

**Report to the North Carolina General Assembly's
Environmental Review Commission**



Surface Water Identification and Training Certification Course

October 1, 2022

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 – 2022

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, 2021 and September 30, 2022, DWR offered two SWITC training courses. The courses took place October 12-15, 2021 and May 17-20, 2022 at NCSU’s McKimmon Center and at established field locations in and near Raleigh. Modifications for these classes allowed greater distancing indoors, required (October) and recommended (May) use of masks, and optimized space and time outdoors due to COVID restrictions. 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 2021: 30 participants attended, 7 of whom were DWR employees (1 from the Fayetteville Regional Office, 1 from the Mooresville Regional Office, 2 from the Raleigh Regional Office, 1 from the Washington Regional Office, and 2 from the Wilmington Regional office). In addition, 4 NCFS staff, 7 local government representatives (none from delegated communities), and 12 employed by private consulting firms attended the course.

June 2021: 28 participants attended, 4 of whom were DWR employees (all 4 from the Raleigh Regional Office). In addition, 4 NCFS staff, 11 local government representatives (8 of whom were from delegated communities), 1 state agency representative, and 8 employed by private consulting firms attended the course.

Certifications: DWR issued 11 new certifications in October 2021 and 15 new certifications in May 2022 to DWR staff, NCFS staff, and delegated local government staff as a result of these courses. These 26 individuals are certified to determine where surface waters are present and thus where the riparian buffer rules apply. DWR also issued 19 training certificates in October 2021 and 10 in May 2022 to other individuals who successfully completed the course. 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 2.6 in October 2021 and 2.5 in May 2022. DWR asked the participants to rate their level of

knowledge again after the course, and the average was 4.4 in October 2021 and 4.6 in May 2022.

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.