

The Town of White Bluff

EPA Water Quality Scorecard Summary

The Town of White Bluff was recently awarded one of three Greater Nashville Regional Council grants to work with the Cumberland River Compact to evaluate the town's development rules and policies. The team elected to use the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Water Quality Scorecard as a way of evaluating current green infrastructure policies and practices within the community's jurisdiction. This process was used as a way to be consistent with other communities across the state and country; many of which are required by federal law to use this method. The Scorecard was reviewed on June 29th, 2011, by the Town's Planning office, the State Planner, the Town's engineering firm and elected officials of the Town of White Bluff.

The Scorecard was developed to help local governments identify opportunities to remove barriers and revise or create codes, ordinances, and incentives for improved water quality protection. The two main goals of this tool are to: (1) help communities protect water quality by identifying ways to reduce the amount of stormwater flows in a community and (2) educate stakeholders on the wide range of policies and regulations that have water quality implications. This helps municipal staff and other stakeholders understand where a municipality's land development regulations and other ordinances may present barriers or allow for opportunities to implement a comprehensive water quality protection approach.

The Scorecard provides policy options, resources, and case studies to help communities develop a comprehensive water quality program. It guides municipal staff through a review of relevant local codes and ordinances, across multiple municipal departments and at the three scales within the jurisdiction of a local government - municipality, neighborhood, and site, to ensure these codes work together to protect water quality goals. At the municipal scale, decisions about where and how we grow are the first development decisions related to water quality. Preserving and restoring natural landscape features are critical components of green infrastructure. Using land more efficiently enables better management of stormwater runoff by reducing impervious areas. At the neighborhood scale, green infrastructure, including planning and design approaches, help reduce impervious surfaces and better integrate the natural and built environments. At the site scale, green infrastructure practices include rain gardens, porous pavements, green roofs, infiltration planters, trees, tree boxes, and rainwater harvesting for non-potable use.

The Scorecard has an optional point system allowing White Bluff to gauge its current overall water quality program. The Town of White Bluff chose to utilize the point system and received a score of 58 out of a possible range of 247 to 256 (some questions had multiple score options). Keep in mind, there is no right or wrong score and because the Scorecard is intended for use by a wide range of community types, sizes, and locations throughout the U.S., some questions and points were not applicable to the Town of White Bluff. The goal is to have each department within the Town which is responsible for water quality enforcement regulations revise the current rules and policies, where needed, in order to improve water quality and reduce runoff from reaching our waterways.

The Town of White Bluff currently has the following development guidance documents in place to serve the municipal, neighborhood and/or site design level.

- Land Use and Transportation Plan
- Comprehensive Strategic Plan
- Commercial Design Review
- Planning and Zoning Ordinance
- Subdivision Regulations

Moving forward, each plan or policy will be reviewed and updated, where needed, to improve clarification and consistency with green infrastructure practices. The Town will strive to develop, update and adopt regulations requiring and encouraging the use of green infrastructure as a tool for managing stormwater. Adoption of policy change suggestions will enable the town to better manage runoff, protect the local watershed, and improve water quality.

Attached is a comprehensive list of proposed policies and practices for consideration. Specifically the grant team makes the following recommendations to the Town of White Bluff leadership:

- adopt a stormwater ordinance
- Implement and require developers to follow a packet of instructions pertaining to stormwater management
- institute buffer zones
- develop steep slope ordinances
- adopt new TDEC site design standards and erosion control standards for new construction
- require the use of green infrastructure, where appropriate
- adopt progressive landscaping and tree ordinances

These policies support water quality goals and ensure good management of stormwater runoff. Effective overall stormwater management requires coordination and collaboration across many different municipal departments and processes. Further, each department must coordinate with one another to confirm green infrastructure implementation is legal and encouraged. It is the goal of the community to have these practices phased in over a four year period.

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