

# Strategic Plan for the Crane Creek Watershed Association

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*Lake Elizabeth in the Crane Creek Watershed*

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## 1. Overview of the Crane Creek Watershed

### 1.1. General Description of the Watershed

The Crane Creek Watershed is located in Richland County, South Carolina (Figure 1.1). Crane Creek has two main branches, the North Branch with headwaters near Blythewood, South Carolina and the Main Branch with headwaters in the Northeastern suburbs of Columbia. The Creek's two branches join and then flow through the northern most portions of Columbia and into the Broad River just south of the Interstate 20 Bridge. The watershed is primarily forest land (50%) and developed land (30%). The remaining twenty percent of the watershed is a combination of agricultural land, wetland, open water, and other land use types (Figure 1.2). The total watershed area is sixty-seven square miles, which accounts for eighteen percent of the total land area in Richland County.

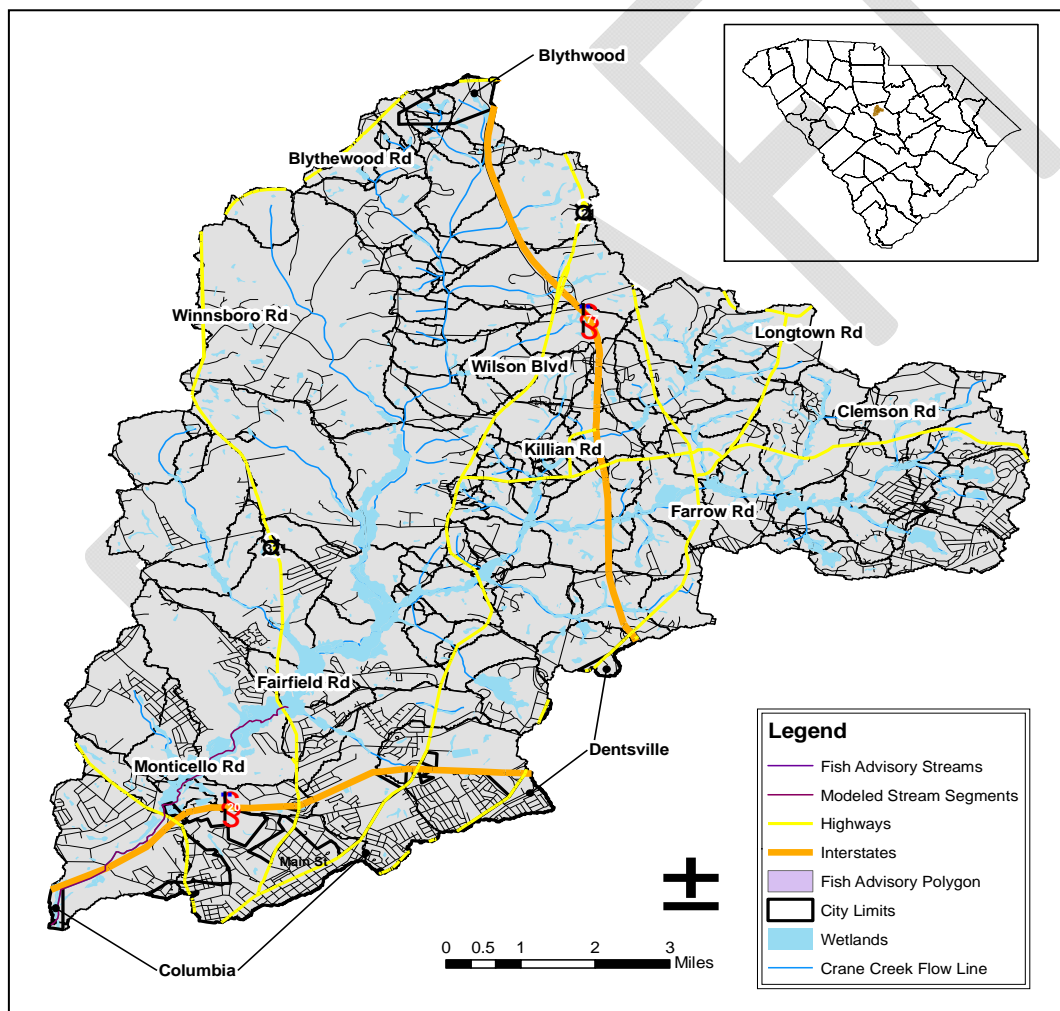


Figure 1.1 - Overview map of the Crane Creek Watershed

1.2. Current Conditions within the Watershed

Although it the public perception of water quality in Crane Creek appears to be primarily positive, it is nonetheless listed as an impaired waterbody by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC). This designation is due to poor water quality conditions measured by state officials at three water quality monitoring stations located along the Crane Creek (Figure 1.2). In 2008, two of the stations were designated impaired. The B-081 station was cited for biological impairment and the B-316 station for low dissolved oxygen. The positive public perception of Crane Creek's water quality is likely influenced by Gills