

ROY COOPER
Governor

MARY PENNY KELLEY
Secretary

RICHARD E. ROGERS, JR.
Director



DATE: September 25, 2024

TO: DEQ-DWR-Wetlands-Public Listserv

FROM: Stephanie Goss, 401 & Buffer Permitting Branch

RE: Draft Water Quality General Certification for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Wilmington District (USACE) proposed reissuance of Regional General Permit 20181536.

The purpose of this Public Notice is outlined below. This notice is available electronically at <https://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/water-resources/water-resources-permits/wastewater-branch/401-wetlands-buffer-permits/401-public-notices>.

The Division of Water Resources (DWR) invites public comment on its draft 401 Water Quality General Certification (GC) that it may reissue as part of its consideration of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Wilmington District (USACE) proposed reissuance of Regional General Permit 20181536 (RGP1536). On September 24, 2024, the USACE provided [notice](#) of its proposal to modify and reissue this RGP.

DWR is providing a draft GC to the public for review and comment as a first step towards certifying the proposed Regional General Permit. The complete text of the draft GC is attached below. If you lack internet access, please contact Cat Otero at 919-707-9141 to request a printed copy of the revised GC.

The draft GC has been updated in language and format to match the most recently issued GCs for new Nationwide Permits and Regional General Permits.

The public is invited to comment in writing to the DWR on the document described above. Comments should be emailed to: PublicComments@ncdenr.gov; please include "401GC" in the email's subject line. Alternatively, comments may be mailed to the NC Division of Water Resources, Attn: Cat Otero, 1617 Mail Service Center, Raleigh NC 27699-1617. Comments must be received no later than close of business on October 25, 2024.



North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality | Division of Water Resources
512 North Salisbury Street | 1617 Mail Service Center | Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1617
919.707.9000

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
DIVISION OF WATER RESOURCES**

WATER QUALITY GENERAL CERTIFICATION NO. XXXX

**GENERAL CERTIFICATION FOR PROJECTS ELIGIBLE FOR US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
REGIONAL GENERAL PERMIT NUMBER 201801536
(MARSH SILLS FOR SHORELINE STABILIZATION WITHIN COASTAL COUNTIES)**

Water Quality General Certification Number XXXX is issued in conformity with the requirements of Section 401, Public Laws 92-500 and 95-217 of the United States and subject to the North Carolina Regulations in 15A NCAC 02H .0500 and 15A NCAC 02B .0200 for the discharge of fill material to surface waters and wetland areas as described in the US Army Corps of Engineers Wilmington District's Regional General Permit 20181536.

The State of North Carolina certifies that the specified category of activity will comply with water quality requirements and applicable portions of Sections 301, 302, 303, 306 and 307 of the Public Laws 92-500 and 95-217 if conducted in accordance with the conditions hereinafter set forth.

Effective date: _____

Signed this day: XXXXX

By

Richard E. Rogers, Jr.
Director

GENERAL CERTIFICATION COVERAGE:

Activities that are eligible for US Army Corps of Engineers Wilmington District's Regional General Permit 201801536 qualify for coverage under this General Certification unless they meet one of the thresholds listed below. Activities meeting any one (1) of the thresholds or circumstances listed below are not eligible for coverage under this General Certification and require an Individual 401 Water Quality Certification from the Division of Water Resources (DWR):

- a) If any of the conditions of this General Certification cannot be met; or
- b) Living shorelines/marsh sills where the landward edge of the sill extends waterward of the normal high water or normal water line more than 30 feet or five feet waterward of the existing wetlands whichever distance is greater; or
- c) Living shorelines/marsh sills that result in any fill of wetlands landward of the toe of the sill alignment; or
- d) Any impacts to submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) habitat or significant shellfish resources as identified by the NC Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF); or
- e) Any permanent impacts to Unique Wetlands (UWL) as defined in 15A NCAC 02B .0231; or
- f) Any impacts to state regulated riparian buffers along subject water bodies in the Neuse or Tar-Pamlico River Basins (or any other basin or watershed with State Regulated Riparian Area Protection Rules or State Regulated Riparian Buffer Rules in Chapter 2B of Title 15A in the North Carolina Administrative Code in effect at the time of application) *unless*:
 - i. The activities are listed as "DEEMED ALLOWABLE" in these rules; or
 - ii. A Buffer Authorization Certificate is issued by the NC Division of Coastal Management (DCM); or
 - iii. A Buffer Authorization Certificate, or Certificate with Exception, is issued by a delegated or designated local government implementing a state riparian buffer program pursuant to 143-214.23.

