

**PRESENTATION TO THE ONSLOW COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
MAY 19, 2003, REGULAR MEETING**

**ELMER EDDY, THE WHITE OAK RIVER TRASHMAN  
[www.whiteoakstewards.org](http://www.whiteoakstewards.org)**

There are four things I want to share with you and I want to ask for your help. First I want to thank you for making the New River accessible for paddlers. Onslow County is blessed with many beautiful waterways and having access to them is essential for our citizens and visitors to enjoy them. I urge you to continue this program to the White Oak River. Currently, access to the White Oak is very limited, especially on the Onslow County side. Queens Creek is also an underutilized resource. There are many smaller creeks that could be included too.

Keep in mind that you are not just providing access for Onslow's current paddlers. Tourists and people looking to relocate consider water access important when making choices about where to go. Investment in water access points will surely more than pay for itself in increased tourism and economic development. More water access means more tourism and more and better development.

Second, we are losing access points we now have. Every time NCDOT does a bridge or culvert replacement, a potential access point is lost. New bridge and roadway designs leave no place for access. There is Federal money available for making access points on these projects, but NCDOT does not utilize it unless there is a partner that will share in the cost and do the maintenance. Onslow County could work with NCDOT to provide access points at some of these locations for a lower cost than developing these access points independently.

Third, access to the water is only one part of the picture. Some of our waterways that should be open and canoeable are closed by blown down trees. Mac Sligh, Bill Norris, and JR Bachelor have done an outstanding job of clearing many creeks and streams, but there are still some wonderful sections needing to be cleared. The most deserving of these is the White Oak River from Emmett's Lane to Gibson Bridge Road. Clearing this section would give 40 miles of uninterrupted paddle trail on one of our Nation's most beautiful rivers.

Last, the Stewards of the White Oak River Basin is an organization of volunteers who have taken on the challenge of removing litter from the White Oak River Basin. The basin, as defined by the state, includes not only the White Oak River, but also the New. In fact, the basin covers about 80 percent of Onslow County and 50 percent of Carteret County. We have made progress in cleaning up the White Oak River itself and were able to declare the river cleaned last fall. We are now turning our attention to the New. We have cleaned several tributaries and the section of the New River Trail that was recently dedicated.

We are glad to clean up these waters and we hope it won't be needed again. Prevention is the key to help keep the watershed clean. What can we do to prevent littering?

Individual and group awareness and commitment is one way. If we can bring litter prevention awareness to people and gain their commitment to not litter, littering will be reduced. Our new campaign is to stop litter and increase involvement in clean-up by having everyone pledge "I/we will fight litter." To help us reach everyone, the Daily News has given us a whole page to list every firm, business, church, club, school, and organization, who tells us that they, and all their employees or members, have pledged to fight litter. We'd like to include Onslow County at the top of this list. We hope you can make this possible.