Creek, another major watershed within Richland County which has poor water quality conditions. While Crane Creek's current water quality conditions are designated as impaired by the State, monitoring data shows that current water quality conditions in Crane Creek are generally superior to those found in neighboring Gills Creek.

1.3. Projected Future Conditions within the Watershed

Crane Creek, however, is under increasing stress due to changing land use in the watershed. Blythewood, which overlaps with the Northern most portion of Crane Creek, is expanding rapidly. The Interstate-77 corridor between Columbia and Blythewood has also seen increased

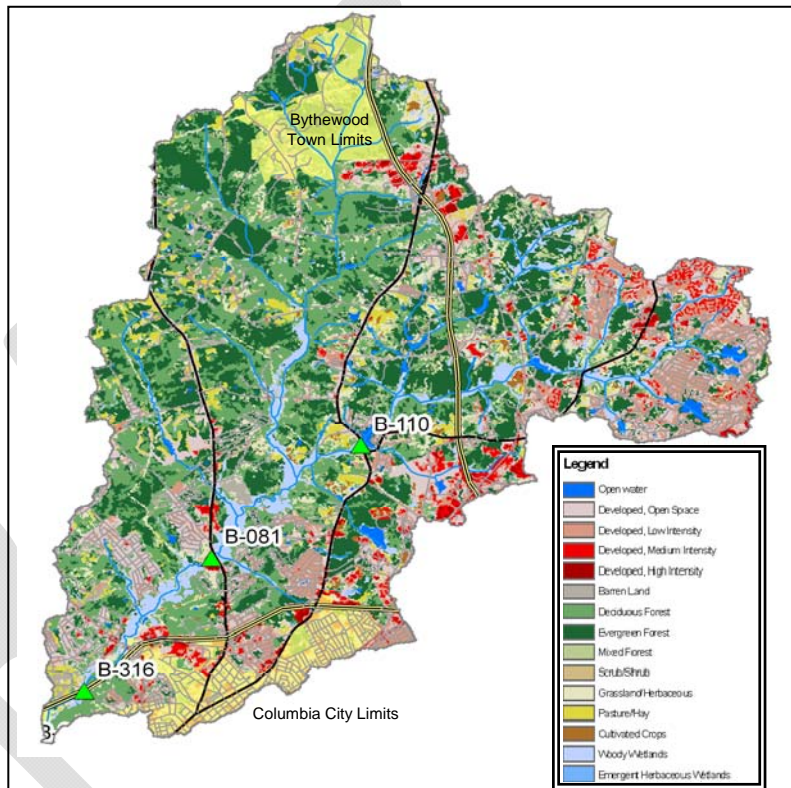


Figure 1.1 - SCDHEC Monitoring Stations in the Crane Creek Watershed

development in recent years and is expected to continue to become more urbanized over the next decade. Development is also expected in the southern portion of the Crane Creek Watershed with the City of Columbia's plans to add drinking and water infrastructure just north of the city limits. Development has the potential to negatively impact that natural environment through loss of wildlife habitat and increased pollution to rivers, lakes, and creeks from storm water runoff. With careful planning and public and private interest in protecting the natural environment, however, these negative impacts can be minimized.

**2. The Crane Creek Watershed Association**

*2.1. Purpose of the Watershed Association*

Watershed associations are an effective means for organizing the public's voice in order to protect the natural environment. Watershed associations range in size from the very large (e.g., the multi-state Chesapeake Bay Watershed), to smaller watersheds throughout the country where concerned citizens have joined in order to protect their natural environment.

