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We say ... Don't delay river fix

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An apparently dead turtle named Barbie is actually a pretty good metaphor for where we are as a community.

Ecologist Fred Holland told the story of years ago giving his daughter a turtle painted with the word "Barbie" on its shell rather than one of the long-legged dolls. She loved it at first, mourned its apparent death, held a wake with ice cream before its burial and told Daddy to kill it when he opened its cardboard coffin just before its burial only to find it alive. She didn't want to give back all that ice cream.

Barbie represents our developers. We thought we needed them, we worked hard to help them thrive and we mourned their losses in the economic downturn. While we don't want to "kill" them if the economy turns around, we're not sure we collectively love them as much as we used to.

The gleam has worn off their shells.

Holland, who had a point to make, told the Town Council on Tuesday how stormwater runoff from new developments really must be controlled, and quickly, to preserve the May River — which is already imperiled. New state rules say the headwaters of the river will be closed to shellfish harvesters for two weeks after heavy rains.

Fresh water flowing off rooftops into storm sewers too often reaches the river unfiltered. Not only does that bring pollutants, it brings, well, fresh water. The correct salinity levels are vital to keeping our oysters alive and edible.

The town and county fortunately have developed a "war plan" to preserve the watershed, and the Town Council voted unanimously Tuesday to reach an intergovernmental agreement with the Beaufort County Council to implement a "watershed action plan."

That's great. So why did the council choose to wait to require that stormwater volume along the river not exceed pre-development rates? We all know protecting the river should be our priority. And we all know how slow governments often move.

Not this time. Protect the May River now.