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Western Piedmont Council of Governments

Creative Regional Solutions Since 1968

July 2017



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Community & Regional Planning

Annual Western Piedmont Air & Water Quality Conferences

On August 3rd and 4th, the Reese Institute for the Conservation of Natural Resources and the Western Piedmont Council of Governments will host their Annual Western North Carolina Air and Water Quality Conference at Lenoir-Rhyne University in Hickory, NC. The Western Piedmont Council of Governments organizes these annual conferences while Lenoir-Rhyne University's Reese Institute provides lunch and facilities.

The purpose of the conferences is to educate the public, government officials and the private sector on current air and water quality issues important to the Western Piedmont region and beyond. Both conferences are a daylong event that include six regular sessions and teacher breakout sessions. AICP credits are available for planners, and continuing education credits are available for teachers.

Conference sessions include speakers from NC Division of Air Quality, Duke Energy, NC Division of Environmental Quality, NC State, Appalachian State University, the Division of Soil and Water Conservation, Carolina Land and Lakes RC&D, Clean Air Carolinas, and the Centralina Clean Fuels Coalition.

Other sponsors of the conferences include the Greater Hickory MPO, the Western Piedmont Air Quality Committee, the Western Piedmont Water Resources Committee and Western Piedmont Stormwater Partnership.

Water Quality Conference on Thursday, August 3rd topics include:

- Lake Rhodhiss Monitoring Study
- The importance of protecting riparian buffer
- Land Use, Buffers and Stormwater
- Educational Initiatives for Environmental Problem Solving and Community Development

- Stream Restoration and Water Quality
- Agricultural Best Management Practices for Water Quality Protection

Air Quality Conference on Friday, August 4th topics include:

- Wildfires and Air Quality
- Electrification and Natural Gas Solutions in Transportation
- Advancing Technologies in Transportation
- Citizen Science and the Internet of Things - AirKeepers in Action
- Details on the Volkswagen Settlement
- Western Piedmont Greenway Projects

Click the link below to register for either or both conferences:

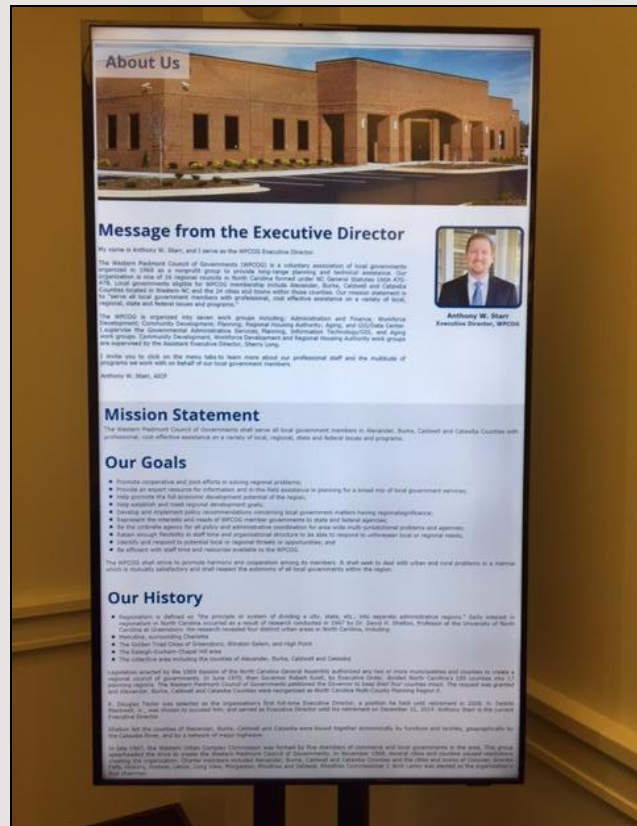
[**Register Now!**](#)

Article by Johnny Wear

IT/GIS Services Sign(age) of the Times

Visitors to The Western Piedmont Council of Governments are now being greeted by new electronic signs. Last month, Administration and IT/GIS staff began the installation and implementation of digital signage in the main lobby. These three LCD display boards are highly interactive and can portray various forms of information visually. The displays consist of a 55" information kiosk and two side-by-side 40" wall signs ("video wall"). Thought of as a sister product to the organization's monthly activity report and newsletter, the signage displays information on upcoming conferences, meetings, seminars, webinars, open application deadlines, postings of required state and federal regulations, annual reports and more.