In accordance with 15A NCAC 02H .0503(f), the Director of the North Carolina Division of Water Resources may require submission of an application for Individual Certification for any project if it is deemed in the public's best interest or determined that the project is likely to have a significant adverse effect upon water quality, including state or federally listed endangered or threatened aquatic species, or will degrade the waters so that existing uses of the waters or downstream waters are precluded.

This General Certification does not relieve the permittee of the responsibility to obtain all other required Federal, State, or Local approvals before proceeding with the project, including those required by, but not limited to, Sediment and Erosion Control, Non-Discharge, Water Supply Watershed, and Trout Buffer regulations.

Upon the presentation of proper credentials, DWR may inspect the property.

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This General Certification shall expire on the same day as the expiration date of the corresponding Regional General Permit. The conditions in effect on the date of issuance of Certification for a specific project shall remain in effect for the life of the project, regardless of the expiration date of this General Certification. This General Certification is rescinded when the US Army Corps of Engineers reauthorizes the corresponding Regional General Permit or when deemed appropriate by the Director of the Division of Water Resources.

Non-compliance with or violation of the conditions herein set forth by a specific project may result in revocation of this General Certification for the project and may also result in criminal and/or civil penalties.

I. ACTIVITY SPECIFIC CONDITIONS:

1. All sills shall have at least one five-foot opening every 100 feet and may be staggered or overlapped or left open as long as the five-foot separation between sections is maintained. Overlapping sections shall not overlap more than 10 feet.

Citation: 15A NCAC 02H .0506(b)(1) and (3); 15A NCAC 02H .0507(c)

2. The permittee shall employ all sedimentation and erosion control measures necessary to prevent an increase in sedimentation and turbidity within waters and wetlands outside the permitted area. This shall include, but is not limited to, the immediate installation of silt fencing, turbidity curtains, or similar appropriate devices around all areas subject to soil disturbance.

Citation: 15A NCAC 02H .0506(b)(1) and (3); 15A NCAC 02H .0507(c); 15A NCAC 02B .0200

II. GENERAL CONDITIONS:

1. The permittee shall report to the appropriate DWR Regional Office any noncompliance with, and/or any violation of, stream or wetland standards [15A NCAC 02B .0200], including but not limited to sediment impacts to streams or wetlands. Information shall be provided orally within 24 hours (or the next business day if a weekend or holiday) from the time the permittee became aware of the non-compliance circumstances.

Citation: 15A NCAC 02H .0506(b); 15A NCAC 02H .0507(c)

2. No waste, spoil, solids, or fill of any kind shall occur in wetlands or waters beyond the footprint of the impacts (including temporary impacts); or beyond the thresholds established for use of this General Certification and Programmatic General Permit.

Citation: 15A NCAC 02H .0506; 15A NCAC 02H .0507(c)

3. All activities shall be in compliance with any applicable State Regulated Riparian Buffer Rules in Chapter 2B of Title 15A in the North Carolina Administrative Code.

Citation: 15A NCAC 02H .0506(b); 15A NCAC 02H .0507(c)

4. When applicable, all construction activities shall be performed and maintained in full compliance with G.S. Chapter 113A Article 4 (Sediment and Pollution Control Act of 1973). Regardless of applicability of the Sediment and Pollution Control Act, all projects shall incorporate appropriate Best Management Practices for the control of sediment and erosion so that no violations of state water quality standards, statutes, or rules occur.

Design, installation, operation, and maintenance of all sediment and erosion control measures shall be equal to or exceed the requirements specified in the most recent version of the *North Carolina Sediment and Erosion Control Manual*, or for linear transportation projects, the *North Carolina Department of Transportation Sediment and Erosion Control Manual*.

All devices shall be maintained on all construction sites, borrow sites, and waste pile (spoil) sites, including contractor-owned or leased borrow pits associated with the project. Sufficient materials required for stabilization and/or repair of erosion control measures and stormwater routing and treatment shall be on site at all times.

For borrow pit sites, the erosion and sediment control measures shall be designed, installed, operated, and maintained in accordance with the most recent version of the *North Carolina Surface Mining Manual*. Reclamation measures and implementation shall comply with the reclamation in accordance with the requirements of the Sedimentation Pollution Control Act and the Mining Act of 1971.

