



## MEMORANDUM

TO: ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW COMMISSION  
The Honorable Jimmy Dixon, Co-Chair  
The Honorable Chuck McGrady, Co-Chair  
The Honorable Trudy Wade, Co-Chair

FROM: Mollie Young, Director of Legislative Affairs, NCDEQ

SUBJECT: Surface Water Identification and Training Certification Course 2015-2016 Annual Report

Pursuant to G.S. 143-214.25A, Section 4(b), “*the Division of Water Resources shall evaluate the effectiveness of the Surface Water Identification Training and Certification Program and shall submit an annual report of its findings and recommendations, if any, to the Environmental Review Commission,*” I have attached the following document as a formal submission of this report.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me by phone at (919) 339-9433 or via e-mail at [mollie.young@ncdenr.gov](mailto:mollie.young@ncdenr.gov).

Cc: Jay Zimmerman, Director of Water Resources, NCDEQ  
Lanier McRee, Fiscal Research Division, NCGA  
William Childs, Fiscal Research Division, NCGA  
Eric Moore, Fiscal Research Division, NCGA  
Mariah Matheson, Legislative Analysis Division, NCGA



**SURFACE WATER IDENTIFICATION AND  
TRAINING CERTIFICATION COURSE  
2015-2016 ANNUAL REPORT**

*Pursuant to G.S. 143-214.25A Section 4.(b)*

Department of Environmental Quality  
Division of Water Resources

## Background:

The Surface Water Identification Training and Certification (SWITC) Course is offered by the Division of Water Resources, Water Quality Programs (formerly known as the Division of Water Quality prior to August 1, 2013, and hereinafter referred to as “DWR”) 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, 2015 and July 31, 2016, DWR offered two SWITC training courses. These courses took place November 17-20, 2015 and April 19-22, 2016 at the Wake County Center in Raleigh. Due to lack of grant funds, DWR has partnered with NC State University to offer classes. Below are summaries of the courses:

### **November 2015**

- 28 students attended.
- 2 students were DWR staff.
- 2 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 Raleigh, Mecklenburg County, NCDOT).

### **April 2016**

- 26 students attended.
- 2 students were DWR staff.
- 2 students were NCFS staff.
- 4 students were from local governments with delegated local buffer programs.
- 4 students were from other local and state agencies (Columbia County (GA) BOC, City of Charlotte, NC Parks and Recreation)

## Certifications:

DWR issued 11 new certifications in November 2015 and 8 new certifications in April 2016 to DWR staff, NCFS staff, and local government staff as a result of this course. These 19 individuals are certified to determine where surface waters are present and thus where the riparian buffer rules apply. DWR also issued 14 training certificates in November 2015 and 18 training certificates in April 2016 to other individuals that successfully completed the course. These 32 individuals are not eligible to be officially certified because they do not meet the certification criteria in G.S. 143-214.25A.

## 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 2.6 in November 2015 and 2.4 in April 2016. DWR asked the participants to rate their level of knowledge again after the course, and the average was 4.5 in November 2015 and 4.4 in April 2016.

## 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.