

DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSISTANCE AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

BIENNIAL REPORT

2021 AND 2022

The North Carolina Division of Environmental Assistance and Customer Service (DEACS) is a non-regulatory division of North Carolina DEQ offering technical and financial assistance to businesses, manufacturers, local governments, institutions, economic developers and citizens in environmental management. For questions, call 1-877-623-6748.



Friends and Colleagues,

Thank you for reviewing the Division of Environmental Assistance and Customer Services' (DEACS) biennial report for Fiscal Years 2021 and 2022. We have many stories to share. DEACS continues to assist businesses, organizations, facilities, and citizens through its regional office support staff, technical assistance team, and volunteers in Waste Reduction Partners.

While we cannot tell every story, this report provides examples of how our pollution prevention, compliance and permitting assistance, recycling economic development, sustainable materials management, recognition and outreach programs have benefited North Carolina.

You will see that the Environmental Stewardship Initiative program is celebrating its 20-year anniversary, which is a tremendous milestone for the program and the department. DEACS has continued to foster economic growth in the state and support recycling infrastructure investment in the transition to a circular economy.

We appreciate you for taking time to learn more about the division and how its assistance programs serve businesses, organizations and all North Carolinians.

Best Regards,

JAMIE RAGAN, DEACS DIRECTOR



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WHAT IS DEACS?

NON-REGULATORY TECHNICAL, PERMITTING AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

DEACS is a non-regulatory division in the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) which protects the state’s natural resources for the health and prosperity of all North Carolinians. The division accomplishes these goals by encouraging sustainable practices, advancing recycling efforts, reducing waste generation and disposal, and promoting more efficient resources consumption. The division also strives to promote compliance and help customers navigate environmental permitting.

HELPING OUR CUSTOMERS

- Navigate regulatory and permitting challenges.
- Use resources responsibly and move toward a more circular economy.
- Achieve and be recognized for environmental excellence.
- Interact with and access DEQ programs through seven regional offices.
- Implement pollution prevention strategies.
- Grow local economies and create jobs.
- Understand how to address environmental problems.
- Coordinate the State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA) process.
- Experience customer service excellence.
- Access grant funding and assistance to improve recycling infrastructure.



ENVIRONMENTAL AND PERMIT ASSISTANCE



NON-REGULATORY LIAISON

The division's Environmental Assistance coordinators (EACs), in DEQ seven regional offices, are located close to customers and provide non-regulatory, on-site consultation and coordinated permit reviews for proposed projects. Their primary responsibility is to assist businesses, industries, local governments, other institutions, consultants, and private citizens to identify, understand and comply with the state's environmental requirements.

CUSTOMIZED PERMIT ASSISTANCE AND COORDINATION

Environmental Assistance coordinators provide permitting assistance that is tailored to individual customer needs. Each coordinator also provides personalized guidance through each step of the permitting process. Regional Environmental Assistance coordinators provided clients with more than 210 customized permit lists in the past two years.

MULTI-AGENCY SCOPING MEETINGS

A scoping meeting provides an opportunity for customers to meet with coordinators and environmental regulatory agency staff to facilitate a more efficient permitting process. DEACS Environmental Assistance coordinators participated in 150 scoping meetings in FY 2021 and 144 scoping meetings in FY 2022. Examples of multi-agency scoping meetings include:

- Blackburn 58-MW solar project in Catawba County
- Okra Holdings 69-MW solar project in Rowan County
- Balsam Mountain Campground and Heintooga Picnic Area Wastewater and Water System Improvements in Swain County

EXPRESS PERMITTING

DEACS staff provide coordination and assistance to clients to facilitate expedited permitting decisions within the Express Permitting Program. This assistance acts as a key component, which leads to more timely permitting decisions in relation to DEQ regulatory requirements. In the past two years, Environmental Assistance coordinators took part in a total of 543 DEMLR Express Permitting meetings.

MILITARY PERMITTING ASSISTANCE

In 2021 Cameron Weaver, Environmental Assistance coordinator in the Wilmington Regional Office, facilitated four multiagency scoping meetings and numerous Express Permitting meetings for construction projects at U.S. military installations. These coordination efforts led to Express Permits being issued by Stormwater and Erosion Control programs within the Division of Energy, Mineral and Land Resources (DEMLR) for military projects in the Wilmington Region. There were more than 22 DEMLR Express Permits issued for military projects in 2020 and more than 35 DEMLR Express Permits issued in 2021.

PERMITTING TRANSFORMATION RECEIVES FUNDING

In the 2021 state budget, the DEQ Permitting Transformation Program (PTP) received \$11 million in funding for two years. DEQ, in partnership with the N.C. Department of Information Technology, is using the funding to streamline and automate DEQ's permitting processes with an online portal to apply for, pay for and track permits. The PTP consists of two major projects — frontloading and development. Frontloading includes mapping workflows and streamlining the permitting processes while development includes creating an online solution. The Division of Coastal Management's General and Major permits are the first permits to launch online in third quarter of 2022.

