



**Central Piedmont Community College**  
**Charlotte, North Carolina**  
**Habitat Restoration - NWF Certified Campus Habitats**

## **SCHOOL**

Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) is a public, 2-year college with 70,000 students served per semester. It's the largest community college in North Carolina. All campuses (Cato, Central, Harper, Harris, Levine, and North) are located within Mecklenburg County, North Carolina ([www.cpcc.edu](http://www.cpcc.edu)).

## **ABSTRACT**

CPCC received a Certified National Wildlife Habitat designation for all campus locations by the National Wildlife Federation. Six internal grants, written by the Center for Sustainability Coordinator, Ernie McLaney, each worth \$2000, allowed campus teams to design and develop their own unique wildlife habitat. Each habitat provides the four essential elements to attract wildlife which include: food, water, cover and places to raise young. Our long-term goal is to provide ongoing educational opportunities in sustainable landscape practices using native plants. These low-maintenance areas will also provide an example of wildlife habitats that can be created in anyone's backyard. Ernie McLaney's own home is registered as a NWF Wildlife Habitat and he's a NWF Habitat Steward as well as a Board Member of HAWK (Habitat and Wildlife Keeper), a sub-chapter of the North Carolina Wildlife Federation.

## **GOALS AND OUTCOMES**

### **Goals**

When we started our project, our hope was to raise environmental awareness and engage hands-on participation from our students, faculty and staff in creating and maintaining habitats for wildlife and native plants.

Our goals were to create a certified wildlife habitat on each of CPCC's six campuses.

Our goals for the next 2-3 years include applying for more (internal) Innovation Grants for outdoor classrooms, educational kiosks, fountains and continued plantings. We will apply for grants, form teams, get Campus Deans' support, engage our Horticulture department as a partner, design layout/blueprint plans as well as research native plants that will be draught tolerant, attract local wildlife and be low maintenance. We will also take this concept to k-12 schools, other colleges and businesses in our region.

### **Accomplishments and Outcomes**

All of our goals were met. We have increased awareness and reduced maintenance needed to these areas due to native plantings that require less maintenance. Various staff and faculty have requested habitat expansions near their building and many are taking this concept home to implement in their own landscape. This project has peaked interest in providing for local wildlife with native plants. Our staff and travel limitations has delayed getting out to other organizations, however we have a middle school scheduled this fall to create a habitat on their campus.

Our college Grounds Maintenance Department has an increased awareness in low maintenance landscaping as well as the use of native plants. This project has motivated them to enhance the landscaping around their own building with native seed bearing plants and bird baths.

Our project has positively impacted wildlife and the natural environment by creating a safe place for food, nesting and cover which have increased population and variety. Our campus serves as a model for area schools and businesses and has inspired employees to expand the concepts of wildlife habitats around their office buildings as well as their homes. We have been invited by numerous organizations and schools to speak on our accomplishments.

### **Challenges and Responses**

Challenges included getting all entities involved at the same time (deans, facilities, faculty and students); budgeting wisely and recruiting volunteers. Time management was also a challenge since this project took place during normal business hours in which all participants added this work into their normal tasks and responsibilities.

We responded to these challenges by “selling” concepts, explaining benefits and being persistent. By gaining the support of each campus Dean, the approval of “time” to work on this project was granted. Also, by creating a habitat team on each campus, we were able to establish a local task force on site to monitor and maintain the area.

In the future, additional grant money from other sources would allow us to expand our efforts for native planting over a larger portion of each campus. Dollars reserved for an educational kiosk would provide a permanent source for information regarding the site as well as tips and resources for implementing a similar project at home or workplace.

### **Campus Climate Action: Your School’s Carbon Footprint**

The additional landscaping reduced the risk of water and soil run-off. Also, we created an ozone garden at our Levine Campus, increasing awareness of ozone damage.

We now have less lawn area to mow and with a decrease in the use of chemicals in these areas. We’ve provided a place for students, faculty, staff and visitors to stay on campus (lunch) rather than leaving campus (less car usage/travel). We hope to encourage others to duplicate this concept at home, creating more green pockets throughout our community. We were also able to work with college administrators to provide each full time staff and instructor with a free tree seedling to take home and plant in their yard, sharing the benefits of increasing the tree canopy in our region.

