

North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality

Pat McCrory
Governor

Donald R. van der Vaart
Secretary

November 18, 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW COMMISSION
The Honorable Mike Hager, Co-Chairman
The Honorable Brent Jackson, Co-Chairman

FROM: Matthew Dockham, Director of Legislative Affairs

SUBJECT: 2015 Surface Water Identification Training and Certification Program Report

DATE: November 18, 2015

Pursuant to Session Law 2010-180, Sec. 4(b), the Division of Water Resources shall submit to the Environmental Review Commission a report on the Surface Water Identification Training and Certification program by October 1st of each year. Please consider the 2015 Surface Water Identification Training and Certification Program Report attached as the formal submission of this report.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me by phone at (919) 707-8618 or via e-mail at matthew.dockham@ncdenr.gov.

cc: Tom Reeder, Assistant Secretary for Environment, NCDEQ
Jay Zimmerman, Director of Water Resources, NCDEQ
Mariah Matheson, Committee Assistant, NCGA
Jeffrey Hudson, Commission Council, NCGA
Jennifer McGinnis, Commission Council, NCGA

Surface Water Identification and Training Certification Course Annual Report

In accordance with G.S. 143-214.25A Section 4.(b)

Background: The Surface Water Identification Training and Certification (SWITC) Course is offered by the Division of Water Resources, Water Quality Programs to comply with N.C. General Statute 143-214.25A. This statute requires DWR to train and certify staff within the North Carolina Forest Service (NCFS), local governments with delegated riparian buffer programs, and DWR. This training certification is required to determine where surface waters are present and thus where the riparian buffer rules apply.

Courses: Between October 1, 2014 and September 30, 2015, DWR, in partnership with NC State University, offered two SWITC training courses. These courses took place December 2-5, 2014 at the Walnut Creek Wetland Center in Raleigh and June 2-5, 2015 at NCSU's Weaver Labs in Raleigh. Below are summaries of the courses:

December 2014

- 26 students attended.
- 8 students were DWR staff.
- 3 students were NCFS staff.
- 6 students were from local governments with delegated local buffer programs.
- 4 students were from other local and state agencies (City of Charlotte, City of Raleigh).

June 2015

- 32 students attended.
- 4 students were DWR staff.
- 1 student was NCFS staff.
- 7 students were from local governments with delegated local buffer programs.
- 5 students were from other local and state agencies (Union County, City of Fayetteville, NCDOT, USDA Forest Service)

Certifications: DWR issued 17 new certifications in December 2014 and 12 new certifications in June 2015 to DWR staff, NCFS staff and local government staff as a result of this course. These 29 individuals are certified to determine where surface waters are present and thus where the riparian buffer rules apply. DWR also issued 8 training certificates in December 2014 and 19 training certificates in June 2015 to other individuals that successfully completed the course. Finally, DWR issued 2 additional full certificates, 1 each in December 2014 and June 2015, to students who needed only to pass the field testing component of this course to complete previous course requirements.

Effectiveness: DWR consistently receives positive feedback about this course. DWR asked the participants to rate their level of knowledge before the course (on a scale of 1-5), and the average was 2.2 in December 2014 and 2.3 in June 2015. DWR asked the participants to rate their level of knowledge again after the course, and the average was 4.2 in December 2014 and 4.0 in June 2015.

Recommendations: DWR always reviews the course evaluations completed by the students and makes adjustments to the course as needed based on that feedback. DWR will continue to solicit feedback and make improvements to future courses.