"The new digital signage is a savvy way to communicate important information to our visitors. We strive to provide the best service to the public and our local governments, and this is a new tool for those efforts," Anthony Star, WPCOG Executive Director.



Additionally, our organization is finding many more advantages to the new signage. The displays are an environmentally friendly way to disseminate information to visitors by reducing the number of paper copies. In the case of traditional display advertising boards, it was time-consuming to upgrade the content of the advertisements, but with the use of Digital signage, advertising content can be scheduled in advance and regularly altered. The ability to program scheduled content changes is a prime cause for the widespread popularity of digital signage. Furthermore, the signs help to ensure WPCOG's compliance with necessary information requirements while keeping the lobby neat and organized.



Looking forward, WPCOG expects that this new technology will better help provide ever-changing, current, up-to-date snapshots of what is happening at the agency. Visitors to the lobby can expect useful/helpful information to be on display. If you would like further information on how digital signage can help your organization, please feel to contact the IT/GIS staff at the Western Piedmont Council of Governments at (828) 322-9191.

Article by Trey Schweitzer

Regional Housing Authority

Section 8 Waiting List Purge

On February 20, 2017, the Regional Housing Authority began accepting applications for Section 8 housing assistance. In five months, over 1,700 applications were received, and approximately 1,500 families were determined eligible for the waiting list. Final eligibility for the program is determined once an applicant reaches the top of the waiting list.

Since the demand for housing assistance often exceeds the limited resources available to the RHA, long waiting periods are common. During this waiting period, circumstances may change, and housing assistance may no longer be needed. To remove those families that may no longer be interested or in need of housing, the RHA conducts a purge of the waiting list every six months.

A purge is the removal of an applicant from the waiting list. Letters will be mailed to each applicant requesting a response regarding their continued interest in the Section 8 housing program. The letter must be returned by the specified date shown in the notification. Applicants who do not respond or respond after the deadline will be removed from the waiting list. The RHA will purge the waiting list in August and again every 6 months.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to keep their mailing address up-to-date with the RHA. All changes of address must be submitted in writing to Kala Guido, either by email at kala.guido@wpcog.org, fax 828-322-5991 or mail PO BOX 9026 Hickory, NC 28603.

If you have questions about the waiting list, please email Kala Guido at kala.guido@wpcog.org or by

phone at 828-485-4282.

The RHA will continue to take applications for the Section 8 housing program. Applications and instructions can be found on our website at www.wpcog.org/applicants.

Article by Kala Guido

Workforce Development Hickory & NC Star Jobs

The Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board works in close collaboration with NC Department of Commerce, Labor and Economic Analysis Division to provide details on top careers with high wages and employment growth by education requirements across our region. The latest star jobs report for 2017 is out and available for print. The report is an excellent tool for career coaches in workforce development and education to use to guide jobseekers and students in making solid career choices. You can find our area's star jobs report at

www.westernpiedmontworks.org.



Article by Wendy Johnson

Area Agency on Aging Small Steps for Fall Prevention

Many older adults face the fear of falling as they age. In fact, one out of three older adults, age 65 and older, fall each year but less than half talk to their healthcare provider about the fall. Many older adults view falls as a normal part of aging,



when in fact it is the complete opposite. Once an older adult experiences a fall, they often develop a fear of falling again, resulting in a decrease in their physical activity.

There are many contributing factors related to

falls. For example, the side effects of prescribed medication may cause dizziness or issues with balance that leads to a fall, or a fall could be the result of the shoes a person chooses to wear. After a fall, whether minor or severe, it is often hard to break the cycle of fear of a repeated incident.

If you have developed a fear of falling, you are not alone. The Area Agency on Aging continues to work with older adults who have developed this fear by implementing evidence-based programs such as "A Matter of Balance" and "Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention."

