

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

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

October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024

Division of Water Resources

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Surface Water Identification and Training Certification Course Annual Report – 2024

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, 2023 and September 30, 2024, DWR offered two SWITC training courses. The courses took place October 2-6, 2023 and May 13-17, 2024 at NCSU’s McKimmon 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 2023: 30 participants attended, 5 of whom were DWR employees (1 from the Asheville Regional Office, 1 from the Central Office, 2 from the Raleigh Regional Office and 1 from the Wilmington Regional office). In addition, 3 NCFS staff, 1 from NC DEQ Stewardship program, 14 local government representatives (6 from delegated communities), and 7 employed by private consulting firms attended the course.

May 2024: 30 participants attended, 7 of whom were DWR employees (3 from the Raleigh Regional Office, 1 from the Mooresville Regional Office, 2 from the Central Office, 1 from the Fayetteville Regional Office). In addition, 1 participant from NCDEQ, 1 from NC DOT, 2 NCFS staff, 9 local government representatives (6 of whom were from delegated communities), 1 state agency representative, and 9 employed by private consulting firms attended the course.

Certifications: DWR issued 13 new certifications in October 2023 and 15 new certifications in May 2024 to DWR staff, NCFS staff, and delegated local government staff as a result of these courses. These 28 individuals are certified to determine where surface waters are present and thus where the riparian buffer rules apply. DWR also issued 17 training certificates in October 2023 and 15 in May 2024 to other individuals who 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. 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 2.1 in October 2023 and 2.3 in May 2024. DWR asked the participants to rate their level of knowledge again after the course, and the average was 4 in October 2023 and 4.4 in May 2024.

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.