

THE NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL WATER RESOURCES ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (AgWRAP)
Fiscal Year 2014 Detailed Implementation Plan
October 1, 2013

Background

The North Carolina Agricultural Water Resources Assistance Program was authorized through Session Law 2011-145, and became effective on July 1, 2011. This program, herein referred to as AgWRAP, was established to assist farmers and landowners in doing any one or more of the following:

- Identify opportunities to increase water use efficiency, availability and storage;
- Implement best management practices (BMPs) to conserve and protect water resources;
- Increase water use efficiency;
- Increase water storage and availability for agricultural purposes.

AgWRAP is administered by the North Carolina Soil and Water Conservation Commission and implemented through local soil and water conservation districts. The commission meets with stakeholders to gather input on AgWRAP's development and administration through the AgWRAP Review Committee. AgWRAP has received the following state appropriations:

- FY2012: \$1,000,000
- FY2013: \$500,000
- FY2014: \$1,000,000; \$500,000 available statewide, \$500,000 limited to counties affected by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) settlement: Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga and Yancey counties.

Up to 15% of these funds can be used by the Division of Soil and Water Conservation and districts to provide technical and engineering assistance, and to administer the program.

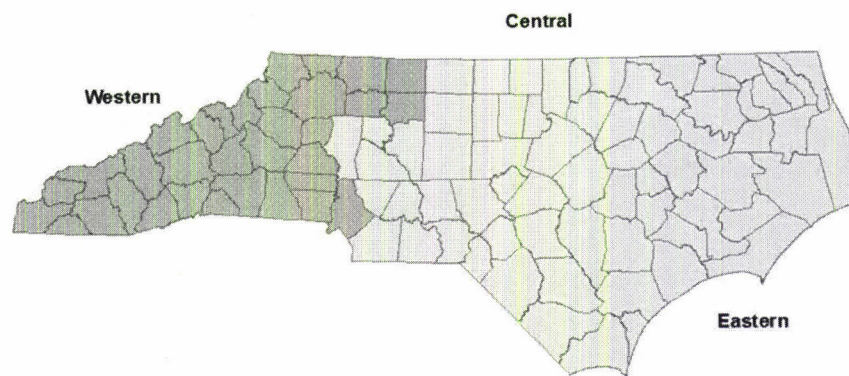
Fiscal Year 2014 Allocation Strategy

State Allocation

The Commission will allocate all PY2014 funding through a competitive regional application process for selected program practices including: new ponds, pond repair/retrofits, pond sediment removal and a potential new practice of streamside pickups based on the spring development standard. \$425,000 will be available for these practices.

The regions, as depicted in Figure 1, will be eligible to receive 1/3 of the available funds (\$141,667 per region), and projects will be approved using the same ranking criteria for each region. Should a region not have sufficient applications to fund, the commission will allocate the remaining funds by approving applications in other regions.

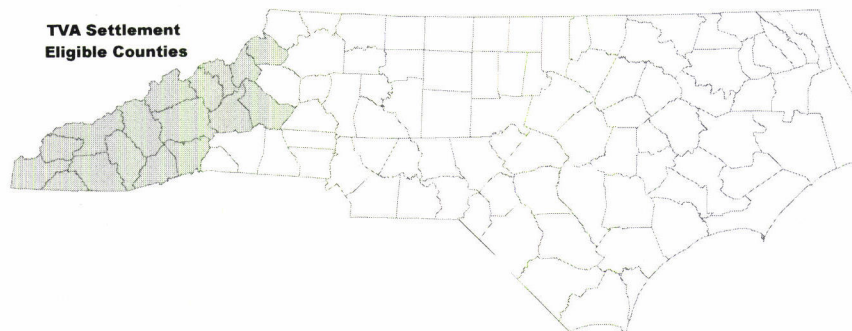
Figure 1: Regions for AgWRAP allocations



TVA Eligible Districts Allocation

The Commission will allocate all PY2014 funding through a competitive application process for selected program practices including: new ponds, pond repair/retrofits, pond sediment removal and a potential new practice of streamside pickups based on the spring development standard, conservation irrigation conversion and micro-irrigation systems. \$425,000 will be available for these practices. Eligible counties, shown in Figure 2, include Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga and Yancey counties.

