

Eno River Water Users Annual Meeting

Meeting Summary from August 31, 2023

The meeting commenced at approximately 10:12am 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 annual Eno River water users group held at the Orange County Bonnie B. Davis Environment and Agricultural Center at 1020 US HWY 70 West Hillsborough and asked for all attendees to introduce themselves (attendance sheet attached).

Following the introductions, Mr. Harold Brady (DWR Water Supply Development Coordinator) provided a brief historical overview of the Eno River as a source of water for the local community. The first continuous flow records began in 1929 when the United States Geological Survey (USGS) installed a stream gage on the Eno River near Hillsborough (site of the current gage). Drought conditions in the mid-1950's led to a group of landowners to donate land to Orange County for a water storage project. This became the site of Lake Orange, constructed in 1968. Similar drought conditions reappeared in the region during the 1970's, prompting additional studies by the state environmental agency, and led to the formation of a water resources task force by the Orange County Commissioners in 1979. The task force requested that a Capacity Use Investigation (CUI) be conducted in the Upper Neuse River basin by the Division of Water Resources (DWR). A formal Eno River CUI was issued in 1987. Following the issuance of the CUI, the Environmental Management Commission (EMC) issued a resolution creating the current water users group and Water Management and Operations Plan (WMOP); thereby, avoiding a formal Capacity Use Area designation. The Town of Hillsborough completed construction on Phase 1 of the West Fork Eno Reservoir (WFER) in 2000 and began construction of Phase 2 of the WFER in 2018.

Following the brief history of water use in the Eno River watershed, Mr. Louis Murray (Eno River Water Users Group DWR Coordinator) provided an overview of the annual water use report. This included 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, as well as an accounting of changes in streamflow observed over the past year at the USGS gage on the Eno River at Hillsborough. According to USGS data, following the protocols set forth in the WMOP, the Eno River Water Users Group spent 148 days in Stage 1 from August 1, 2022 through July 31, 2023 (i.e., reporting year). That represents all of August, September, October, and November 2022. During this reporting year, most of the days in Stage 1 were in 2022 (123 days), with only 25 days in stage 1 so far in 2023. Average daily flow over this 12-

month period was 34.1 cubic feet per second (cfs), which is significantly less than the long term 30-year (1993-2023) average of 57.6 cfs. Compared with long term (30-year) averages, the past 12-month period had significantly more days with flows of less than 10 cfs (152 days compared to 129 days) and significantly more days with flows less than 3 cfs (49 days compared to 34 days). Mr. Murray then discussed the flow and precipitation graphic, noting the flashy nature of the Eno River discharge in response to daily rainfall events. Total precipitation of 38.8 inches over the past year was less than the long-term average of 49 inches. He then briefly reviewed the monthly graphics, noting significant peaks and valleys in withdrawals, especially in the first half of the reporting year. He concluded by noting that the Eno River entered back into Stage 1 restrictions on June 10 for 15 days and then went back into Stage 1 restrictions again on July 23 where it remains. This detailed data review and analysis provided context for the topics and discussions to follow.

Mr. Nathan Cates (Town of Hillsborough Water Treatment Plant Operator) began the updates from the primary water users by reporting on the current water levels of the West Fork Eno Reservoir (WFER). The WFER has been continuing to rise very slowly over the past year with greater variability during the past few hot and dry summer months. Currently, the WFER is at approximately 48 feet, with a maximum storage of 53 feet. He expressed hope that we have a wet winter so the reservoir could break the 50 ft mark. The Town of Hillsborough is currently releasing approximately 5 cfs from the WFER into the Eno River.

Ms. Tonya Scarlett (Plant Manager, Resco Products) provided an annual update for Resco Products. She stated that, as in previous years, they have had to withdraw very little water from the river to wash equipment (water in the wash down basin (i.e., facility pond) has been largely sufficient for these activities). Due to the occasional use of the basin and slower than normal business, Ms. Scarlett did not expect that they would need to withdraw very little, if any, water in the near term from the Eno River.

Following reports from the primary water users, Ms. Kimberly Radewicz (Superintendent, Eno River State Park) provided an update on issues and activities in the Eno River State Park. She noted that funding through the NC Connect Bond there are lots of new facilities in various stages of construction and planning in the park. Also, the park will be acquiring additional land located outside of Hillsborough between the main portion of the park and Oconeechee Mountain. This land is the site of a popular abandoned speedway track and there are no immediate plans to connect this land with the other sections of the park. The Eno River *Hydrilla* task force, including staff from the Eno River State Park, have been conducting surveys this summer which will be used to develop a treatment plan for 2023. *Hydrilla* treatment for 2023 ended on the day of the

meeting (i.e., August 31). She concluded by reiterating 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.

Following Ms. Radewicz, Mr. Christopher Sandt (Orange County Engineer) opened his update on the management and maintenance activities at Lake Orange by stating that the county is currently receiving bids on needed concrete repairs and that they hope to get started on this phase of the repairs soon. He noted that a contractor has been selected for a full survey of the lake property. This project will take several months, but he hopes they will be able to start soon. However, a public meeting with the homeowners on Lake Orange will be held before starting the initial survey work so that residents understand the purpose of the work. The new survey would take about three months to complete and will provide detailed information incorporating both GPS and lidar technology. Lastly, Mr. Sandt plans to reissue the RFQ (Request for Qualifications) for the proposed and much needed repairs to the tower structure in the lake. He is hoping to receive innovative ideas that could avoid construction of a coffer dam, thereby saving considerable time and money. However, he recognizes it may not be feasible.

Mr. John Toler, a long-time board member of the Friends of Lake Orange, then spoke on issues related to Lake Orange over the past reporting year. He stated that he was pleased with the conditions of the lake over the past few years and hopes that they continue. They will continue working closely with Mr. Sandt and Orange County on the needed repairs to the lake.

Lastly, Mr. Cy Stober, Orange County Planning and Inspections Director, spoke on two planned bridge replacements over the Eno River around the Hillsborough area, including the US Highway Business 70 bridge. He also mentioned a large, proposed development near NC Highway 751 and US Highway 70 that could require installation of a wastewater package plant. The County and the Town are keeping a close eye on this project as the management could become a long-term issue.

With no further business to discuss, Mr. Peele thanked the attendees and adjourned the meeting at approximately 11:25am.