

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

***Surface Water Identification and Training
Certification Course***

October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020

Division of Water Resources



**NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**

Surface Water Identification and Training Certification Course Annual Report – 2020

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, 2019 and September 30, 2020, DWR offered one SWITC training courses. (The course originally slated for May 12-15, 2020 was canceled due to COVID-19 restrictions.) The course took place October 15-18, 2019 at NCSU’s Booth Field Learning Lab (Lake Wheeler Rd facility) in 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 course:

October 2019: 29 students attended: 2 students were DWR staff, 4 students were NCFS staff, 4 students were from local governments with delegated local buffer programs, 6 students were from other local and state agencies (City of Raleigh, Town of Holly Springs, NC State Parks, York County (SC) Environmental Compliance, IL Department of Natural Resources).

Certifications: DWR issued 10 new certifications in October 2019 to DWR staff, NCFS staff, and delegated local government staff as a result of these courses. These 10 individuals are certified to determine where surface waters are present and thus where the riparian buffer rules apply. DWR also issued 18 training certificates in October 2019 to other individuals that successfully completed the course. These 18 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), and the average was 2.2 in October 2019. DWR asked the participants to rate their level of knowledge again after the course, and the average was 4.4 in October 2019.

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.