

Shallowbag Bay is subject of public forum at RIFP

How healthy is Shallowbag Bay? Is the bay safe for swimming or fishing? What can be done to help?

Those that are curious about these questions can find answers at a community meeting Thursday, February 26 from 6-8 p.m. at the film theatre, Roanoke Island Festival Park.

The public is invited to this information session is the first in what local officials hope will be an ongoing education series on the bay. There is no cost and light snacks will be served.

Stormwater runoff is the number one cause of water pollution on the North Carolina coast. Rain water flows off impervious surfaces, such as roof tops and roads, washing bacteria, lawn chemicals, pet feces and sediment into estuaries. To help eliminate runoff, property owners can install best management practice (BMP) features that soak up stormwater or slow it down so it will seep into the ground.

Local experts will discuss the problems caused by stormwater and other pollution, along with possible solutions. Presentations will be made on the status of Manteo's stormwater system, its effects on the bay, and ways that residents, businesses and local government can help eliminate runoff — both through simple conservation measures and the installation of BMPs.

One presentation will be on grants that can help pay for BMP installation through the Dare County Community Conservation Assistance Program (CCAP).

Another presentation will discuss how property owners unwittingly contribute to runoff problems. Educational exhibits will be on display throughout the evening.

The town of Manteo has an

interactive stormwater atlas online that enables property owners to calculate how much runoff would be eliminated with the installation of one or more BMPs on their land. One presentation will include a demonstration on how to use the atlas.

The meeting is sponsored by numerous organizations, including the town of Manteo, the North Carolina Coastal Federation, the UNC Coastal Studies Institute, the N.C. Aquarium on Roanoke Island, the NC Cooper-

ative Extension Service, and the Dare County Soil and Water Conservation Service. Staff from the N.C. Division of Water Quality, the N.C. Recreational Water Quality Program and other groups will also be on hand to answer questions.

For more information contact Sara Jean Hallas with the Coastal Federation — sarajh@nccoast.org or 473-1607 — or Erin Trebisacci with Manteo — Trebisacci@townofmanteo.com or 473-2133.