

Sustainable Sandhills Hosts First Green Growth Toolbox Workshop



GREEN GROWTH TOOLBOX Nature-friendly planning



“Green growth” is a nature-friendly way of developing communities. It means conserving habitat and biological diversity while building homes, businesses and shopping centers. The Green Growth Toolbox promotes green growth by providing local decision-makers with the resources they need to make well-informed decisions to manage and protect the unique natural areas in their jurisdictions. This state-wide initiative is being carried out by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission and its partners in all four ecoregions of the state.

As a partner in this initiative, Sustainable Sandhills is proud to bring the Green Growth Toolbox to planners in the Sandhills Region. On August 26, Sustainable Sandhills, in collaboration with the Wildlife Resources Commission and NC Sandhills Conservation Partnership, provided a day-long Green Growth Toolbox training workshop for planners and policy makers in Moore County. This was the first workshop presented to a county in the Sandhills.



The Workshop included a series of presentations that outlined the social and economic benefits of green growth as well as in-depth information about what conservation data are available for the Sandhills and how those data can be used in planning. The workshop also included several hands-on exercises that challenged participants to place homes and lots into a subdivision site while conserving natural resources based on the recommendations in the Green Growth Toolbox.



The Green Growth Toolbox is unique in that it provides a link between biologists and decision makers, and allows local governments to be proactive toward conservation and green planning. We hope that the information and recommendations in the Toolbox will influence greener long-term visioning and plan-making throughout the Sandhills, inspire nature friendly zoning patterns and development ordinances,

and facilitate greener development and site design at the local level. Green growth not only benefits our area's wildlife resources, but maintains the long-term well-being of all living things in the Sandhills.

Sustainable Sandhills anticipates providing workshops to additional local governments in the coming months. For more information on the Green Growth Toolbox, please visit the [Green Growth Toolbox website](#) at or contact Brenda Johnson, Green Growth Planner at Sustainable Sandhills, at brendaj@sustainablesandhills.org or 910-484-9098.



More about Green Growth in NC

Green growth principles are especially applicable in North Carolina. According to the U.S. Census Bureau in 2005, North Carolina is the fifth fastest growing

state in the nation and the only state with three of the top 20 sprawl centers: the Triangle, the Triad, and the Charlotte-Metro area. The land development that is an inherent consequence of this population increase is a top threat to wildlife resources. Current patterns of development tend to sprawl into undeveloped areas, instead of concentrating in already-existing town centers. The Sandhills region is particularly susceptible to the negative consequences of sprawl. The Longleaf Pine ecosystem is one of the top 21 endangered ecosystems in the U.S. The necessity to manage this area with periodic prescribed fires creates unique obstacles to natural lands management in populated areas.

The Green Growth Toolbox is a pro-active, non-regulatory effort of the Wildlife Diversity program of the Wildlife Resources Commission to provide local governments with the tools for nature-friendly growth at every level of planning. The Toolbox consists of an informational handbook, GIS data package, and a daylong workshop and follow-up guidance by a member of the Green Growth Toolbox team. Because natural resources and development needs differ in the various ecoregions of the state, the WRC and its partners have separate data appendices for each region, with maps that are uniquely suited to the needs of that region. For example, Red Cockaded Woodpecker (RCW) nesting and foraging habitat is an important consideration for development in the Sandhills, so a single GIS map layer that shows the location of RCW habitat will be provided in the Sandhills Regional Appendix. The Green Growth Toolbox also includes explanations and descriptions of each layer and recommendations for management of those areas.

Did you know?

Green growth also provides local communities with a variety of important economic and social dividends. By promoting conservation of forestland and waterway buffers, green growth can improve air and water quality. Well-maintained natural areas also increase opportunities for ecotourism and outdoor recreation, bringing economic dividends to the region. Green growth also functions to conserve wildlife resources, protect natural heritage and important cultural resources, and maintain ecosystem services, which can also have significant economic returns for local communities. Green growth not only beautifies the landscape, but improves quality of life by providing healthy ecosystems.

[Learn more!](#)

