



# Adding Open Space to the NEMO Educational Arsenal

## Using the NEMO Network: Project Profile #1

### The Project

In 2002, the National NEMO Network partnered with the EPA Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation, Division of Development, Community and Development (a.k.a. the “Smart Growth” Office) on a project called *Smart Growth through Open Space Planning*. Through training of the NEMO Network, the EPA hoped to promote open space planning in many more communities than could be reached by direct training of selected communities.

An “Open Space Boot Camp” training session was held at the University of Connecticut marine campus in the summer of 2002. Staff from 14 NEMO programs in 13 states attended. These included: Alabama, Texas, Massachusetts, Delaware, Maine, New York, Tennessee, Connecticut, South Carolina, Georgia, Indiana, Ohio and Minnesota. Participants were trained by Connecticut NEMO staff on educating local land use officials on two key processes necessary to local open space preservation: conducting a natural resource inventory, and then using the

inventory as the basis for creating an open space plan. In addition, they were tasked with preparing “game plans” for working with specific communities in their state. Finally, the UConn NEMO team participated in “kick-off” conferences or workshops to help generate interest in the new open space planning programs of four Network affiliates (Delaware, Maine, Minnesota and Indiana).

### Results to Date

Impacts have covered at least six states, ranging from statewide resource materials and conferences to permanent protection of priority open space, and additional impacts are still accruing.

Selected results are summarized here. For more information, we suggest that you contact the appropriate state NEMO Project Director, a list of which can be found on [nemonet.uconn.edu](http://nemonet.uconn.edu).

- ▶ A team that included **Northland NEMO** (Minnesota/Wisconsin) incorporated much of the open space training information into a new **statewide educational brochure and companion CD** entitled *A Guide to Using Natural Resource Information in Local Decision Making*.

Released in 2004, the Guide is already having an impact on Minnesota communities. For example, the Metropolitan (Met) Council, which is the regional planning agency for the seven-county Minneapolis/St. Paul metro area, will be using the open space information as a **framework for their planning guidance to communities**. Met Council

also will be providing communities with a CD of digital natural resource inventory information, and ordering copies of the Guide for each of the region’s 183 communities. The Guide has received an *Award of Merit in Planning* from the Minnesota Chapter of the American Society

of Landscape Architects.

- ▶ **South Carolina NEMO**, led by Clemson Cooperative Extension and SC Sea Grant, is focused on working with communities along the rapidly growing Carolina coast. The Town of Bluffton, faced with overwhelming development pressures on and around the popular Hilton Head Island, used mini-grant funding from SC NEMO to develop a **Critical Resources Map and Survey**. Based on the survey, the town has revised its comprehensive



*Participants of the Open Space Planning Boot Camp, held at UConn’s Avery Point campus, Groton, Connecticut in 2002.*





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plan and drafted **natural resource protection ordinances** for wetlands, floodplains, trees, wildlife habitat and stormwater. Horry County, which borders North Carolina and includes the resort mecca of Myrtle Beach, conducted an **open space inventory** with NEMO's assistance and then developed an **Open Space Plan** that will be included in the County's Comprehensive Plan.

- ▶ The **Indiana NEMO** Program, *Planning with POWER*, has helped Porter and Lake Counties, which lie outside of Chicago along Lake Michigan, launch a joint **Smart Growth initiative**. As part of this effort, Porter County recently adopted **conservation design subdivision regulations** requiring 10% open space minimum on all subdivision development, and up to 40% open space requirement on subdivisions in designated sensitive areas. POWER also worked with Hendricks County on the development of an **open space subdivision regulation** and other site design standards. The County has developed a **conservation design ordinance**, and revised a rural estate subdivision ordinance to require a rezone for added density in rural areas after sewer services become available.
- ▶ The **Delaware NEMO** Program held a **statewide workshop**, "*Community Planning for Open Space and Natural Resource Protection*" that was attended

by approximately 100 planners, local officials and other interested stakeholders. The workshop convinced the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination to develop a **conservation design manual** and to partner with the DE NEMO Program to help expand the message statewide. The Sussex County Land Trust partnered with NEMO to develop a **resource inventory of environmentally sensitive areas** that is being used to set priorities for conservation land purchases. The DE NEMO Program also developed a **best management practices manual for natural resource based planning**.

- ▶ The **Georgia NEMO** Program, led by University of Georgia Sea Grant, targeted two coastal counties for assistance on **open space planning**. In Bryan County, GA NEMO worked in collaboration with the county greenspace planner to present an open space workshop to the Board of Commissioners. The County then conducted a **natural resource inventory** that was incorporated into the county's application to the Georgia Community Greenspace Program, from which it received **\$200,000 in funding to purchase property or easements for permanent protection**. A citizen advisory group was formed to help identify land protection priorities and incorporate them into the **County Open Space Plan**. GA NEMO also partnered with the

St. Simons Land Trust to hold a workshop on conservation easements for community planners, local governments, assessors, appraisers and others in Glynn County. The county set land protection priorities and developed an **open space decision matrix** to help identify priority parcels. County funds were used to **purchase several properties for open space protection**, including 65 acres along the Altamaha River and 13 acres on St. Simons Island.

### What this Project Demonstrates

The project is a textbook example of how a modest investment in the NEMO Network can leverage far-reaching on-the-ground impacts in communities around the country. \$80,000 was invested by EPA in the project. About half of this sum was used to underwrite travel expenses (for Network staff to attend the training, and for UConn staff to do the follow-up visits), with the other half going to training expenses and UConn staff time. Three years later, this investment is still paying dividends in the form of community natural resource inventories, open space plans, revised comprehensive plans, changed regulations and permanently protected open space. In addition, NEMO experience reveals that these positive examples will greatly increase the chance of similar actions being implemented in neighboring communities, especially if catalyzed by ongoing NEMO educational efforts.