DEACS is leading the frontloading effort for the PTP. As of June 2022, the first four programs in frontloading are: Brownfields Program, Post-Construction Stormwater Program, NPDES Wastewater Program (General and Certificate of Coverage) and NPDES Construction Stormwater Program.

"This regulatory interpretation is very helpful! Big thanks to you and your colleagues for the quick turnaround on this."

**KELLY BAKER, SENIOR RESEARCH ANALYST
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP
OF NORTH CAROLINA**



ON-SITE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

In addition to permitting assistance services, grant programs and recognition initiatives, businesses and local governments can call on DEACS staff to provide on-site, one-on-one technical assistance to help achieve their environmental performance goals. Technical assistance services address resource efficiency, recycling-, water- and energy-use management, pollution prevention and sustainability strategies.

DEACS COLLABORATES TO ASSIST RIVERBEND MALT HOUSE

The division's Waste Reduction Partners (WRP) and Environmental Stewardship Initiative (ESI) staff provided on-site guidance to Riverbend Malt House (RMH) in Asheville — a new ESI Partner. RMH creates unique, high-quality malt for the brewing and distilling industries, sourced from local, family-owned farms and produced in a socially and environmentally responsible manner.

RMH's owner Brent Manning requested assistance with upgrading the facility's sustainability plan. DEACS staff provided suggestions on how to complete a materials balance, identified higher uses for used wooden pallets, narrowed options for potential reuse of process water, identified enhanced process controls for energy savings, and discussed the merits of future staff electric vehicle charging stations. Utilizing these suggestions, RMH later published its 2021 Sustainability Commitments.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COMPOSTING ASSISTANCE

In May 2022, Christine Whitmiere, the organics recycling specialist, coordinated a cafeteria food composting review for Dana Elementary in Henderson County. The school is participating in a food waste recycling program to divert compostable materials from the landfill. The two-day "waste sort" field analysis engaged area volunteers including WRP's Bruce Helwig and Jan Hardin and showed that the cafeteria collection program was working well.



HELPING MANUFACTURERS FIND RECYCLING MARKETS

The WRP field staff helped Jackson Paper Manufacturing, a 100% corrugated paper manufacturer in Sylva, connect with Biltmore Iron and Metal (BIMCO) to recycle a paper-making residual called "rag rope." Jackson Paper now receives a small revenue for this by-product instead of paying a disposal fee. The recycling arrangement is diverting up to 2,076 tons per year from the landfill and saves more than \$80,000 in annual disposal costs.

ASSISTING LIBERTY TIRE WITH AN ENERGY ASSESSMENT

In March 2022, Liberty Tire Recycling staff contacted Waste Reduction Partners to request assistance with conducting an energy efficiency review for its Cameron site. WRP Engineer Adrian Boutwell conducted a pilot energy and water assessment and guidance report for the site to identify cost-effective efficiency and renewable energy projects. The work is helping Liberty develop environmental sustainability goals at a corporate level.

"This (energy assessment) report is extensive and really helps us define priorities as we move forward."

AMY BRACKIN, VP SUSTAINABILITY
LIBERTY TIRE RECYCLING

CREATING A BREWERY RECYCLING PARTNERSHIP

After meeting with a series of breweries, DEACS' Mike Greene discovered they all generate the same hard-to-recycle material streams but in quantities too small to attract a recycler. In coordination with Sierra Nevada, the Western North Carolina Brewery Recycling Co-Operative was launched in April 2021 that allowed regional breweries to bring source-separated recyclable materials including plastic wrap, cardboard, polypropylene grain bags and mylar hops bags to Sonoco Recycling (formerly American Recycling of WNC) in Candler. DEACS awarded a grant to Sonoco Recycling to make facility modifications and buy equipment to accommodate the brewery recycling station.

ESI FACILITATES ISO AUDITOR TRAINING EVENT

The ESI staff revamped its training to provide a generalized class on auditing techniques, applicable to the ISO 9001, 14001 and 50001 standards implemented by members. This training provided participants with presentations, hands-on exercises (including mock audits), and in-depth discussion about ISO internal auditing. The new course launched on May 26, 2022 at ESI Steward Thomas Built Buses - High Point.



ESI's ISO Internal Auditor Training Event at ESI Steward Member Thomas Built Buses in High Point (May 26, 2022).

ENHANCING RECYCLING NETWORKS

MAKING GLASS RECYCLING WORK

Achieving a 50% glass recycling rate and including 50% recycled content in all glass containers by 2030 is the goal of the glass container industry, represented by the Glass Packaging Institute. The United States' glass recycling rate remains in the mid-30s percentage-wise, and most glass containers are created with about 35% recycled content. Recent statewide data shows a picture of declining glass recovery tonnage from local government programs in North Carolina.

