

**Annual Report to the
North Carolina General Assembly**



Surface Water Identification and Training Certification Course

October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023

Division of Water Resources

**NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL
QUALITY**

Pursuant to G.S. 143-214.25A(c)

Surface Water Identification and Training Certification Course Annual Report – 2023

In accordance with G.S. 143-214.25A

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, 2022, and September 30, 2023, DWR offered two SWITC training courses. The courses took place October 31 to November 4, 2022, and May 15 to May 19, 2023, at the Thomas G. Crowder Woodland Center and at established field locations in and near Raleigh. Due to lack of funding for these courses, DWR has partnered with NC State University to offer classes. Below is the summary of the courses.

October 2022: 30 participants attended, 5 of whom were DWR employees (1 from the Asheville Regional Office, 2 from the Raleigh Regional Office, 1 from the Washington Regional Office, and 1 from the Central Office). In addition, 3 from NCFS, 7 local government representatives (6 from delegated communities), 1 Division of Energy, Mineral, and Land Resources staff, and 14 employed by private consulting firms attended the course.

May 2023: 30 participants attended, 7 of whom were DWR employees (4 from the Raleigh Regional Office, 1 from the Washington Regional Office, 1 from the Washington Regional Office, and 1 from the Wilmington Regional Office). In addition, 1 from Wake Soil and Water Conservation District, 10 local government representatives (9 of whom were from delegated communities), 1 from NC State Parks, 1 from NC Department of Transportation, and 10 employed by private consulting firms attended the course.

Certifications: DWR issued 14 new certifications in October 2022 and 16 new certifications in May 2023 to DWR staff, NCFS staff, and delegated local government staff because of these courses. These 30 individuals are certified to determine where surface waters are present and thus where the riparian buffer rules apply. DWR also issued 16 training certificates in October 2022 and 13 in May 2023 to other individuals who successfully completed the course (1 individual took the course as a refresher and did not require a training certificate). These 29 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. The class also fills quickly upon opening of registration and consistently carries a waitlist. DWR asked the participants to rate their level of knowledge before the course (on a scale of 1-5). The average was 2.3 in October 2022 and 2.5 in May 2023. DWR asked the participants to rate their level of knowledge again after the course, and the average was 4.5 in October 2022 and 4.6 in May 2023.

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.