The Watershed Ecology Center’s mission is to collect, analyze, and disseminate sound scientific information on the ecology of the region. Special emphasis is placed on watershed conservation, education, water quality and the study of organisms living in the area encompassed by a watershed. The center serves as a repository for regional ecological information, providing education and research assistance to individuals, communities, local schools and governmental organizations. The WEC is also dedicated to providing research opportunities for the facility and students at the University of South Carolina Upstate and other regional institutions. The Watershed Ecology Center is located in the Horace C. Smith Science Building on the campus of the University of South Carolina Upstate.
The Directors Corner

This year has been a good year for the Center.

We have started a new venture at the Watershed Ecology Center this year that will add an interesting component to our outreach efforts. We will video tape most of our programs and when we put the program brochure together for next year teachers will be able to view a short section of any program that they might be interested in to see if it will satisfy their needs.

We are also continuing to expand our “program in a box” project. This allows teachers to bring a program in to their classroom with out having to book the program with the Center.

We will have four summer camps this year. We are trying something new this summer by partnering with Sparty’s Camp to provide all day camp activities. The children will be with us in the morning and then will go to Sparty’s Camp at the Health Education Complex to enjoy an afternoon of fun and games. Note: there will be an additional charge for this opportunity. The campers will finish between 4:30 and 5 p.m. each day.

-Dr. Jack Turner

Storm Drain Marking

Our storm drain marking programs is on hold until the weather warms up. We will start our program in another month and will be marking the storm drains around Lake Blalock and Lake Bowen. These markers will state, “No dumping water drains to the Lake.” When we finish these areas we will work on the subdivisions around Lake Lyman and that area. Again the goal of this program is to reduce the amount of debris and chemicals that enter our lakes though storm drains reducing the water quality in the lakes. These are the same lakes that we fish in, swim and boat in and provide us with drinking water.

If you live in a community and would like to put out your own storm drain marker please contact the Center and we will provide the markers and the other supplies to accomplish this effort. This is a good program for scout troops, church groups and other community organizations.

BETH’S CORNER

It may be only March but we are already receiving summer camp registration forms! This year we will offer four camps instead of three like we had last year. “Discover Why” will be offered for students ages 5-7, “Discover How” for students ages 8-10 and “Discover Who” for students ages 11-12. New this year, our Discovery Camps will be scheduled from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. We have partnered with Sparty’s Kids Camps for the afternoon portion where the campers will play games and even go swimming!

The fourth newly added camp is a week exclusively for 20 students from Cleveland Academy who worked hard to earn this experience. This camp will be the week of June 17.

If you know anyone interested in attending one of these camps, please have them visit uscupstate.edu/wec soon as the camps are filling up fast!
Rainbows Are a Sign of Spring

There is an old saying that there is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, but so far, through the years, it has never been discovered. Have you ever thought that the real beauty of the rainbow is the lovely colors of the rainbow itself?

One of the Watershed Ecology Center’s fourth grade programs, Color Me with Light, introduces students to the basic properties of light, as they discover that it is a form of energy with colors and brightness. Using flashlights, the students learn about reflection, refraction and absorption when light hits different objects. The students also enjoy experimenting with light to see what happens when it hits translucent, transparent, and opaque type materials. They learn how the famous scientist, Sir Isaac Newton, used a prism to form a rainbow out of sunlight. They ascertain how light bends in a raindrop, just like the prism, to create the rainbow’s seven colors and they like using Roy G. Biv as a color memory device. The students have fun wearing the special rainbow glasses that allow them to see the visible spectrum of many different rainbows while looking at light.

So, as spring approaches bringing warmer weather, hopefully it will also bring many beautiful rainbows.

Watershed Ecology Center Reaches Across the Ocean

Chinese middle school students from Handan, China recently spent an educational afternoon visiting the Watershed Ecology Center. WEC educator, Cindy O’Hare, used the Enviroscape watershed model to show the different ways a watershed can become polluted. The students were asked to add various pollutants to the model and afterwards they brainstormed solutions to clean the pollution and restore the watershed to its healthy state. Dr. Jack Turner took the students on a plant tour and they also enjoyed a nature scavenger hunt in the beautiful Susan Jacobs Arboretum.

Spring Forward with Hummingbirds

As the warmer weather of spring arrives, start watching for the little migrants! Their acrobatic moves are amazing to watch as they fly in all directions and magically hover in mid-air! You can keep the hummingbirds happy and healthy by maintaining their feeders. Also, consider planting different types of hummingbird flowers such as herbaceous plants, vines, shrubs, and trees of varied heights and bloom dates. They love red, tubular types of blooms. Hummingbirds also like to have space so they can nest, roost, and find shelter.

They are not only pretty and interesting to watch, but also very beneficial to our environment. Hummingbirds help in pollinating flowers that they feed on, plus they also eat small insects and spiders which provides them with much needed protein. This makes hummers a biological insecticide which is better for the environment than chemicals.
We want to thank the City and County of Spartanburg, and the following water districts for gracious donations and continued support: Spartanburg Water, Blue Ridge Rural Water, SJWD, Woodruff-Roebuck, and Liberty-Chesnee-Fingerville. The Watershed Ecology Center is privately funded, and our critical issue each year is to find enough funding to keep the center open and running.

Since the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year, the Watershed Ecology Center has presented programs to 12,280 students in public and private schools in Spartanburg County and the Blue Ridge community schools. Most of the programs are offered free of charge and are correlated to the South Carolina science standards. It is so much fun to visit the schools and see the student’s smiling faces as they enjoy the presentations.

The Watershed Ecology Center also has lessons in a box for the teachers to check out and use at their convenience in their classrooms. Each box is complete with lesson plans and all the needed supplies and materials to teach the lesson.

As for the community, WEC has many interesting outreach programs that are available to organizations. We would be glad to come out and present a program to your group. Please contact wec@uscupstate.edu for a list of programs and more information.