Figure 2: TVA eligible counties for AgWRAP allocation



All approved applications, regardless of funding source, must have a completed conservation plan prior to the district requesting design assistance from division engineering staff.

Program Guidelines

AgWRAP will be implemented using a pilot approach for this third year, while rule drafting is underway.

The agricultural water definition, from Protecting Agriculture Water Resources in North Carolina Strategic Plan (February 2011) will be used to determine eligibility for AgWRAP.

Agricultural water is considered to be any water on farms, from surface or subsurface sources, that is used in the production, maintenance, protection or on-farm preparation or treatment of agriculture commodities or products as necessary to grow and/or prepare them for on-farm use or transfer into any form of trade as is normally done with agricultural plant or animal commerce. This expressly includes any on-farm cleaning or processing to make the agricultural product ready for sale or other transfer to any consumer in a usable form. It does not include water used in the manufacture or extended processing of plants or animals or their products when the processor is not the grower or producer and/or is beyond the first handler of the farm product.

All eligible operations must have been in existence for more than one year, and expansions to existing operations are eligible for the program.

The percent cost share for all BMPs is 75%. Limited resource and beginning farmers and farmers enrolled in Enhanced Voluntary Agriculture Districts are eligible to receive 90% cost share. The contract maintenance period of the majority of practices is 10 years.

Soil and water conservation districts can adopt additional guidelines for the program as they implement AgWRAP locally.

Fiscal Year 2014 Annual Goals

- I. Conduct a competitive regional allocation process for selected AgWRAP BMPs.
 - a. Fund projects in each of the division's regions: western, central and eastern.
 - b. Distribute funding for BMPs among the following agricultural sectors identified in the Protecting Agriculture Water Resources in North Carolina Strategic Plan (February 2011): aquaculture, field crops, forestry, fruit and vegetable, green industry, livestock and poultry (and forages and drinking water for same).
- II. Implement Job Approval Authority Process for AgWRAP BMPs
 - a. Expand job approval categories for investigations and evaluations.
 - b. Provide training for district employees to earn job approval.
 - c. Maintain the job approval database.
- III. Conduct training for districts
 - a. Continue to train districts on the program.
 - b. Provide technical training for the required skills to plan and implement approved AgWRAP BMPs.
 - c. Maintain the AgWRAP website (<http://www.ncagr.gov/swc/agwrap.htm>) with all relevant information.

Best Management Practices

(1) Agricultural water supply/reuse pond: Constructing agricultural ponds for water supply for irrigation or livestock watering. Benefits may include water supply, erosion control, flood control, and sediment and nutrient reductions from farm fields. The minimum life expectancy is 10 years. *This practice is eligible for State and TVA allocations.*

(2) Agricultural pond sediment removal: Remove sediment from existing agricultural ponds to increase water storage capacity. Benefits may include water supply, erosion control, flood control, and sediment and nutrient reductions from farm fields. The minimum life expectancy is 1 year. Cooperators are ineligible to reapply for assistance for this practice for a period of 10 years; unless the sedimentation is occurring due to no fault of the cooperator. *This practice is eligible for State and TVA allocations.*

(3) Agricultural pond repair/retrofit: Repair or retrofit of existing agricultural pond systems. Benefits may include water supply, erosion control, flood control, and sediment and nutrient reductions from farm fields. The minimum life expectancy is 10 years. *This practice is eligible for State and TVA allocations.*

(4) Conservation Irrigation Conversion: Modifies an existing overhead spray irrigation system to increase the efficiency and uniformity of irrigation water application. The minimum life expectancy is 10 years. *This practice is eligible for TVA allocation only.*

(5) Micro-irrigation System: An environmentally safe system for the conveyance and distribution of water, chemicals and fertilizer to agricultural fields for crop production. A micro-irrigation system is for frequent application of small quantities of water on or below the soil surface: as drops, tiny streams or miniature spray through emitters or applicators placed along a water delivery line. This practice may be applied as part of a conservation management system to efficiently and uniformly apply irrigation water and maintain soil moisture for plant growth. The minimum life expectancy is 10 years. *This practice is eligible for TVA allocation only.*

Additional practices may be approved by the Soil and Water Conservation Commission and introduced during the program year through an amendment to this plan.