To reverse this trend, DEACS staff initiated a series of stakeholder discussions in 2021 resulting in the award of five grants co-funded by DEQ and the glass industry. With \$200,000 from the Department and \$35,000 from the Glass Recycling Foundation, projects started in summer 2022 at two material recovery facilities (MRF) and three local governments:

- **Sonoco Recycling MRF in Wilmington and Mecklenburg County MRF in Charlotte will add glass-cleaning equipment to improve sorting and increase the value of recycled glass.**
- **Pinehurst will establish a drop-off site to give residents an opportunity to recycle glass since it is not accepted curbside.**
- **Pitt County will construct a glass bunker and Moore County will expand a glass bunker to consolidate recycled glass from surrounding drop-off sites and haul it more efficiently.**



Pitt County will save money transporting glass from these recycling containers with the grant-funded bunker system.

"This effort demonstrates the power of public-private partnerships to ensure that the state's recycling system supports a continued move towards a circular economy for glass."

ELIZABETH S. BISER, SECRETARY
N.C. DEQ



UPGRADING NC'S RECYCLING MARKETS DIRECTORY

In May 2022, DEACS launched an updated version of the interactive North Carolina Recycling Markets Directory. The directory, which now features a mapping function, complements the work of DEACS by connecting generators with nearby recyclers to keep materials out of the landfill and advance the state's circular economy.

USE THE FOOD NC

FOOD WASTE STOPS WITH ME

FOCUSING ON FOOD WASTE

Food waste makes up 25% of landfill disposal according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The DEACS team is working to help generators reduce wasted food and build the state's composting infrastructure.

With support from DEACS recycling grants, Henderson and New Hanover counties made upgrades to their permitted compost facilities. Durham is expanding a curbside compost pilot, and Chapel Hill, Cary, Davidson, and Asheville/Buncombe County launched compost drop-off sites.



Secretary Biser visits Cary's drop-off compost site with DEACS and Town staff.

Crown Town Compost expanded its compost collection service in the Charlotte region, while McGill Environmental and Gallins Family Farm made upgrades to their permitted compost facilities in Sampson and Davie counties. Additionally, seven local governments distributed 1,532 backyard compost bins to residents through a special grant opportunity in 2021.

The DEACS Waste Reduction Partners team recently acquired an EPA grant to develop outreach materials and increase one-on-one technical assistance with food service businesses and manufacturers to prevent and recycle food waste. In the fall of 2022, DEACS is launching a comprehensive campaign to reduce food waste from the residential, commercial and agricultural sectors statewide. The campaign - called Use the Food NC - will focus on ways to eat, donate, compost or anaerobically digest food before landfilling.

BRINGING RECYCLING TO MULTIFAMILY

DEACS has partnered with The Recycling Partnership to help expand recycling access at multifamily properties across the state. A new multifamily grant program will fund startup costs to establish more quality recycling services to the one in five North Carolina residents who live in apartments and townhomes.

REGIONAL OFFICE OPERATIONS

DEACS OFFICE MANAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE FOR DEQ'S SEVEN REGIONAL OFFICES

DEACS provides the administrative support for DEQ's seven regional offices, including customer service, lease and space management, budgeting, operational logistics, and emergency operations.

Each regional office connects the Department to the surrounding community and addresses the unique needs, customers, demographics, industries, and geography, creating variations in workloads, activity levels and decision outcomes.

The administrative workload in each office is specifically tailored to the needs of the division staff at each location.

- Customer assistance and outreach
- Fiscal management
- Support to DEQ permit and inspection staff
- Facility improvements
- Electronic records transition and management

DEVELOPING AND ADAPTING BEST PRACTICES WITH NEW CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

- COVID-19 prompted a shift in DEACS processes as more program staff teleworked and later returned to the office environment.
- Office lease renewals required diligent information review to inform Request for Proposal development.
- New pass-through federal infrastructure grant funding streams required creative solutions to accommodate additional staff, including the development of shared co-working spaces.



Fayetteville Regional Office staff members (from left to right): Deven Williamson, manager Lee Cottrell and Marisa Lanka.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT TO DEQ DIVISIONS IN THE REGIONAL OFFICES

- Daily processing of deposits and audits of permit fees
- Entering data into permit tracking databases
- Tracking and recording of monthly and annual inventories
- Conducting fire and risk inventory assessments
- Managing safety equipment and state vehicles
- Assisting with file reviews and public records requests



Shaquan Walker providing support in the Wilmington Regional Office.

