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County's Non-Compliance with Clean Water Laws Causing Damage to Private Property

Citizen group kicks off enforcement campaign, Targets Mayor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

June 22, 2006

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(June 22, 2006) Members of the Knox County Clean Water Alliance and the Tennessee Clean Water Network kicked off a citizen's stormwater enforcement campaign at Fountain City Park today. The kick-off urged Knox County residents to take pictures of flooding, drainage and water pollution from over development and send them to Mayor Ragsdale. The Tennessee Clean Water Network pointed out that pollution is occurring because the County continues to be in non-compliance with state and federal clean water laws.

"Over the past 20 years I've seen tremendous growth in Northeast Knox County and with that growth, increased flooding and clear creeks running cloudy with sediment." Said Darrell Acuff, a farmer in Corryton. "It is the responsibility first of our Knox County Mayor Ragsdale along with County officials and County Commission to protect our property from flooding and protect our water quality."

The responsibility Acuff is referring to is spelled out in a state mandated program called the MS4 Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) phase II water pollution permit program. The MS4 Phase II Permit is given by the state to small municipalities to control pollution going into our waters. In particular, it is designed to control pollution that flows into our streams from over development, such as sediment or mud. Sediment carried in water increases flooding, impacts water supplies and navigation, degrades aquatic habitat and transports chemicals.

"Water pollution from over development should be Mayor Ragsdale's first priority when the Charter issue is resolved." said Renée Hoyos, Executive Director of TCWN. "That means Knox County adopts a stormwater ordinance that meets state and federal clean water laws and protects its waters from pollution and property from flood damage." added Hoyos.

James McMillan, a farmer in Northeast Knox County assists people like Darrell Acuff to get Knox County to enforce its stormwater ordinance and other clean water laws. McMillan has helped over 40 people in 2 years with problems ranging from flooding to drainage to water pollution. Alone, he has recorded over 400 water quality violations from over development in Knox County.

"Over the past year we've been meeting with Mayor Ragsdale and his staff to communicate the urgency and his responsibility to protect the waters of the County and protect people's property." said Hoyos. "Our recommendations have fallen on deaf ears."

Add to that a report the Mayor's close friend and engineer, Steve Maynard, wrote in early 2005, that noted harmful flooding occurring in Whites Creek and Murphy's Creek watersheds due to the laws of Knox County, the State of Tennessee and the Federal Government not being enforced.

"The Knox County Clean Water Alliance is calling on its residents to report flooding, water pollution and drainage problems by using their flood action brochure and their website www.kccwa.org" exclaimed Nancy Andrews, volunteer for the Knox County Clean Water Alliance.

The brochure and website gives citizens the tools and assistance needed to show Mayor Ragsdale that the County should prioritize the adoption of a protective stormwater ordinance that meets state and federal clean water laws to protect property and water for future generations.

"Enforcement of our clean water laws means no community has to suffer from water pollution." concluded Hoyos.

The TN Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) labels sediment as the state's **number one source** of pollution into our river, creeks and streams.

Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation released their list of the states most polluted and impaired waters earlier this year and Knox County has 35 streams and their associated 360 river miles on this list.

The Knox County Clean Water Alliance is a citizen group working to urge Knox County and Mayor Ragsdale to adopt a stormwater ordinance that meets state and federal clean water laws and protects the County's water and private property from over development.

TCWN is a statewide organization that assists Tennesseans facing threats to their clean water.

Visit <http://www.tcwn.org/press.htm> (*Ragsdale, Wuethrich Jeopardize Clean Water and Individual Property Rights*) for background information. Including a memo outlining at least 11 points where Knox County's proposed stormwater ordinance does not meet state and federal clean water laws.

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