FINAL BASELINE MONITORING DOCUMENT AND ASBUILT BASELINE REPORT LITTLE LICK CREEK BUFFER RESTORATION Durham County, North Carolina EEP Project No. 92542, Contract No. D13010S

Data Collection - January 2014

NEUSE RIVER BASIN Cataloging Unit **03020201**



SUBMITTED TO/PREPARED FOR:

North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources Ecosystem Enhancement Program 1652 Mail Service Center Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1652



February 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
Project Components and Mitigation Units Table	1
1.0 PROJECT GOALS, BACKGROUND, AND ATTRIBUTES	1
1.1 Location and Setting	1
1.2 Project Goals and Objectives	1
1.3 Project Structure, Restoration Type, and Approach	2
1.3.1 Project Structure	2
1.3.2 Restoration Type and Approach	2
2.0 SUCCESS CRITERIA	2
3.0 MONITORING PLAN	2
Monitoring Schedule/Requirements Table	2
4.0 MAINTENANCE AND CONTINGENCY	3
5.0 SITE PROTECTION INSTRUMENT	3
Project Land Information Table	3
5.0 ŘEFERENCES	4

5.0	
	APPENDICES
Appen	dix A. General Tables and Figures
	Table 1. Project Components and Mitigation Units
	Table 2. Project Activity and Reporting History
	Table 3. Project Contacts Table
	Table 4. Project Attributes Table
	Figure 1. Project Location
	Figure 2. Project Assets

- Figure 3. Monitoring Plan View
- Figure 4. Site Protection

Appendix B. Vegetation Data

Table 7. Planted Bare Root Woody Vegetation

Table 8. Total and Planted Stems by Plot and Species

Vegetation Plot Photographs

Appendix C. Preconstruction and Asbuilt Photographs

Appendix D. DWR Memorandum

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The North Carolina Ecosystem Enhancement Program (NCEEP) has established the **Little Lick Creek Buffer Project** (Project) located approximately five miles east of Durham in Durham County, North Carolina. The Project is located within the Upper Neuse River Basin Hydrologic Unit and Targeted Local Watershed 03020201050020. This document details riparian buffer and nutrient offset buffer mitigation activites within an approximately 12.14-acre easement.

The *Little Lick Creek Local Watershed Plan* (NCEEP 2006) project atlas includes this Project (called Butler Road) with identified stressors resulting from anthropogenic activities related to the conversion of 80 percent of the watershed to disturbed land use/land cover with impervious surfaces covering over 14 percent of the watershed. Water quality is influenced due to the watershed slope (6 percent), the presence of moderately erodible soils, and its location within the Triassic Basin ecoregion. This project was identified for riparian buffer and nutrient offset restoration opportunities to improve hydrology, water quality, and habitat. Little Lick Creek is on the NC Section 303(d) list of impaired water bodies, due to poor aquatic life ratings and low levels of dissolved oxygen.

The goals of the Little Lick Creek Project (Butler Road) address stressors identified in the Project watershed and include the following.

• Restore riparian buffers associated with Little Lick Creek, a UT to Little Lick Creek, and water conveyances flowing to jurisdictional waters on site.

The project goals will be addressed by the following objectives:

• Reestablish natural vegetation along stream banks and water by planting existing cleared/disturbed land and treating invasive species.

Project restoration activities were completed between November 2013 and December 2013 with invasive species controls ongoing. Activities included 1) removal and treatment of invasive species including rose (*Rosa* sp.), Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*), and Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*), 2) mowing and/or clearing of dense areas of loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*) seedlings and blackberry (*Rubus argutus*), 3) soil amendments based on recommendations from soil samples analyzed by the NCDA&CS Agronomy Division, and 4) plant community restoration. The implemented mitigation is as follows.

Mitigation Credits^								
Туре	Riparian	Buffer		Nut	trient Offset			
Totals	106,331 ft ² (2	2.44 acres)		221,429 ft ² (5.08 acr Nitrogen: 11,547	res) [minimum, see ** be lbs Phosphorous: 742	low] lbs		
	Projects Components							
Project Component/ Reach ID	Restoration/ Restoration Equivalent	Restoration Acreage	Mitigation Ratio	Pounds of Nitrogen Treated Over 30 Years	Pounds of Phosphorus Treated Over 30 Years	Comment		
*Riparian Buffer	Restoration	106,331 ft ² (2.44 acres)	1:1	**5546 lbs	**356 lbs	Invasive/nuisance species removal and		
***Nutrient Offset	Restoration	221,429 ft ² (5.08 acres)	1:1	11,547 lbs	742 lbs	planting with native hardwood trees.		

Project Components and Mitigation Units Table

^Calculated in accordance with DWR Memorandum (Appendix D).

*These areas are between 0-100 feet from top of bank and will either be used for Riparian Buffer Mitigation OR Nutrient pound reduction, not both.