REGIONAL OFFICE ASSISTANCE 2020-2022 REPORTING

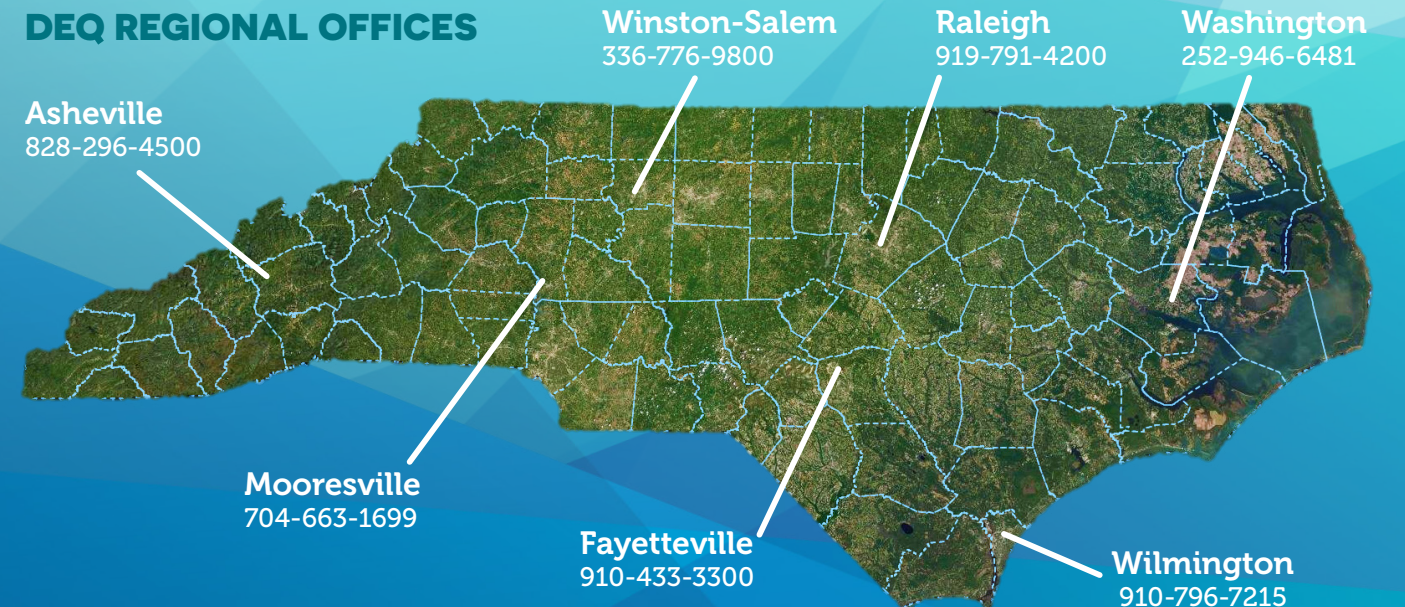
9,639 WALK-INS

71,175 CUSTOMER CALLS



Rebecca Reaves providing support in the Asheville Regional Office.

DEQ REGIONAL OFFICES



DEACS ASSISTANCE BY THE NUMBERS

DATA FROM JULY 2020–JULY 2022



71,175
Regional Office
Customer Phone Calls



15,237
Toll-Free Hotline Calls



\$1,186,473
Local Government Recycling
Grants Awarded



\$1,397,545
Recycling Business
Development Grants Awarded



9,639
Regional Office Walk-ins



654,778
DEACS Webpage Views

203
Environmental Stewardship
Initiative Members Sites



**NORTH CAROLINA DEQ
TOLL-FREE NUMBER:
1-877-623-6748**

DEACS staff manages DEQ's toll-free hotline, fielding customer calls and leading the department's response to customer needs. Their technical expertise guides callers to the appropriate staff. Historically, 85% of calls are handled through programs administered by DEQ. During this two year period, 15,237 calls were fielded by the hotline.



294 Scoping Meetings
543 Express Permitting Meetings



293
Site Visits

210 
NC GreenTravel Members



176
Presentations
Audience reached: **5,434**



603
SEPA and Related Reviews



23
Webinar Trainings
Audience reached: **2,634**



\$14.9 MILLION
Client Cost Savings Reported*

* Latest two reporting years.



In 2021, NC GreenTravel celebrated its 10th anniversary. As a state recognition program for the sustainable tourism sector, NC GreenTravel membership now tops 210 organizations. Any tourism-based business in North Carolina can apply for recognitions and become part of a dynamic network for information resources.

In May 2021, NC GreenTravel was featured on the UNC Public Broadcasting Service's program, North Carolina Weekend with host Debora Holt Noel. The episode featured NC GreenTravel members Raffaldini Vineyards, Print Works Bistro and Lake Waccamaw. DEACS also recognizes GreenTravel's long-time manager, Tom Rhodes, who retired in May of 2022 after 23 years of dedicated state government service.





ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP INITIATIVE

Established in 2002, the Environmental Stewardship Initiative's mission is to assist organizations in reducing their environmental impacts beyond regulatory requirements, promote pollution prevention strategies and recognize those that achieve and maintain this commitment.

ESI 2020 ANNUAL REPORT AVAILABLE



ESI BENEFITS

The ESI Program is different from other state and federal efforts as we provide no-cost training, education, networking and technical assistance to help members improve their environmental performance. This includes opportunities to learn about innovative solutions and share information on member successes in achieving environmental goals.

The program's staff tailor offerings to member needs, and recent focus areas have included life-cycle analysis, energy efficiency and greenhouse gas reporting, hazardous materials management and reductions, and waste reduction strategies.

20 YEARS OF ESI

There are three levels of participation in the voluntary ESI program:

- ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNER**
For organizations that are interested in beginning the process of improving their environmental performance.
- ENVIRONMENTAL RISING STEWARD**
For organizations that are interested in improving their existing environmental management system.
- ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARD**
For organizations that have shown a commitment to exemplary environmental performance beyond rules and regulations.



Established on April 22, Earth Day
1 Steward and 27 Partners



2004
Rising Steward level added

2007
First ESI Members Meeting

2012
Eligibility opened to facilities without a DEQ permit. 83 Members at 129 sites

2015
First ESI Conference

2017
1st Member hosted Benchmarking event

2022
New ESI Awards launched. 103 Members at 203 sites



ESI MEMBERS' 20-YEAR REDUCTIONS AND SAVINGS

WATER REDUCTIONS



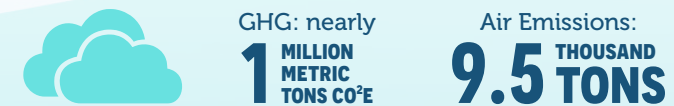
ENERGY REDUCTIONS



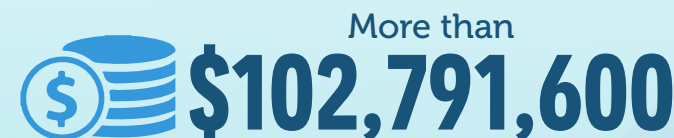
WASTE REDUCTIONS



AIR EMISSION REDUCTIONS



COST SAVINGS



"Our ESI membership has made us so mindful of our energy and water consumption. Examining our data and knowing what is expected has helped us problem solve when usage and expenses are increased. Thankful for our partnership with you!"

CATY GRAY URQUHART, ENVIRONMENTAL TEAM LEADER
TARBORO BREWING COMPANY, ESI PARTNER

Food Waste and Composting at the Zoo



The N.C. Zoo is an original member of the ESI, having joined as a Partner in 2002. Becoming a Rising Steward in 2004 and a Steward in 2013, the N.C. Zoo exemplifies environmental stewardship. It currently maintains 85% zero-waste-to-landfill and continues post-consumer composting of food waste in its five restaurants. Since 2002, the N.C. Zoo has composted more than 28,287 tons and saved more than \$1.4 million with its composting efforts. Excess finished compost is managed through both sales and donations to assist the local agricultural community in dealing with increasing fertilizer and food production costs.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

JDIG ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE CHECKS

DEACS staff provide technical assistance before and after a business becomes operational in North Carolina. In 2018, DEACS became responsible for Environmental Compliance Reviews (ECRs) that are performed when businesses apply for Job Development Investment Grants (JDIGs) or grants through the One North Carolina Fund (OneNC). JDIG grants are available for new and expanding companies to help offset expansion or locating costs. JDIGs are based on North Carolina Department of Commerce (NC Commerce) criteria for operation. The One NC Fund is a discretionary cash-grant allowing for quick response to job creation projects. It is based on the number of jobs created, overall level of investment, location, and economic impact for the specified area or region.

To complete an ECR, the regional Environmental Assistance coordinator (EAC) reviews the project information such as project location, industrial processes, new or expanding an established business. The EAC then creates a compliance report for the project, and DEQ staff are contacted for historical compliance information and potential permitting needs. The EAC conducts internal database searches, as well as querying the EPA's Enforcement and Compliance History Online database. This information is compiled, summarized and added to the final ECR report, which is shared with DEQ's Projects Liason for submission to NC Commerce.

WHITE RIVER MARINE SAILS INTO THE CRYSTAL COAST

Bass Pro Shops founder Johnny Morris and owner of White River Marine Group (WRMC), the world's largest fishing and recreational boat builder, announced in May 2021 that they acquired the Hatteras Yacht facility in New Bern.

WRMC plans to renovate the existing facility and expand its ability to design, manufacture, service and sell Mako, Ranger and Hatteras brand vessels in an environment that is close to its customers and accessible to the saltwater market.

DEACS staff supported NC Commerce in performing a compliance check, which helped lead to WRMC being awarded a JDIG grant.