This is an important time for the Crane Creek Watershed because the watershed is forecasted to undergo increased development in coming years. The primary strategic goal of the Crane Creek Watershed Association, therefore, should be to insure that development within the watershed have minimal environmental impact on the natural environment within the watershed. Development in the Columbia metropolitan region is in everyone's best interest; however, it is important to take into account both the economic benefits of development and the potential economic costs associated with environmental degradation caused by development. If efforts are made at the outset to minimize environmental impacts caused by development, it will bring long term rewards for the County and residents of the Crane Creek watershed.

*2.2. Public and Stakeholder Meetings to Date*

The University of South Carolina was contracted by Richland County's Stormwater Management Division to hold public meetings to understand the public desire for forming a watershed association. Beginning in September of 2008, stakeholder, county council, and public meetings have been held to discuss formation of the Crane Creek Watershed Association (Table 2.1). Much of the material presented in this report is the direct result of these stakeholder and public meetings. The goal from the beginning was for the Strategic Plan for the Watershed Association to come directly from the citizens that live within the watershed.

**Table 2.1 – Crane Creek Watershed Association Meeting to Date**

<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Meeting Objective</u>
September 30, 2008	Stakeholder Kick-off Meeting
October 2, 2008	County Council Kick-off Meeting
November 13, 2008	Crane Creek Watershed Introduction
March 18, 2009	Overview of the Strategic Plan
April 18, 2009	Crafting a Vision Statement
June 25, 2009	Crafting an Action Plan
October 1, 2009	Stakeholder Meeting

### 2.3. Motivation for a Strategic Plan

The motivations for the Crane Creek Watershed Association Strategic Plan are to formulate a vision and action plan to guide the Association's startup and short term operations. The strategic plan was completed in parallel with a Crane Creek Management Plan developed by the Center for Watershed Protection. The difference between these two documents is that the strategic plan is intended to provide a blueprint for organizing the association, while the management plan outlines a list of projects that the association can undertake in order to improve and protect water quality within the watershed.

The remaining portion of this report is organized as follows. First, a vision for the watershed crafted by the public participants at community meetings is presented. This vision expresses the overarching goal of the watershed association. Second, four goals are expressed around "areas of focus" that are meant to serve as organizing principles needed for the association to implement their vision. Third, each goal has been translated into an action plan with specific tasks relevant to achieving that particular goal. This structure is summarized in Figure 2.1 which uses the analogy of a pyramid to describe the strategic plan development process. The association vision supports a set of goals, which then support a set of action item tasks. The intention is to provide the association organizational structure and task list which they can follow in implementing their vision statement.

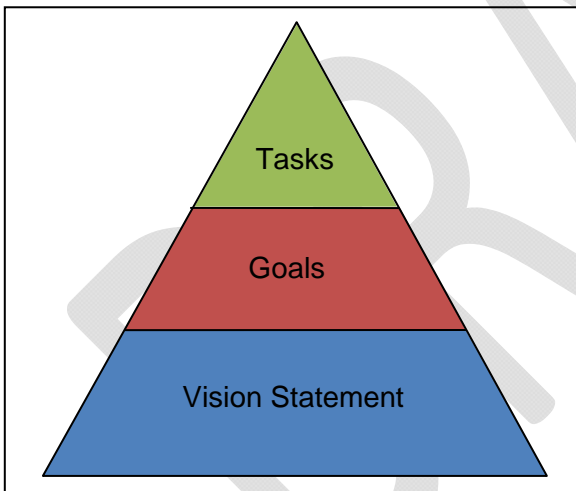


Figure 2 – Organization of the strategic plan as a vision statement, which leads to organization goals (or focus areas), which leads to tasks (or an action plan)

## 3. Strategic Plan for the Crane Creek Watershed Association

### 3.1. Vision Statement for the Crane Creek Watershed Association

The following vision statement was authored after brain storming sessions at community meetings where participants were asked how they envisioned the watershed in ten years. The authors of this report blended the participants' statements into the vision statement, which was

presented to the community in a subsequent meeting and approved by the attendees. The statement reflects the desires of the community members that participated in the Crane Creek Watershed Association meetings.

The Crane Creek Watershed Association is a citizen-based group united for and working to maintain, protect, and further improve the natural environment within the Crane Creek Watershed. Our vision for the watershed is to be a place where people enjoy hiking trails, scenic parks, and fishing and swimming in the creeks and ponds within the watershed, and where environmentally-sound development codes protect the health of the watershed by taking into account impacts on water quality, water quantity, and wildlife habitat. The Association will achieve this vision by providing a unified voice to the appropriate governmental agencies to enforce existing laws and discourage actions that will be harmful to the watershed. The association will foster partnerships to improve knowledge of existing conditions, take action to correct identified problems, and educate citizens and public officials on the state of Crane Creek Watershed.

