

## Formula for success

A comprehensive approach to issues and solutions was undertaken. Following a strict protocol, The Beaver Creek Watershed Assessment inventoried 12 drainage basins within the watershed, identifying

problems and opportunities for restoration and producing a planning document and outreach tool.

Public meetings and surveys created awareness, enlisted participants, nurtured cooperation and led to formation of the Beaver Creek Watershed Association in 2003, through a grant from TVA. BCWA has a true grassroots membership of over 200 public and private stakeholders guiding and driving it. That year, Knox County Watershed Coordinator Roy Arthur was hired

as liaison between watershed communities, task force partners and restoration initiatives. The association emphasizes outreach and education.

## The cutting edge

A framework for community cooperation and involvement has been established, and major progress is already evident (see sidebar). Interest from state and federal agencies promises to press this framework into broader service throughout the Southeast. Coordinator Roy Arthur said that TDEC wants the task force "to document the process used to create the plan," which it will then "disseminate for use as a watershed planning model and tool" throughout Tennessee. Strategies used and lessons learned in Beaver Creek will be applied to watersheds up and down the Tennessee Valley.

If imitation is the truest form of flattery, it gets even better. In Sept. 2005, the Beaver Creek Task Force made presentations to EPA Region IV's Watershed Management Office in Atlanta. Having just adopted a watershed model approach as an agency, EPA recognized the value of the work underway in the Beaver Creek watershed and described the effort as "one of the most advanced watershed efforts in the southeastern United States." Arthur said EPA "designated Beaver Creek as a priority watershed," issued strong support for the initiative, and "looks to Beaver Creek as a project model for the entire southeastern U.S."

## Accomplishments of the Beaver Creek Watershed Association:

- Beaver Creek – Our Forgotten Resource, a 16-page periodical, was distributed to 20,000 residences and stakeholders in 2003.
- Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation recently awarded a \$55,000 grant to fill information and data gaps, identify problems, present a range of solutions, and enable the Stakeholders Advisory Council and general public to prioritize restoration efforts.
- Models of primary pollutants and hydrologic impacts have been calibrated with GIS land use coverage, enabling analysis of how proposed county stormwater regulations and best management practices will impact Beaver Creek.
- UT Water Resource Research Center and AmeriCorps introduced hands-on programs into six middle and high schools in the watershed and teamed with Hallsdale-Powell Utility District to present environmental education programs in elementary schools.
- Received a \$100,000 grant from the Tennessee Stream Mitigation Program to undertake riparian restoration on a five-mile segment of Beaver Creek.
- Retained UT School of Architecture and Design to prepare a Green Infrastructure Plan for the entire watershed, a land use planning tool that will identify areas best suited for future development and those best retained as natural areas, habitat corridors and parks.
- Helped Knox County establish a 50-foot buffer zone for new construction along streams with woody vegetation and managed grass for sediment control.
- Knox County Soil Conservation District co-funded eight projects in 2005 at a cost of \$125,000 for adopting agricultural best management practices like cattle exclusion. Similar projects will recur annually in the watershed, reducing non-point-source pollution.
- Under a Five Star Restoration Grant from EPA Region IV, 15 acres of wetlands at Halls Community Park were restored.
- Conducting wetland enhancement on five acres in Halls for use as an educational resource and demonstration project for area schools.

*Schacher is a resident of Clinton, a member of Knoxville Water Quality Forum, and has been a natural resource advocate and professional for 30 years. Wayne may be reached at [whschacher@natreserv.com](mailto:whschacher@natreserv.com).*