If the project occurs in waters or watersheds classified as Primary Nursery Areas (PNAs), SA, WS-I, WS-II, High Quality Waters (HQW), or Outstanding Resource Waters (ORW), then the sedimentation and erosion control designs shall comply with the requirements set forth in 15A NCAC 04B .0124, *Design Standards in Sensitive Watersheds*.

Citation: 15A NCAC 02H .0506(b)(2); 15A NCAC 02H .0507(c); 15A NCAC 02B .0200; 15A NCAC 02B .0231

5. Sediment and erosion control measures shall not be installed in wetlands or waters except within the footprint of temporary or permanent impacts otherwise authorized by this Certification. If placed within authorized impact areas, then placement of such measures shall not be conducted in a manner that results in dis-equilibrium of any wetlands, streambeds, or streambanks. Any silt fence installed within wetlands shall be removed from wetlands and the natural grade restored within two (2) months of the date that DEMLR or locally delegated program has released the specific area within the project to ensure wetland standards are maintained upon completion of the project.

Citation: 15A NCAC 02H .0506(b); 15A NCAC 02H .0507(c); 15A NCAC 02B .0200; 15A NCAC 02B .0231

6. Erosion control matting that incorporates plastic mesh and/or plastic twine shall not be used along streambanks, shorelines, or within wetlands.

Citation: 15A NCAC 02H .0506(b); 15A NCAC 02H .0507(c)

7. If the project is covered by NPDES Construction Stormwater Permit Number NCG010000 or NPDES Construction Stormwater Permit Number NCG250000, full compliance with permit conditions including the erosion & sedimentation control plan, inspections and maintenance, self-monitoring, record keeping and reporting requirements is required.

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) shall be required to be in full compliance with the conditions related to construction activities within the most recent version of their Individual NPDES Stormwater Permit Number NCS000250.

Citation: 15A NCAC 02H .0506(b); 15A NCAC 02H .0507(c); 15A NCAC 02B .0200; 15A NCAC 02B .0231

8. All work in or adjacent to streams or open waters shall be conducted so that the flowing stream or open waters do not come in contact with the disturbed area. Approved best management practices from the most current version of the *NC Sediment and Erosion Control Manual*, or the *NC Department of Transportation Construction and Maintenance Activities Manual*, such as sandbags, rock berms, cofferdams, and other diversion structures shall be used to minimize excavation in flowing water.

Citation: 15A NCAC 02H .0506(b); 15A NCAC 02H .0507(c); 15A NCAC 02B .0200

9. If activities must occur during periods of high biological activity (e.g. sea turtle nesting, fish spawning, or bird nesting), then biological monitoring may be required at the request of other state or federal agencies and coordinated with these activities.

All moratoriums on construction activities established by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), NC Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF), or National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) shall be implemented. Exceptions to this condition require written approval by the resource agency responsible for the given moratorium.

Work within a designated trout watershed of North Carolina (as identified by the Wilmington District of the US Army Corps of Engineers) or identified state or federal endangered or threatened species habitat, shall be coordinated with the appropriate WRC, USFWS, NMFS, and/or DMF personnel.

Citation: 15A NCAC 02H .0506(b); 15A NCAC 02H .0507(c); 15A NCAC 04B .0125

10. Application of fertilizer to establish planted/seeded vegetation within disturbed riparian areas and/or wetlands shall be conducted at agronomic rates and shall comply with all other Federal, State and Local regulations. Fertilizer application shall be accomplished in a manner that minimizes the risk of contact between the fertilizer and surface waters.

Citation: 15A NCAC 02H .0506(b); 15A NCAC 02H .0507(c); 15A NCAC 02B .0231

11. If concrete is used during construction, then all necessary measures shall be taken to prevent direct contact between uncured or curing concrete and waters of the state. Water that inadvertently contacts uncured concrete shall not be discharged to waters of the state.

Citation: 15A NCAC 02H .0506(b); 15A NCAC 02H .0507(c); 15A NCAC 02B .0200

12. All proposed and approved temporary fill and culverts shall be removed and the impacted area shall be returned to natural conditions within 60 calendar days after the temporary impact is no longer necessary. The impacted areas shall be restored to original grade, including each stream's original cross-sectional dimensions, planform pattern, and longitudinal bed profile. All temporarily impacted sites shall be restored and stabilized with native vegetation.