### **Commentary and Reflection**

This is a team effort which requires the approval and support of both college administrators and the grounds maintenance staff. It’s very important to bring in partners from across college programs such as Horticulture, Biology, Student Organizations and college staff support. This increases the chance for long term support and spreading the project knowledge throughout the college.

## **ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT**

### **Leaders and Supporters**

CPCP Presidential Cabinet (approved Innovation Grants which funded all habitat projects)  
Rod Townley, Ph.D., Dean Information Technologies and Engineering Technologies Divisions  
Ernie McLaney, Center for Sustainability Coordinator  
Randy Sigg, Landscape Design Instructor  
Eddie Howell, Grounds Supervisor

Pi Theta Kappa (CPCC Phi Lambda)

Horticulture, Biology, Zoology and other students, faculty and staff on all campuses

Central Campus Wildlife Habitat Team: Dean Cynthia Johnson, Johnny Roach, Mark Helms, Christy Napier, Brandon Lewis, Scott Diegmann, Ernie McLaney

Levine Campus Wildlife Habitat Team: Dean Augustine Martinez, Debby Foster, Barry Gilmore, Holly Kupfer, Stacey Polak, Betty Baker

Cato Campus Wildlife Habitat Team: Randy Sigg, John Holmes, Bill Whitaker

Harper Campus Wildlife Habitat Team: Dean Jay Potter, Steve Corriher, Ken Compton, Anver Classins

Harris Campus Wildlife Habitat Team: Dean Mary Vickers-Koch, Anne Whitmeyer, Michael Matlock, Charlotte Pfeifer

### **Funding and Resources**

The overall project cost was \$2,000 for each campus. Our methods and resources for financing included: applying for and receiving internal grants. Some campus teams also went after additional funds through external grants and local partners. The project was supported through Campus Deans and Facilities Services. Selling the benefits of wildlife habitats was key. It was also clear the marketing possibilities and attention this could bring to the college as environmental interests were gaining momentum.

### **Education and Community Outreach**

By exposing our community's residents to these spaces, we increase the likelihood that they will become inspired to develop similar habitats at home and in business, creating a healthier and more environmentally friendly campus and greater Charlotte.

Our habitats have been used in our continuing education classes as a result, such as our "Birding in North Carolina" and "Urban Ecosystems" classes include lectures and field trips into the habitats. Habitats were also the site of lectures during our Earth Day event where a variety of speakers provided free classes and demonstrations. "Creating a Wildlife Habitat" and "Birding in North Carolina" were two of many programs supporting and referencing our campus habitats.

Our habitats are visually displayed on our website with supporting documents and links available to the public. The college gave away 1,000 tree seedlings during our College Kick-off beginning semester event, contributing to global awareness thinking. We were honored with the **2008 Charlotte Green Award**: <http://www.cpcc.edu/cfs/about/cpcc-wins-green-award> as well as being a "Finalist" in the Greater Good Category of the annual Sustainable North Carolina Awards for 2008.

Check out our local TV channel: <http://www.cpcc.edu/tv/online/spotlight-on-sustainability>

Also, check out our video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6TNeNVcT5U>

### **National Wildlife Federation's Campus Ecology Program**

We used the Campus Ecology program and concepts for guidance and reference in preparing our project plans. We have consulted with Campus Ecology staff and used Campus Ecology online resources, such as the *Higher Education in a Warming World* guide, the Campus Ecology blog, and the case study Database. We also entered the Chill Out competition. We wanted to be able to add our college to the list of outstanding projects showcased on the NWF website.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

#### **Contacts**

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**Case study submitted by:**

Stacey Polak, Executive Secretary, Central Piedmont Community College, P.O. Box 35009, Charlotte, NC 28235; 704-330-4383; stacey.polak@cpcc.edu

**MORE ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL**

Central Piedmont Community College is the largest community college in North Carolina with numerous accreditations and awards. We have six campuses throughout Mecklenburg County.

