

Project Description

Catawba-Wateree Water Management Group Citizens' Water Academy

Launched in 2019, the Citizens' Water Academy supports the growth of a new generation of civic, utility and industry leaders interested in source water protection, the environment and in brainstorming innovative solutions for our region's most pressing water resource challenges.

By learning how the river system works, seeing the interconnectedness of diverse interests and the need for broad based collaboration and planning, the Academy seeks to develop educated, informed and engaged leaders who will advocate for protecting our source water.

Beginning with in person sessions, then transitioning to virtual sessions during the pandemic, we are now returning to a combination of in-person and virtual sessions for 2023. A total of 170 participants have attended a total of 37 sessions including elected officials, agencies, governmental staff, non-profit groups and local leaders from across the Catawba-Wateree River Basin. This year's class includes 30 individuals from a broad spectrum of organizations and offices. The program is interactive with quizzes, discussion, panels and on-site tours.

Each session is led by experts who present and engage on topics including:

- Understanding the river basin - past, present and future - including threats and invasive species
- History of human dependence on the river beginning with the Catawba Nation (includes tour)
- Duke Energy's role and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission hydropower licensing
- How water treatment plants work - includes tours of 4 treatment plants
- Understanding the dynamics of storm water runoff and the rules, regulations and efforts to manage it
- Meeting and learning from local advocates: Riverkeeper, Land Conservancies, Marine Commissions
- Land use impacts on water quality and quantity and introduction to the modeling tool created by RTI international that quantifies the benefits of land protection on water resources
- Examples of restoration projects
- Recreation and economic values derived from the river resources
- Planning for the future: the Integrated Water Resources Plan

The program also includes a practicum where participants will choose an area to pursue after the formal sessions.

A pre- and post-survey will be conducted to gauge participants' knowledge and attitudes toward our river's resources.

Graduates leave with a deep, multi-perspective understanding of the need to collaborate to protect source water throughout the watershed. Our model and topics could be scaled, modified and utilized in other basins.

This year's presenters are listed in attachment 1.

Website: <https://www.catawbawatereewmg.org/citizens-water-academy>

All graduates of the Academy will be recognized at the Annual Summit. The Annual Summit serves our education goals through presentations and discussions with national, regional and local experts. More details are on attachment 2.

<https://www.catawbawatereewmg.org/annual-summit>

Attachment 1

2023 Citizens' Water Academy Speakers

Jimmy	Bagley	City of Rock Hill	Deputy City Manager
Rusty	Rozzelle	Mecklenburg County	Water Quality Program Manager
Jeff	Lineberger	Duke Energy	Director, Water Strategy & Hydro Licensing
Garry	Rice	Duke Energy	Deputy General Counsel
Steve	Immel	Duke Energy	VP, Fleet Transition Strategy
Robert	McMurry	Duke Energy	Director, Production Cost Modeling & Analytics
Ed	Bruce	Duke Energy	Lead Engineer, Water Resources Planning
Brett	Hartis	Duke Energy	Lead Scientist, Environmental Sciences
Ron	Hargrove	Charlotte Water	Deputy Director
Angela	Charles	Charlotte Water	Director
Will	Jernigan	Cavanaugh Engineers	
Zach	Hall	Duke Energy	Director, Environmental Science
Vicki	Taylor	Catawba-Wateree Initiative	
Michele	Eddy	RTI International	Environmental Engineer
John	Searby	Catawba Riverkeeper Foundation	Executive Director
Bart	Landess	Catawba Lands Conservancy	Executive Director
Neil	Brennan	Lake Wylie Marine Commission	
Hank	Eimer	Coldwell Banker Boyd and Hassell, Inc., Realtors	Broker in Charge
Randy	Kelley	Lake Wateree Association	Chair Water Watch Committee
Joe	Albright	Two Rivers Utilities / Gastonia	Director of Public Utilities
Jennifer	Bennett	Duke Energy	Project Manager, Water Strategy & Hydro Licensi
Glinda	Coleman	Great Falls Home Town Association	Executive Director
Anthony	Rivers	Rock Hill Utilities	Water Plant Superintendent
Anjoli (Joli)	Reynolds	Quest at Latta Nature Preserve - Mecklenburg County	Nature Center Manager
Michelle	Raquet	NCDWR	Basin Planning Branch Supervisor
Kassidy	Plyler	Catawba Nation	
Darryl	Hammock	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Storm Water Services	Assistant Manager

Participants touring a water treatment plant



Source water protection is woven throughout the program with sessions on land conservation, GIS modeling, emerging contaminants, invasive species. The program uses examples of conservation projects that the Catawba-Wataree Water Management Group has assisted in funding such as these:

Our Work

Other Source Water Protection Investments



Forney Creek Stream Restoration Project [A]
 CWWMG provided a \$20,000 grant to the Catawba Lands Conservancy to help purchase a 1.9-acre property in the Forney Creek watershed in eastern Lincoln County. This newly purchased property is now part of the larger 470-acre Forney Creek Conservation Area and provides a critical link for future stream restoration plans for this watershed.

Photo by Nancy Ferenc

Paddy Creek Land Acquisition [B]
 CWWMG provided a \$20,000 grant to the Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina to help purchase a 27-acre property in Burke County, which included 1,950 linear feet along Paddy Creek. Paddy Creek is a direct tributary to Lake James in the headwaters of the Catawba-Wataree River Basin. This newly purchased property is now part of a 180-acre parcel that has been put under conservation easement by the Foothills Conservancy and will be part of a conservation project to reestablish a 300-foot riparian buffer along Paddy Creek, which will help to protect water quality in Lake James.

Canoe Creek Restoration [C,D]
 CWWMG provided a \$20,000 grant to the Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina to support the acquisition and restoration of a portion of Canoe Creek in Burke County. This effort is part of a project to establish the Oak Hill Community Park and Forest for passive outdoor recreation, nature-based education, community agriculture, archeological exploration, ecological study, and forest restoration and stewardship.



These efforts have received support from elected officials and other graduates of the Citizens' Water Academy. This growing citizen support has been essential in building a long term plan to protect and manage watershed resources.

Attachment 2 Annual Summit

Annual Summit Speakers have included:

John Hofmann, Executive Vice President of Water at the Lower Colorado River Authority,

Richard Whisnant, Professor of Public Law & Government at UNC-Chapel Hill's School of Government.

George Hawkins

Former CEO, DC Water Founder, Moonshot

Radhika Fox, CEO, [US Water Alliance](#)

Dr. Wenonah Haire, Cultural Center Executive Director, [Catawba Indian Nation](#)

Kim Colson, Former Director North Carolina Division of Water Infrastructure

Howard Neukrug, Professor of Practices in Water Leadership and Innovation at the University of Pennsylvania and the founder and director of the University's "Water Center at Penn".

Shadi Eskaf, Research Director, Environmental Finance Center, UNC School of Government

Mohamed Balla, Deputy Commissioner, City of Atlanta Watershed Management

Plus many others. Details and copies of presentations can be found on the Annual Summit website: <https://catawbawatereewmg.org/annual-summit>

One participant wrote:

As a relatively recent addition to the professional world of water, and as someone who grew up passionate about water quality and the environment, I appreciated the vast wealth of knowledge that was presented at the Water for All Summit. Learning about all the amazing work that's being done by different organizations, corporations, partnerships, etc. was fascinating and enlightening. Go water!!

