

Realtors Learn About Wetlands and Shoreline Stabilization

Why should realtors and land-use planners learn about coastal wetlands? At the N.C. National Estuarine Research Reserve's (NCNERR) Coastal Training Program workshop September 11, participants made the connection between the environmental and economic benefits wetlands bring to coastal communities and how they can use their professional knowledge to help clients make smart development choices. The Estuarine Shorelines: Value, Regulations, and Stabilization workshop offered the first opportunity for participating realtors to receive Continuing Education Credits, which are required by the N.C. Real Estate Commission for license renewal. Participation from 34 realtors, in addition to



Dr. John Fear addresses questions from participants

land-use planners (who received Certification Maintenance Credits from the American Planning Association for participation), landscape architects, and local government representatives, fostered important dialogue about sustainable strategies for coastal development.

The workshop began with a presentation by NCNERR Research Coordinator Dr. John Fear, who outlined estuary ecology and explained the benefits of healthy coastal wetlands. Wetlands and associated estuarine ecosystems provide habitat for economically valuable fish and shellfish, lessen the impact of storm surge, and help prevent coastal erosion. Dr. Fear then discussed current estuarine shoreline research, including a project to determine shoreline stabilization impacts on estuary function. Representatives from the N.C. Division of Coastal Management, which emphasized the need for advancing alternative sustainable estuarine shoreline stabilization techniques, connected estuarine science to the role of realtors and land-use planners by explaining the detailed permit process required for living shoreline stabilization in an effort to address perceived barriers to adoption by coastal development professionals and property owners.

By the end of the workshop, participants understood that coastal development can affect the health of surrounding ecosystems, and that realtors and land-use planners are crucial information sources for those purchasing, selling, or building on estuarine shorelines. Workshop attendees acknowledged that “defining various erosion control methods and discussing the benefits and drawbacks of each” and “seeing examples of shoreline stabilization” during presentations and a field trip were some of the most valuable aspects of the program.

Realtors joining the N.C. Coastal Training Program for the first time had positive experiences, with one participant claiming that the workshop was “the best continuing education experience and learning opportunity I’ve had in years!” In addition to future Estuarine Shorelines workshops, the N.C. Coastal Training Program also offers Stormwater Management and Barrier Island Development courses for Continuing Education and Certification Maintenance Credits. Realtors and land-use planners can take advantage of this training to inform clients about estuarine ecology and stabilization, and encourage responsible development along the N.C. coast.