has been made aware of the issue and is working to resolve it.

Ms. Jessica Sheffield (Director, Eno River Association) provided a brief update on the Eno River Association's activities including the recent annual Festival for the Eno held online/virtually this year as necessitated by the pandemic. Considering the change in venue, the festival was deemed successful. However, they hope to have a more traditional in-person festival next year and the Association has diligently worked to be fully staffed. Ms. Sheffield asked if anyone could provide detailed information regarding the City of Durham's proposed intake on the Eno River and associated withdrawals from the Teer Quarry.

Following this question, Mr. Peele asked Mr. Sydney Miller (City of Durham Water Resources Planning Manager) to provide information on the proposed intake on the Eno River and the Teer Quarry project. Mr. Miller mentioned that he had given a detailed presentation at last year's meeting and that little has changed since then regarding the proposal. Therefore, instead of a full presentation, he provided a quick overview of the proposal and updates. Since mining activities have ceased at the Eno River Teer Quarry for a number of years, the property has been sold to the City of Durham. Although the Teer Quarry has an estimated 1.5 billion gallons of storage, it has no watershed, and the only water input currently available is precipitation falling directly into the quarry. Consequently, to make the quarry useful as a water-supply source, the City of Durham has proposed to input water from Lake Michie as well as the adjacent Eno River. Proposed withdrawals from the Eno River would only occur during times of high flows, and even during these times the withdrawals would be limited to either 10% or 20% of the flows in the river, based upon the elevation of the water level in the quarry. The proposal has been extensively vetted by state and federal resource agencies including the DWR, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC), and United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). A presentation of the proposal was also recently provided to the Environmental Management Commission (EMC), with no objections. Mr. Miller noted that there are many hurdles yet to

be resolved, including the reclassification of the Teer Quarry as a water supply, and extending the existing water-supply classification of the Eno River upstream about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile, which would extend the projected area of the water-supply watershed by  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile into Orange County. The Eno River Water Users Group have all individually provided letters of no objection to the proposed project. The City of Durham is planning to hold a meeting in the next few months with representatives from American Rivers and other environmental advocacy groups to provide details and answer questions regarding the proposed withdrawals from the Eno River and the Teer Quarry project.

Following Mr. Miller, Mr. Peele asked if there were any other stakeholders who would like to speak or if there were any questions or other items not already addressed. Mr. Christopher Sandt spoke up to ask the group to consider how the future additional storage in the WFER should be best used for all parties once Phase II is completed sometime next year. He was not prepared to discuss the issue in depth at this year's meeting, but that it should be discussed in some detail at next year's annual meeting. He noted that there will always be a need to release water from Lake Orange to augment downstream flows for aquatic wildlife and habitat, especially in the East Fork of the Eno River. Mr. Peele then reiterated Mr. Sandt's comments for the need to maintain flows throughout the East and West Forks, as well as the main stem of the Eno River. He then provided some historical context for the original construction of the WFER; that is, that the Town of Hillsborough pursued, funded and constructed the project entirely on its own, despite their request for the other Eno River water users to assist with planning and funding the project.

Hearing no further comments or questions, Mr. Peele provided a closing statement concerning the constant vigilance the water users group and other interested parties should have regarding potential drought conditions. These conditions are known to occur both slowly and very quickly in the Eno River watershed and require all water users and stakeholders to remain engaged for the current water management and operations arrangement to remain effective.

With no further business to discuss, Mr. Peele thanked the attendees and adjourned the meeting at approximately 11:00 am.

**ROY COOPER**  
*Governor*

**MICHAEL S. REGAN**  
*Secretary*

**S. DANIEL SMITH**  
*Director*



**NORTH CAROLINA**  
*Environmental Quality*

## **2020 ENO RIVER WATER USERS MEETING**

### **August 26, 2020**

#### **AGENDA**

- (10:00 – 10:15) Welcome and Introductions (Linwood Peele, NCDEQ)
- (10:15 – 10:30) Annual Operations (Louis Murray, NCDEQ)
  - Water Use Report
  - Stream Flow Report
- (10:30 – 11:00) Status of Water Users
  - Hillsborough (Marie Strandwitz, Town of Hillsborough)
  - Orange-Alamance (Dale Hamby, Orange-Alamance Water System)
  - Piedmont Minerals (Tonya Scarlett, Resco Products)
  - Other Agencies/Organizations
- (11:00 – 11:30) Other Topics of Interest
- (11:30) Adjourn



North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality | Division of Water Resources  
512 North Salisbury Street | 1611 Mail Service Center | Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1611  
919.707.9000