### *3.2. Goals and Areas of Focus for the Crane Creek Watershed Association*

Guided by the vision statement, the following areas of focus and goals were identified as necessary to achieving the vision for Crane Creek Watershed.

1. **Management Structure:** To establish an effective system for organizing, prioritizing, and directing Crane Creek Watershed Association activities
2. **Volunteer Groups:** To organize a committed group of volunteers from community members and watershed stakeholders to give their time and efforts to the Crane Creek Watershed Association.
3. **Outreach and Education:** To inform the public about Crane Creek Watershed and their role in ensuring a healthy watershed for years to come.
4. **Budget and Fund Raising:** To maintain a budget and raise adequate funding to support the Crane Creek Watershed Association

### *3.3. Action Plan for the Crane Creek Watershed Association*

Following the vision statement discussion, the community meeting attendees were asked to articulate a task list for each area of focus. The task list gives specific steps needed to achieve the goal associated with that area of focus. Because each area of focus is tied to

the overarching vision statement, the tasks list is in effect those tasks needed to achieve the vision for the Crane Creek Watershed.

### 3.3.1. Management Structure

**Goal:** To establish an effective system for organizing, prioritizing, and directing Crane Creek Watershed Association activities

**Tasks:**

- 1) Recruit from the leadership of neighborhood associations and populate a core group of volunteers
- 2) Establish an Executive Committee of 3-7 people to coordinate sub-committees (e.g., budget, outreach)
- 3) Recruit an Advisory Committee from agencies (e.g., Sheriff's Dept, Richland County, Recreation Commission, Cities of Blythewood and Columbia, Conservation Commission) and Industries (could possibly identify corporate sponsors).

### 3.3.2. Volunteer Groups

**Goal:** To organize a committed group of volunteers from community members and watershed stake holders to give their time and efforts for the CCWA

**Tasks:**

- 1) Draw on neighborhood citizens for participation in this organization, acknowledging that many neighborhood groups already exist.
- 2) Ensure representation from all neighborhoods to provide a means to communicate back to the neighborhoods
- 3) Ensure the Crane Creek group has volunteers in contact with government groups working in the watershed (e.g., the group working on development codes).
- 4) Create volunteer activities to help keep the watershed clean (e.g. Adopt-a-Highway, Adopt-a-Stream, potentially get scouts and other existing community organizations involved
- 5) Develop trails and parks (will require help to identify potential trail locations, work with property owners).
- 6) Coordinate increases in green spaces (Task #5) with wildlife control and hunting regulations



### 3.3.3. Outreach and Education

**Goal:** To inform the public about Crane Creek Watershed and their role in ensuring a healthy watershed for years to come.

**Tasks:**

- 1) Provide information about CCWA to the community, focusing specifically on the use of fliers because many people in the community do not have access to the internet.
- 2) Provide access to planned community development in the watershed
- 3) Educate the community on what area the watershed encompasses

### 3.3.4. Budget and Fund Raising

**Goal:** To maintain a budget and obtain adequate funding to support the Crane Creek Watershed Association

**Tasks:**

- 1) Identify needs (e.g., Is a full or part time paid staff person necessary? What outreach materials are required to achieve the CCWA vision?)
- 2) Identify funding sources for short term operation costs (e.g. membership fees or donations for individuals and organizations)
- 3) Contact local government agencies (e.g., city and county) for willingness to fund start-up activities
- 4) Create a CCWA Management Plan that identifies important projects that can be done to protect and restore watershed health.
- 5) Identify and apply for state and federal dollars to undertake larger projects identified in the CCWA Management Plan

## 4. Summary

This report outlines a strategic plan for the Crane Creek Watershed Association. It was created from community meetings held in 2008 and 2009 facilitated by the University of South Carolina and organized by Richland County Stormwater Management. Crane Creek Watershed is one of the major watersheds within Richland County with projected growth in the region likely impacting the watershed. Therefore this is an opportune time to form an association with the goal of protecting the watershed from environmental degradation. This plan presents the community's vision for the Crane Creek Watershed and a strategy for building an association needed to achieve that vision.

**Appendix A**

Crane Creek Watershed Association Steering Committee Members:

<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Company</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Email</b>
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