"A Matter of Balance" is an evidence-based program that recognizes the risk of falling and highlights real-world coping strategies to reduce those fears. Workshop participants learn effective ways to prevent falls from occurring. Throughout the "Matter of Balance" workshop, participants will have an opportunity to establish realistic goals to increase their physical activity. The workshop teaches each participant exercises that focus on balance and strength and are easily done in the comfort of your home.

"Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention" is recognized worldwide for its overall health benefits. Focusing on three main principles that include movement control, weight transfer, and integration of mind and body, Tai Chi works to increase balance, reducing future risk of falling. The movement control principle in Tai Chi encourages slow, smooth and continuous movements so participants can increase their internal muscle strength without causing too much tension on their bodies and joints. The second principle, weight transfer, allows participants to focus on weight transfer with each step, helping improve overall mobility, coordination and balance. The integration of body and mind, the third principle, encourages finding a balanced connection between their mind and body. With a balanced mind and body, participants can focus on relaxation and continue to build confidence as they gain strength.

If you are interested in "A Matter of Balance," "Tai Chi for Arthritis for Fall Prevention" or any other evidence-based health promotion workshops, contact Aging Specialist, Sarah Evitt at 828-485-4216 or find more information online at www.wpcogaaa.org.

Article by Sarah Evitt

Community & Economic Development

Essential Single Family Rehabilitation (ESFR) Program Available to Eligible Homeowners

The Western Piedmont Council of Governments has been awarded \$175,000 from the NC Housing Finance Agency to rehabilitate five moderately deteriorated homes in Caldwell County. The primary goal of the 2017 cycle of the ESFR program is to encourage the comprehensive rehabilitation of scattered-site single-family housing units owned and occupied by homeowners with an income of less than 80% of median income with one or more elderly and/or disabled full-time household members or with a child under the age of 6 whose health is threatened by the presence of lead-based paint hazards. These funds come from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development Federal HOME Investment Partnership Program.

The amount of funds available for the rehabilitation of each home can vary from \$5,000 to \$25,000, depending on the condition of the home. The home must be economically feasible to rehabilitate. Each dwelling unit assisted must meet all requirements of the ESFR Rehabilitation Standards at a cost that is within the program limits.

The ESFR Program will meet specific minimum housing code standards or the Essential Property Standard set forth by the State.

Eligible applicants will be served on a first-come, first-served basis without regard to race, color, religion, gender, or national origin. ESRF assistance will be provided to eligible owner-occupants in the form of interest-free, forgivable loans covering the costs associated with rehabilitation of the unit. These interest-free loans will be forgiven at the rate of \$3,000 per year. For example, if \$15,000 is spent on housing rehabilitations and the owner lived in the home for five years after the work is completed, the loan is entirely forgiven.

WPCOG staff is currently taking applications for this program. Homeowners desiring additional information or wishing to apply for the ESFR Program may do so by contacting Lisa Helton at 828-322-9191 ext. 281.

Article by Lisa Helton

WPCOG Calendar of Events

August	September	October
02 - CEDS Meeting (3 PM)	09-12 - NADO Conference	18 - Water Resources (12 PM)
03 - WNC Water Quality Conference (8:30 AM) @ Lenoir-Rhyne	19 - Western Piedmont Air Quality Committee (10 AM)	19 - Regional Managers Meeting (12 PM)
04 - WNC Air Quality Conference (8:30 AM) @ Lenoir-Rhyne	26 - Policy Board (6 PM)	23 - Regional Aging Provider Meeting (2 PM)
14 - Regional Aging Advisory Committee (12 PM)	27 - MPO TCC (2 PM) & TAC (3:30 PM)	24 - Executive Committee Meeting (6 PM)
22 - Executive Committee Meeting (6 PM)		25 - MPO TCC (2 PM) & TAC (3:30 PM)
23 - MPO TCC (2 PM) & TAC (3:30 PM)		26 - Workforce Board (8:30 AM)
24 - Workforce Board (8:30 AM)		26 - Mayors/Chairmen/Managers Meeting (6 PM)
24 - Mayors/Chairmen/Managers Meeting (6 PM)		