Citation: 15A NCAC 02H .0506(b); 15A NCAC 02H .0507(c)

13. All proposed and approved temporary pipes/culverts/rip-rap pads etc. in surface waters shall be installed as outlined in the most recent edition of the *North Carolina Sediment and Erosion Control Planning and Design Manual* or the *North Carolina Surface Mining Manual* or the *North Carolina Department of Transportation Best Management Practices for Construction and Maintenance Activities* so as not to restrict stream flow or cause disequilibrium during use of this General Certification.

Citation: 15A NCAC 02H .0506(b); 15A NCAC 02H .0507(c)

14. Any riprap required for proper culvert placement, stream or shoreline stabilization, or restoration of temporarily disturbed areas shall be restricted to the area directly impacted by the approved construction activity. All rip-rap shall be placed such that the original streambed elevation and streambank contours are restored and maintained and shall consist of clean rock or masonry material free of debris or toxic pollutants. Placement of riprap or other approved materials shall not result in de-stabilization of the stream bed or banks upstream or downstream of the area or be installed in a manner that precludes aquatic life passage.

Citation: 15A NCAC 02H .0506(b); 15A NCAC 02H .0507(c)

15. Any riprap used for stream or shoreline stabilization shall be of a size and density to prevent movement by wave, current action, or stream flows, and shall consist of clean rock or masonry material free of debris or toxic pollutants. Rip-rap shall not be installed in the streambed except in specific areas required for velocity control and to ensure structural integrity of bank stabilization measures.

Citation: 15A NCAC 02H .0506(b); 15A NCAC 02H .0507(c); 15A NCAC 02B .0201

16. All mechanized equipment operated near surface waters shall be inspected and maintained regularly to prevent contamination of surface waters from fuels, lubricants, hydraulic fluids, or other toxic materials. Construction shall be staged in order to minimize the exposure of equipment to surface waters to the maximum extent practicable. Fueling, lubrication, and general equipment maintenance shall be performed in a manner to prevent, to the maximum extent practicable, contamination of surface waters by fuels and oils.

Citation: 15A NCAC 02H .0506(b); 15A NCAC 02H .0507(c); 15A NCAC 02B .0200

17. Heavy equipment working in wetlands shall be placed on mats or other measures shall be taken to minimize soil disturbance and compaction.

Citation: 15A NCAC 02H .0506(b); 15A NCAC 02H .0507(c); 15A NCAC 02B .0231

18. In accordance with G.S 143-215.85(b), the permittee shall report any petroleum spill of 25 gallons or more; any spill regardless of amount that causes a sheen on surface waters; any petroleum spill regardless of amount occurring within 100 feet of surface waters; and any petroleum spill less than 25 gallons that cannot be cleaned up within 24 hours.

Citation: 15A NCAC 02H .0507(c); N.C.G.S 143-215.85(b)

19. The permittee and their authorized agents shall conduct all activities in a manner consistent with State water quality standards (including any requirements resulting from compliance with §303(d) of the Clean Water Act), and any other appropriate requirements of State and Federal Law.

Citation: 15A NCAC 02H .0506(b); 15A NCAC 02H .0507(c)

20. The permittee shall require its contractors and/or agents to comply with the terms and conditions of this permit in the construction and maintenance of this project and shall provide each of its contractors and/or agents associated with the construction or maintenance of this project with a copy of this General Certification. A copy of this General Certification shall be available at the project site during the construction and maintenance of this project.

Citation: 15A NCAC 02H .0506(b); 15A NCAC 02H .0507(c)

21. This General Certification neither grants nor affirms any property right, license, or privilege in any waters, or any right of use in any waters. This General Certification does not authorize any person to interfere with the riparian rights, littoral rights, or water use rights of any other person and does not create any prescriptive right or any right of priority regarding any usage of water. This General Certification shall not be interposed as a defense in any action respecting the determination of riparian or littoral rights or other rights to water use. No consumptive user is deemed by virtue of this General Certification to possess any prescriptive or other right of priority with respect to any other consumptive user regardless of the quantity of the withdrawal or the date on which the withdrawal was initiated or expanded.

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History Note: Water Quality Certification (WQC) Number XXXX issued DATE replaces WQC 4501 issued October 28, 2021; WQC 4175 issued February 1, 2019; WQC 4175 issued December 14, 2018; WQC 4144 issued December 1, 2017; WQC 4097 issued March 6, 2017; WQC 3900 issued March 19, 2012; WQC 3641 and 3642 issued March 19, 2007; WQC 3371 and 3400 issued March 18, 2002; WQC 3274 issued June 1, 2000; WQC 3112 issued February 11, 1997; and WQC 3025 issued September 6, 1995.