Over five years, WRMC plans a \$35 million capital investment and the creation of 502 full time jobs with an average salary of \$43,730. The company plans 100 new positions in the first year, with 100 more each subsequent year.

CORNING EXPANDS ITS FOOTPRINT WITHIN THE TARHEEL STATE

Optical fiber pioneer, Corning Incorporated, announced a significant expansion of its optical communication business. Corning Optical Communications, LLC, headquartered in Charlotte, is an international supplier of end-to-end fiber networks. DEACS staff provided compliance check support and data verification for the project which will lead to the construction of a new, state-of-the-art, manufacturing facility in Hickory. Corning plans to invest at least \$150 million and create 200 new jobs. These positions are expected carry an average annual salary of \$55,000. According to the company, this project is planned to be completed before the end of 2023.

Corning produces fiber optic cable, networking products, related hardware, and data center systems for business

and residential telecommunication applications. The company currently operates research-and-development manufacturing facilities in Hickory, Concord, Wilmington, Winston Salem, Durham, and Newton. This current expansion is necessary to address increasing demand from leading network operating companies. Three of Corning's six North Carolina sites are ESI members — and two of those are Stewards.

This economic expansion project was achieved through joint coordination and partnerships with NC Commerce, EDPNC, the NC Community College System, Duke Energy, Catawba County Economic Development, and DEQ, among others.

"It's exciting to see a global manufacturer like Corning expand yet again in a great rural county like Catawba."

ROY COOPER, GOVERNOR
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

DEACS completed 56 ECRs from July 2020 to July 2022. These projects led to the creation of more than 27,000 jobs and total capital investments of at least \$15 billion.




RECYCLING MEANS BUSINESS

NORTH CAROLINA'S PROGRESS TOWARD A CIRCULAR ECONOMY GROWS JOBS AND SUPPORTS MANUFACTURING

Recycling conserves natural resources and reduces energy use in production, and recycling also supports the local economy and provides thousands of jobs to North Carolinians. Buying products with recycled content sustains the entire industry and rewards manufacturers who use recyclables in their processes. North Carolina is home to more than 600 businesses who collect, process, and manufacture products using recycled material.

STIMULATING INVESTMENT WITH RECYCLING GRANTS

DEACS' longstanding Recycling Business Development Grant Program continues to stimulate growth and expansion in the private recycling industry. During FY 2020 and FY 2021, DEACS awarded 41 grants to private recycling companies and nonprofits resulting in additional annual recycling of 102,112 tons of material.

-  **\$1.4M** GRANT FUNDING
-  **\$3.8M** MATCHING INVESTMENT
-  **136** NEW JOBS CREATED



RECYCLING CREATES JOBS

North Carolina's private recycling industry directly employs 15,712 people with an average hourly wage of \$23.23 across more than 600 businesses. This data comes from DEACS' 2020 Recycling Employment Trends Study. The study shows a growing industry with 54% of surveyed businesses planning to invest in upgrades or expansions and 43% anticipating the creation of new jobs during the next two years. DEACS also plays an active role in recruiting new recycling businesses to the state.

 **15,712** EMPLOYED BY NC RECYCLING INDUSTRY

WRP PROFILES AND PURCHASING TOOLKIT PROMOTE RECYCLED CONTENT PRODUCTS

With EPA grant support, Waste Reduction Partners created a series of profiles that highlight North Carolina manufacturers who use significant recycled content in their products. Eleven profiles were created and broadly promoted to showcase these business leaders' support of a circular economy.

WRP also created a North Carolina Purchasing Toolkit as a guide for public and private purchasing agents across the state who want to procure products with recycled content. The resource covers 10 product categories, including sample specifications, state contracts, and links to other sustainable purchasing guides.



"Recycling businesses provide high quality jobs for North Carolinians and play a unique role in boosting the state's economy while improving the state's environmental and carbon footprint."

JAMIE RAGAN, DEACS DIRECTOR
DEACS

SUPPORTING CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVES



SUPPORTING SOLAR EXPANSION IN THE TARHEEL STATE

DEACS staff and NextEra Energy, Inc. worked hand-in-hand to facilitate the permitting process for a proposed 58-MW Blackburn solar facility planned for Catawba County. NextEra Energy, based in Juno Beach, FL, contacted DEACS requesting permitting assistance for its first venture into North Carolina. The regional Environmental Assistance coordinator (EAC) facilitated a productive permitting scoping meeting that included representatives from multiple DEQ divisions, the NC Wildlife Resources Commission, NextEra Energy, and Florida Power and Light. The scoping meeting was beneficial to advance the Blackburn solar project in a more streamlined and efficient manner.

- ◆ NextEra Energy is the world's largest solar and wind generator.
- ◆ Blackburn project will be its 1st in NC.
- ◆ Project will power up to 10,000 homes.
- ◆ As of spring 2022, they are in development/construction phase.



