

WETLAND PRACTICES SUPPORTIVE OF PUBLIC RECREATION AND HUNTING

**REPORT TO THE
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW COMMISSION**

March 2026

PREPARED BY:

**North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality
Division of Mitigation Services
Stewardship Initiative**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pursuant to NC General Statute 143-214.15 the Department of Environmental Quality (Department) reports annually to the Environmental Review Commission on the actions taken to encourage wetland mitigation practices supportive of public recreation and hunting on mitigation sites. The Department's mitigation sites are comprised of lands owned in fee and conservation easements held on private lands. Per paragraph (f) of the statute, the Department shall report to the Environmental Review Commission when there are changes in inventory during the preceding year. In calendar year 2025, the Department's fee simple mitigation land holdings increased by 128 acres. The following report reflects this change in inventory and describes the Department's actions supportive of the statute.

MITIGATION CREDIT FOR DIVERSE HABITATS UPDATE

As the co-chair of the North Carolina Interagency Review Team (IRT), the Division of Water Resources (DWR) works with the US Army Corps of Engineers, the NC Wildlife Resource Commission (NCWRC) as well as other state and federal agencies to review and monitor stream and wetland mitigation sites across North Carolina.

In 2025, DWR reviewed 31 prospectus and post-contract proposals and 20 draft mitigation plans, which shows a continued demand for mitigation credits. Additionally, DWR, in conjunction with the IRT, monitors the success of over 300 mitigation sites around the state that are in active monitoring. These projects were located in a variety of distinctive environments ranging from Carolina Bays to steep mountain valleys. The IRT continues to work with private mitigation companies and the Division of Mitigation Services (DMS) in the development of unique projects. For example, guidance for coastal headwater valley systems was developed to allow crediting of stream-wetland complexes. These systems vary significantly from standard single-thread stream restoration, as they are often braided, and are allowed to form more independently, as long as they are able to meet specific performance criteria. Naturally, many coastal headwater systems would be stream-wetland complexes, so this flexibility and alternative methodology encourages the development of appropriate natural ecosystems.

DWR also participated in drafting an upcoming Wilmington District Mitigation Guidance Document, which will replace the 2016 version. IRT members met numerous times to discuss revisions and improvements. New guidance aims to improve processes and facilitate the development of diverse and successful stream and wetland mitigation sites across the state of North Carolina.

POTENTIAL WILDLIFE HABITATS UPDATE

To conserve, protect and enhance the natural resources of North Carolina, the Department protects mitigation properties through conservation easement (ABE), fee simple deed acquisition (ABD), and re-allocation (ROL) of State-owned lands. These land holdings are managed in perpetuity to protect water quality, wildlife habitat, open space, and compensatory mitigation credits.

For calendar year 2025 the Department held 994 compensatory mitigation properties across the state. This includes 4 property re-allocations (ROL), 27 properties held in fee (ABD), and 963 properties held in conservation easement (ABE). An inventory of the Department's ABD and ROL mitigation lands with determinations of potential wildlife habitats is provided in **Appendix A** of this report. This inventory has been shared with the Wildlife Resources Commission and the Department continues to consult with NCWRC to determine which mitigation land holdings qualify as potential wildlife habitats.

PUBLIC HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES UPDATE

Since the inception of the mitigation program the Department has provided public hunting opportunities on select ABD mitigation properties thru the award of term-limited hunting leases. In 2025, the Department leased approximately 5028 acres of mitigation land for hunting.

