

Local Adopt-A-Stream Group Making An Impact

It's a beautiful Saturday morning and a group of volunteers at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Family in Mills River is hard at work. Since joining the Adopt-A-Stream program of the Environmental and Conservation Organization (ECO) a couple of years ago, a team of concerned church members has been monitoring and surveying the portion of Boylston Creek which runs through their property. Under the leadership of Diane Carter, the group has developed a better understanding of water quality issues and the benefits which arise from protecting and enhancing both the immediate stream bank and the riparian buffer region. Now they are moving ahead to put their plans into effect. Working with Shaun Moore, Watershed Coordinator of the Henderson County Soil and Water Conservation District, they have identified invasive species, like privet, oriental bittersweet and wild primrose, which need to be removed, and have applied for assistance from the SWCD's water quality Cost Share Program to repair and stabilize the stream bank. Analysis of the changes which have occurred over the past few years shows that as much as 34 tons of soil is being lost per year from on their property. In addition, the planting, on one acre, of native trees and shrubs, such as silky dogwood, river birch, hazel alder and spice bush would be included in the restoration plan.

Deserving of credit for his support is Father Rob Lundquist, who assumed his duties at the church less than one year ago. His words speak eloquently to the issue:

"Christianity holds that the Earth is the Lord's, and that we humans are stewards of the Earth - it has been placed in our care. Holy Family is blessed to have such a wonderful creek and wild area placed under our responsibility. This opportunity to help repair the land, to reclaim it from invasive non-native species, allows us to participate with God in caring for Creation. We look forward to working together and seeing improvement in our local environment in the years ahead."

True to his words, Fr. Lundquist is out among the group this morning, working alongside 8 of his flock. By the end of the day they will have removed a dump-truck load of undesirable brush.

ECO is especially proud of the work this group is doing. Out here also to keep in touch is Rich DeSimone, Adopt-A-Stream Coordinator for ECO. "This is a great example of Adopt-A-Stream meeting its goal of helping neighborhood and community groups to do their part in bringing the benefits of environmental stewardship to the community. Any recognition of their efforts is well deserved."

The project has received necessary approvals from the church hierarchy and the local SWCD Board. Within a couple of weeks it is hoped that the state Board will add its final approval and the project will be underway.

For more information on the Adopt-A-Stream program, contact the ECO office at 692-0385.