POULTRY PROCESSOR STRIVES FOR CARBON NET ZERO

The Pilgrim's poultry processing facility in Marshville requested assistance from Waste Reduction Partners to address a corporate net zero GHG goal by 2040. WRP engineers assisted Pilgrim's with multiple strategies as a roadmap toward this goal. The Pilgrim's Marshville site is evaluating additional energy efficiency approaches at the plant, such as co-generation, a photovoltaic solar farm and a biogas development proposal. Parent company JBS is committing \$1 billion to support GHG reduction projects globally.



The goals of North Carolina Clean Energy Plan and Executive Orders 80, 216 and 246 addressing climate change will require transformation in ways energy is generated and consumed in North Carolina. The DEACS teams are helping navigate the permitting process for renewable energy projects, supporting the recycling circular economy and providing direct technical assistance to help organizations meet their own de-carbonization goals. DEACS also provides support to the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina in the recruitment of clean energy businesses.

COMMUNITY RECYCLING REDUCES GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Using recycled materials to make new products reduces the need for virgin materials as well as the energy and greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) involved in extracting or mining them. The EPA has created a calculator to estimate GHG emission reductions due to recycling.

In just one year, N.C. local governments recycled 457,249 tons of paper, cardboard, metal cans, glass and plastic bottles and containers resulting in greenhouse gas emission savings of 1,215,790 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent.

457,249 Tons of materials recycled in FY 2021

RESULTED IN

1,215,790 Metric tons of GHG reduced

EMISSION REDUCTIONS EQUIVALENT TO



258,129 Gasoline-powered passenger vehicles driven for one year

OR



236,562 Homes' electricity use for one year

Calculated using the EPA's Waste Reduction Model.

SUPPORTING PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

DEACS STAFF PREPARES FOR ARPA PROJECTS

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 allocated \$1.9 trillion for COVID-19 relief and economic recovery projects. The State of North Carolina is scheduled to receive more than \$5.7 billion of this funding, over two

separate distributions. DEACS will provide permitting and technical assistance, as needed, for related stormwater, wastewater and public water system infrastructure.

- DEACS staff assisted in the review of more than 600 ARPA grant applications received by DEQ.
- Environmental Assistance coordinators (EAC) in the seven DEQ regional offices can provide assistance and facilitate scoping meetings.
- The EACs can help grantees navigate the permitting process.
- The EACs will work closely with the regulatory divisions, Division of Water Infrastructure and DEQ's Project Management Office to streamline the permitting processes to ensure ARPA projects meet federal deadlines.

DEQ REGIONAL OFFICES READY FOR ARPA-FUNDED STAFFING INCREASES

The regional offices have been preparing for the addition of time-limited positions to support the state's ARPA investments, specifically, ARPA-funded stormwater, wastewater, and public water system infrastructure projects.

DEACS office managers worked with DEQ Financial Services Division staff to surplus old office furnishings and electronics to create new work station spaces.

20 TRUCKLOADS REMOVED



72 NEW WORK STATIONS



WATER QUALITY COMMUNITY SUPPORT

PIGEON RIVER FUND

The Pigeon River Fund is an effective grant program dedicated to improving water quality, aquatic life, and related recreation and educational opportunities in Haywood, Buncombe and Madison counties. Created in 1994 as a federal licensing requirement of Duke Energy to operate the Walters Hydroelectric project, the Fund has provided \$8.5 million to advance a vision of continually improving streams and rivers for both economic and environmental objectives.

In 2017, DEACS' Alison Davison was appointed by DEQ to serve on the Pigeon River Fund Advisory Board along with Duke Energy representatives and other community appointees. In this role, she participates in site visits, provides permit assistance and regulatory guidance regarding grant projects, and evaluates applications for the spring and fall grant cycles.

PARTNERING TO PROVIDE WASTEWATER OPTIMIZATION TRAININGS

Waste Reduction Partners teamed with the Division of Water Resources and the EPA to deliver an 11-week training series for North Carolina Municipal Wastewater Operators in spring of 2021. The course addressed optimization of wastewater processes to biologically remove nutrients without capital investments — a process that also significantly reduces plant energy use and costs. The series had more than 200 registrants and provided 57 NC-licensed operators continuing education credits.



Melinda Ward, Wastewater Plant Supervisor, with staff from the Mebane Bridge Wastewater Treatment Plant in the Town of Eden. Mebane Bridge WWTP was one of four participating case studies visited during the 11-week wastewater training series.

The Pigeon River Fund spring 2022 award cycle provided a total of \$ 234,241 to the following organizations: Asheville Greenworks, The Conservation Fund, Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy, Haywood Waterways Association, Laurel Community Center Organization, MountainTrue, Maggie Valley Sanitary District, Haywood County Soil and Water Conservation District, Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation District, and Riverlink. Projects range from repairing failing septic systems of low-income homeowners, to stream restoration, monitoring programs and litter removal.



