Enhancing Stormwater Public Education and Involvement Efforts through Undergraduate Student Internships and Projects

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INTRODUCTION
The Coastal Waccamaw Stormwater Education Consortium (CWSEC) was established in 2004 to assist small municipal separate storm sewer systems (SMS4s) located within the Myrtle Beach Urbanized Area to meet requirements for stormwater public education and involvement associated with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Phase II permit program.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION INTERNSHIP
The Environmental Education Internship focuses on coordinating CWSEC’s Storm Drain Marking Program to increase public awareness regarding the transport of pollutants (e.g., litter, fertilizer, pet waste) via stormwater into local waterways. Participants (e.g., K-12th grade students, residents) mark the drains with educational decals and collect data on the condition of the devices. CCU interns also provide a presentation using an interactive watershed model. Additional internship activities and responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Manage storm drain data to report to the city/county;
- Provide educational booths at community events and conferences;
- Assist CWSEC Coordinator to develop educational materials for workshops, meetings and events.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES
Through mutually beneficial internships and independent study courses supervised by the CWSEC Coordinator, Coastal Carolina University (CCU) undergraduate students are given the opportunity to receive professional hands-on stormwater education and outreach experience with the public and local schools (K-12th grade), while assisting CWSEC to enhance their reach to communities.

INDEPENDENT STUDY PROJECTS
CCU students enrolled in an environmental science independent study course complete stormwater/watershed education and outreach projects for 1-2 credits. Students are responsible for taking a leadership role in all stages of their project (e.g., activity development and coordination). Three recent projects include:

1) Fall 2015: Development of the 2016 Grand Strand’s Canines for Clean Water contest, the inaugural pet waste public education program that engages human and canine community members to compete for the crown as the CWSEC spokesdog.

2) Fall 2015 & Spring 2016: Development of educational material recommendations for the Murrells Inlet Watershed Plan, including a series of interpretive panels.

3) Spring 2016: Development of an experimental learning mapping activity that guides local school students on an exploration of a selected watershed using GPS devices and facts.

2016–2017 PLANS
CCU interns and independent study students will assist with CWSEC’s mini-grant funded NOAA Climate Stewards Action project with the primary goals to conduct maintenance on 1-2 school rain gardens and provide an experiential learning opportunity for the students, connecting climate science concepts with stormwater and watershed topics.