

REEDY RIVER WATERSHED EDUCATOR JOINS STROM THURMOND INSTITUTE



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CLEMSON – Clemson University officials have announced that the new Reedy River watershed education coordinator is Rebekah Guss.

“This is an Extension Service position, and Ms. Guss will be located at the Strom Thurmond Institute,” said Jeffrey Allen, director of the South Carolina Water Resources Center at STI. “Eventually she will spend more time in the counties.”

Guss will oversee an environmental education program supported by the S.C. Department of Natural Resources Board of Trustees. Funding for the program comes from the 1996 Colonial Pipeline oil spill settlement.

Guss holds a B.S. degree in environmental studies from Brown University and a M.S. in natural resources from Cornell University. She will work on projects to share information and promote watershed management information among decision makers, residents and researchers.

Additionally, Guss will work closely with the Saluda-Reedy Watershed Consortium. The research collaboration is made up of academic, governmental, industrial and non-profit groups examining issues in the watershed, including the economic impact of water use and Lake Greenwood water quality.

Locally, Guss will work with organizations to promote watershed education among residents along the Reedy. Activities will include river clean-ups, workshops, educational campaigns and a paddle festival on the river.

“The Reedy River serves urban, suburban and rural areas as it flows from its headwaters near Travelers Rest to Lake Greenwood,” said Allen. “It serves as a home for wildlife and aquatic creatures, provides drinking water and handles storm and waste water.”

As the region around the Reedy became industrialized, it was transformed from a free-flowing water body with reed-covered banks to one managed with dams.

“It was denuded of vegetation in many places,” he said. “Water quality and the river’s capacity to handle storm events declined during this period.”

Clean Water Act of 1972 resulted in improved water quality and increased public awareness, according to Allen. “Recent projects such as the Liberty Bridge in downtown Greenville highlight the importance and beauty of this natural resource,” he said.

The region continues to grow, and efforts are needed to ensure long term water quality and watershed health.

“The risks are rising for storm events and non-point source pollution to cause problems not only for the river but surrounding communities too,” he said.