APPENDIX A

ABD and ROL Mitigation Land Holdings with Retained Hunting Rights

APPENDIX A.
DEQ Mitigation Land Holdings with Retained Hunting Rights

DEQ Determination of Potential Wildlife Habitat	Department Name	Division Name	Transaction Type	SPO File No	SPO Land Asset ID	Site Name	County
TRUE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	35-011.001	13	MOCCASIN CREEK	Franklin
TRUE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	92-235.111	33103	MOCCASIN CREEK	Wake
TRUE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	DIVISION OF MITIGATION SERVICES	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	96-040.001	562	NORWOOD GAINNEY WETLAND	Wayne
FALSE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	92-234.002	4918	SMITH AUSTIN CREEK	Wake
FALSE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	92-234.001	5587	SMITH AUSTIN CREEK	Wake
FALSE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	DIVISION OF MITIGATION SERVICES	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	67-073.001	5532	HPS&R SITE	Onslow
FALSE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	DIVISION OF MITIGATION SERVICES	ROL REALLOCATION OF LAND	92-236.001	5589	CHAVIS PARK SITE	Wake
FALSE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	DIVISION OF MITIGATION SERVICES	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	34-036.001	5667	BRUSHY FORK CREEK	Forsyth
TRUE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	DIVISION OF MITIGATION SERVICES	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	70-032.001	5849	KNOBS CREEK	Pasquotank
FALSE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	13-016.001	5940	CODDLE CREEK (INDIAN RUN)	Cabarrus
TRUE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	DIVISION OF MITIGATION SERVICES	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	46-031.001	5985	NUCOR STEEL MILL SITE	Hertford
TRUE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	DIVISION OF MITIGATION SERVICES	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	74-041.001	7224	MIDDLE SWAMP CREEK (JOHNSON DALE SITE)	Pitt
FALSE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	92-241.001	13195	NEW LIGHT CREEK (BOLD RUN)	Wake
TRUE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	92-241.002	13196	TERRIBLE CREEK	Wake
TRUE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	26-045.002	22209	BIG POND BAY	Cumberland
FALSE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	DIVISION OF MITIGATION SERVICES	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	28-090.023	22408	HOLIDAY SHORES LOT 39	Dare
TRUE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	08-020.001	22873	TROUBLESOME CREEK (NICHOLLS FARM)	Bertie
FALSE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	DIVISION OF MITIGATION SERVICES	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	79-018.001	23924	SHARPE WETLAND PRESERVATION	Rockingham
FALSE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	DIVISION OF MITIGATION SERVICES	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	80-020.001	25099	DOUBLE THUMB ROAD SITE	Rowan
FALSE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	DIVISION OF MITIGATION SERVICES	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	80-020.002	25100	DOUBLE THUMB ROAD SITE	Rowan
FALSE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	DIVISION OF MITIGATION SERVICES	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	28-096.001	27733	CARLYLE 2 ON THE SOUND	Dare
TRUE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	82-021.008	22388	GREAT COHARIE SWAMP TRACT	Sampson
TRUE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	82-021.010	23169	GREAT COHARIE SWAMP TRACT	Sampson
TRUE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	DIVISION OF MITIGATION SERVICES	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	90-011.035	28319	WAXHAW CREEK WETLAND	Union
FALSE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	DIVISION OF MITIGATION SERVICES	ROL REALLOCATION OF LAND	68-041.038	28409	CHAPEL CREEK (UNC-CH FINLEY GOLF COURSE)	Orange
FALSE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	DIVISION OF MITIGATION SERVICES	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	90-011.036	29705	CROOKED CREEK 2 TUCKER TRACT	Union
FALSE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	DIVISION OF MITIGATION SERVICES	ROL REALLOCATION OF LAND	68-041.041	28864	MORGAN CREEK FLOODPLAIN (UNC-CH)	Orange
FALSE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM	ROL REALLOCATION OF LAND	14-020.008	28954	BROWN BRANCH (NCSU)	Caldwell
TRUE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	DIVISION OF MITIGATION SERVICES	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	23-012.012	29582	FIRST BROAD RIVER WETLANDS	Cleveland
TRUE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	DIVISION OF MITIGATION SERVICES	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	77-028.001	33396	MCDONALD'S POND	Richmond
FALSE	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	DIVISION OF MITIGATION SERVICES	ABD ACQUISITION BY DEED	45-021.018	28777	FLETCHER MERITOR SITE	Henderson