More info may be found at [www.cpcc.edu](http://www.cpcc.edu).

**Campus Sustainability History**

Through CPCC's new degree program, along with workforce development and community workshops, the Center for Sustainability is taking a lead role in preparing Charlotte and Mecklenburg County for a sustainable future. CPCC offers annual events such as Adopt-a-Street, National Global Youth Services Day, America Recycles Day, Charlotte: Clean & Green, community environmental education seminars and presentations. The college's Facilities Services support the concepts of energy conservation and alternative fuels. Low energy buildings, hybrid and electric vehicles, passive lighting, recycle carpet, energy star appliances and low maintenance landscaping are just a few of the sustainability efforts being practiced. Many more activities may be viewed on the college website. Along with our recent (<http://www.cpcc.edu/cfs/academics>), we also have a very special new project dealing with the concepts of "Eco Box" <http://www.ecobox.me/> off- the- grid technologies.

See more information on CPCC's Center for Sustainability website: [www.cpcc.edu/cfs](http://www.cpcc.edu/cfs).

**Supporting Images for Central Piedmont Community College's six-campus Wildlife Habitats**

Also, please see the complete slide show for each campus on our website:

<http://www.cpcc.edu/cfs/about/certified-wildlife-habitats>



**CPCC Meeting on Central Campus to discuss NWF Habitat Project. Photographer: Ernie McLaney**



**Central Campus Grounds Maintenance; Tom Bass, prepares garden site.  
Photographer: Ernie McLaney**

**Student support on Central Campus.  
Photographer; Ernie McLaney**



**Central Campus Wildlife Habitat, Photographer; Ernie McLaney**



**Central Campus Wildlife Habitat Pond,  
Photographer; Ernie McLaney**



**Central Campus – one of five bird houses. Photographer; Ernie McLaney**



**Central Campus – one of three bird baths. Photographer; Ernie McLaney**



**Central Campus NWF Certification, Photographer; Ernie McLaney**



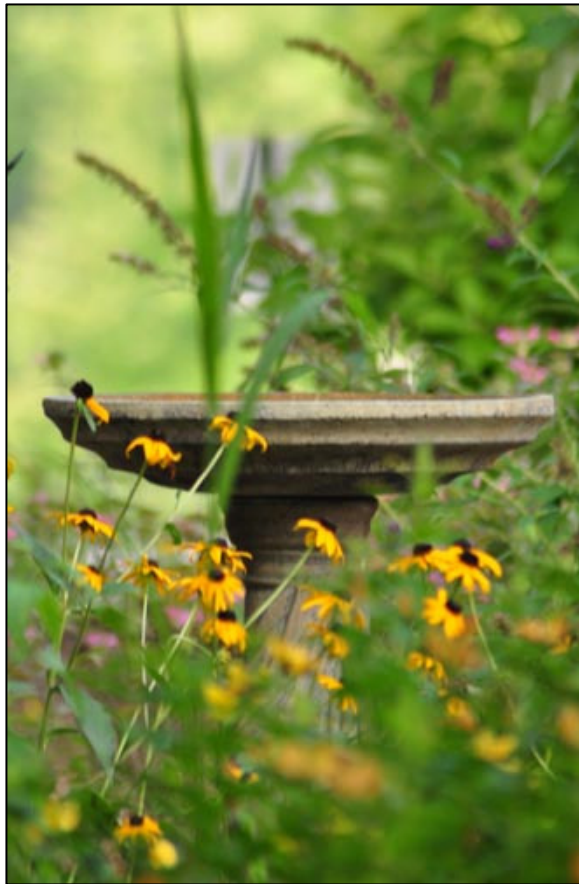
**The Cato Campus Wetland Habitat – Photographer; John Holmes**



**The Levine Campus Pond Habitat – Photographer; Stacey Polak**



**The North Campus Boulder Wildlife Habitat – Photographer; Mary Ferracci**



**The Harris Campus Wildlife Habitat – Photographer: Ann Whitmeyer**



**The Harper Campus Wildlife Habitat - Photographer: Kenn Compton**

**Please see the complete six-campus project and slide show on our website:  
<http://www.cpcc.edu/cfs/certified-wildlife-habitats>**