Asheville Greenworks' Youth Environmental Leadership Program (YELP) interns working on a stream cleanup project. Photo courtesy of Asheville GreenWorks.

THE DEACS TEAM

DEACS DIRECTOR

JAMIE RAGAN

DEACS ADMINISTRATION

GWENDOLYN PALMER

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

LAURA LEONARD

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSISTANCE SECTION

MARCIA ALLOCCO, Section Chief

DON BURKE, ESI/Technical Assistance

DAVY CONNERS, ESI/Technical Assistance

RON PRIDGEON, ESI/Technical Assistance

LISA SHANKLIN, ESI/Technical Assistance

TONY PENDOLA, Small Business Assistance

PAUL E. WILLIAMS, Environmental Assistance Coordinator, Mooresville and Winston Salem RO

ALISON DAVIDSON, Environmental Assistance Coordinator, Asheville RO

DAVID LEE, Environmental Assistance Coordinator, Raleigh RO

LYN HARDISON, Environmental Assistance Coordinator, Washington RO, SEPA

JONATHAN WATTS, Environmental Assistance Coordinator, Fayetteville RO

CAMERON WEAVER, Environmental Assistance Coordinator, Wilmington RO

CALEB GEMPERLEIN, ESI (2021 I)

BETHANY SUAREZ, ESI (2021 I)

TIM HAVENS, ESI (2021 and 2022 I)

EMMA MULLINS, ESI (2022 I)

SHRUSTI PATEL, ESI (2022 I)



Waste Reduction Partners staff, Mark Medlin and Dick Sloane, exhibiting outreach services at the City of Apex EarthFest on April 23, 2022.

RECYCLING AND MATERIALS MANAGEMENT SECTION

WENDY WORLEY, Section Chief

SANDY SKOLOCHENKO, Recycling Business Assistance

MIKE GREENE, Recycling Business Assistance

CHRISTINE WHITTMEIER, Community Technical Assistance

DAVID HANCE, Community Technical Assistance

CAROL ABKEN, Community Technical Assistance

ALEXA CHUMPITAZ, Graphic Design (T)

DELANEY KING, Research Assistance (2022 I)

ELISE TRAYWICK, Research Assistance (2022 I)



Recycling and WRP staff with DEACS providing on-site assistance at Unifi.

WASTE REDUCTION PARTNERS

TERRY ALBRECHT, Section Chief

JAN HARDIN, Land of Sky Regional Council

RUSS JORDAN, Land of Sky Regional Council

TOM KIMMELL, Land of Sky Regional Council

DEE HANAK, Land of Sky Regional Council

35 WRP STATEWIDE FIELD ASSESSORS



Raleigh Regional Office staff Cheryl Richardson recognized for outstanding service. From left to right: Secretary Elizabeth S. Biser, Cheryl Richardson, and interim Chief Deputy Secretary Bill Laxton.

Waste Reductions Partners' Section Chief Terry Albrecht was recognized with a Governor's Award for Excellence in the Human Relations category on October 26, 2021.



Tony Pendola, Small Business Ombudsman, received an EPA Administrator Award for Outstanding Accomplishments by a State Small Business Environmental Assistance Provider in May 2022.

DEQ REGIONAL OFFICE (RO) OPERATIONS AND ADMINISTRATION

SECTION CHIEF

EULA ALEXANDER

ASHEVILLE RO

LINDA STAMEY, Manager

REBECCA REAVES

STEPHANIE FRADY

DEBBIE RIGGINS

FAYETTEVILLE RO

LEE COTTRELL, Manager

MARISA LANKA

DEVEN WILLIAMSON

MOORESVILLE RO

ANGELA EDMONDS, Manager

CATHY SHIPP

DEBORAH LUCKMAN

SHERIAN BLACK

TRUDY MCNEIL

RALEIGH RO

SANDEE ROOF, Manager

BARBARA PARKER

CHERYL RICHARDSON

VALERIE EALEY

AUDREY HUNTER (T)

WASHINGTON RO

KELLY BULLOCK, Manager

BEA DILLON

MELANIE MCROY

KERI SPARKS

PAMELA CADE

DEBORAH DANIEL (T)

WILMINGTON RO

PATRICIA HAY, Manager

JAN DAVIS

LISA EMMONS

TINA BURD

SHAQUAN WALKER (T)

WINSTON-SALEM RO

SANDRA CASTLE, Manager

SHEILA MCINTOSH

PAYGE JORDAN

AURELIA BOSEMEN (T)

(T) = Temporary Employees

(I) = Student Interns

Staff listing as of June 30, 2022.



In Memoriam: The DEACS team mourns the passing of Lisa Elledge on March 13, 2021. She served in the DEQ Mooresville Regional Office.