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**Press Release:**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
May 13, 2009

Contact: Jessica Graham, 704.330.6660, [jessica.graham@cpcc.edu](mailto:jessica.graham@cpcc.edu)

**National Wildlife Federation® certifies all six CPCC campuses as wildlife habitats**  
*Designation makes College first multi-campus community college in the country to certify all campus locations*

The National Wildlife Federation® (NWF) has certified all six Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) campuses as Certified Wildlife Habitat™ sites. This accomplishment makes CPCC the first multi-campus community college in the country to certify the grounds of all its campus locations. CPCC's Presidential Cabinet awarded its Center for Sustainability six, \$2,000 innovation grants to help each campus create and maintain its own unique wildlife habitat. The College's innovation grants reward campus units for developing programs that facilitate improvement, change or growth across various areas of its internal community.

"We commend CPCC for accomplishing what few, if any, community college in the country has been able to do," said Roxanne Nersesian Paul, senior coordinator for habitat programs with the National Wildlife Federation®. "It is a challenge to get just one campus certified; so for CPCC to earn accreditation at all six campuses is a testament to not only its students, but also the quality faculty and staff members it employs."

College officials began working towards this goal in 2007, drafting grant proposals that would meet the NWF's standards, and organizing habitat teams to spearhead the initiative on each campus. To become a Certified Wildlife Habitat™, spaces must include four essential elements: food, water, cover and places to raise young. Over the past two years, the CPCC community has collaborated to reach this goal on all six campuses; CPCC's Harper Campus, became the sixth, and final campus to receive certification in March 2009.

"The campus community's response to these projects has been extraordinary," said Ernie McLaney, program coordinator for CPCC's Center for Sustainability and a NWF steward. "Habitat teams comprised



of representatives from the College's facilities, student life, faculty and student populations have led the charge, creating low-maintenance wildlife habitats that can be enjoyed by the Charlotte community and its wildlife inhabitants."

The wildlife habitats at all six CPCC campuses were designed by Randy Sigg, a landscape design instructor at the CPCC-Cato Campus. Students enrolled in the College's Horticulture program applied their skills and knowledge to the spaces as well, ensuring each habitat included indigenous wildlife that would attract native species.

"This initiative has acted as a service learning project for our students, giving them the opportunity to learn more about sustainable landscape practices and how to create spaces that work," said McLaney. "Our new habitats give us an innovative way to teach and prepare our students – outside of the classroom – for careers in the horticulture, environmental or biodiversity fields."

Going forward, the wildlife habitats will be maintained by each campus's habitat team. While achieving certification at all six campus locations is a significant achievement, CPCC officials plan to apply for innovation grants in the coming months that will include designs for outdoor classrooms and fountains. "We want the CPCC and Charlotte communities to enjoy the area's landscape and our wildlife habitats accomplish this goal," adds McLaney. "By exposing the community's residents to these spaces, we increase the likelihood that they will become inspired to develop similar habitats at home and in business, creating a 'healthier' and more environmentally friendly Charlotte."

Adds Tim Gestwicki, executive director for North Carolina Wildlife Federation, "The certified sites at CPCC's campuses will be an inspiration to other higher education sites across the country. We encourage the CPCC community to keep up the good work and continue to set the standard in environmental sustainability."

For more information on CPCC's Center for Sustainability and certified wildlife habitats, or to view habitat photos, visit <http://cpcc.edu/cfs>.

*[Central Piedmont Community College](#) is the largest community college in North Carolina, offering close to 300 degree and certification programs, customized corporate training, market-focused continuing education, and special interest classes. CPCC is academically, financially and geographically accessible to all citizens of Mecklenburg County. In 2002, the National Alliance of Business named CPCC the Community College of the Year for its response to the workforce and technology needs of local employers and job seekers through innovative educational and training strategies.*

This release prepared by Mallory Benz, 704.330.6613. An archive of CPCC news releases is at <http://www.cpcc.edu/college-news>.