**Additional nutrient removal potential if used in lieu of Riparian Buffer square footage.

***This area is between 100-200 feet from top of bank and can ONLY be used for Nutrient Offset pound reduction.

1.0 PROJECT GOALS, BACKGROUND, AND ATTRIBUTES

1.1 Location and Setting

The Project is located five miles east of Durham in United States Geological Survey (USGS) Hydrologic Unit (HU) and Targeted Local Watershed 03020201050020 (North Carolina Division of Water Quality [NCDWQ] Subbasin 03-04-01) of the Upper Neuse River Basin and will service the USGS 8-digit Cataloging Unit (CU) 03020201 (Figure 1, Appendix A) (USGS 1974). The project HU encompasses approximately 21 square miles and is largely characterized by urban land use. The Project drainage area, nested in the 700 square mile Falls Lake watershed, encompasses approximately 6.0 square miles at the downstream Project outfall. The Project drainage area is located on the outer edge of Durham with identified stressors resulting from anthropogenic activities related to the conversion of 80 percent of the watershed to disturbed land use/land cover and impervious surfaces covering over 14 percent of the watershed (NCEEP 2006).

Directions to the Project from Raleigh, North Carolina:

- Take Glenwood Avenue/US-70 West towards Durham
- After approximately 15.5 miles, turn right on S. Mineral Springs Road
- Turn left after 0.2 mile to stay on S. Mineral Springs Road
- The Project is 2.8 miles on the left; the access point is on Butler Road Latitude 35.9852 °N, Longitude 78.8208 °W (NAD83/WGS84)

1.2 Project Goals and Objectives

The Little Lick Creek Buffer Restoration Project is located in the Little Lick Creek Local Watershed planning area, which is nested in the 700 square mile Falls Lake watershed. The Project watershed is located within 14-digit Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) 03020201050020, which was identified as a Targeted Local Watershed (TLW) in the North Carolina Ecosystem Enhancement Program (NCEEP) 2010 *Neuse River Basin Restoration Priority* (RBRP) plan and is identified in the 2009 *Little Lick Creek Local Watershed Plan* (LWP) Upper Neuse Project Atlas (Butler Road).

NCEEP developed a LWP for the 21-square mile Little Lick Creek watershed area that included land use analysis, water quality monitoring, and stakeholder input to identify problems with water quality, habitat, and hydrology. The Little Lick Creek watershed is relatively undeveloped and in an active state of rural to suburban transition with agriculture, forestry, rural, and undeveloped land comprising over 50 percent of the land uses. Durham's laws zone this land for more intensive development; therefore, this land is rapidly being converted to residential and commercial properties. Little Lick Creek is on the NC Section 303(d) list of impaired water bodies, due to poor aquatic life ratings and low levels of dissolved oxygen as the result of trash dumping, poor maintenance of on-site wastewater treatment systems, small vehicle maintenance and repair operations, outdoor materials storage, grease storage, and wash water disposal.

The Little Lick Creek LWP project atlas includes this Project (Butler Road) with identified stressors resulting from anthropogenic activities related to the conversion of 80 percent of the watershed to disturbed land use/land cover with impervious surfaces covering over 14 percent of the watershed. Water quality is influenced due to the watershed slope (6 percent), the presence of moderately erodible soils, and its location with the Triassic Basin ecoregion. This project was identified for riparian buffer and nutrient offset restoration opportunities to improve hydrology, water quality, and habitat.

The goals of the Little Lick Creek Project (Butler Road) address stressors identified in the Project watershed and include the following.

• Restore riparian buffers associated with Little Lick Creek, a UT to Little Lick Creek, and water conveyances flowing to jurisdictional waters on site.

The project goals will be addressed by the following objectives:

• Reestablish natural vegetation along stream banks and water by planting existing cleared/disturbed land and treating invasive species.

1.3 Project Structure, Restoration Type, and Approach

1.3.1 Project Structure

A depiction of the project structure is provided in the Project Assets (Figure 2, Appendix A) and the Project Components and Mitigation Units Table (Table 1, Appendix A).

1.3.2 Restoration Type and Approach

Project restoration work resulted in 106,331 square feet (2.44 acres) between top of bank and 100 feet from the top of bank viable for either riparian buffer mitigation or nutrient offset mitigation (providing 5546 pounds of nitrogen and 356 pounds of phosphorus offsets over 30 years). Additionally, work between 100 feet and 200 feet from the top of bank will result in 221,429 square feet (5.08 acres) of nutrient offset mitigation (providing 11,547 pounds of nitrogen offsets and 742 pounds of phosphorus offsets over 30 years).

Completed project activities, reporting history, completion dates, project contacts, and project attributes are summarized in Tables 1-4 (Appendix A).

2.0 SUCCESS CRITERIA

An average density of 320 planted hardwood stems per acre must be surviving after five monitoring years in accordance with North Carolina Division of Water Quality Administrative Code 15A NCAC 02B.0242 (*Neuse River Basin, Mitigation Program for Protection and Maintenance of Existing Riparian Buffers*) (NCDWQ 2007).

3.0 MONITORING PLAN

Annual monitoring data will be reported using the EEP monitoring template. The monitoring report shall provide a project data chronology that will facilitate an understanding of project status and trends, population of EEP databases for analysis, research purposes, and assist in decision making regarding project close-out. The following table outlines monitoring requirements for this Project.

Parameter	Quantity	Frequency	Notes
Vegetation	8 CVS plots (see Figure 3 in Appendix A for approximate locations)	Monitoring Years 1-5	Vegetation will be monitored using the Carolina Vegetation Survey (CVS) protocols
Exotic and nuisance vegetation		Semi-annual	Locations of exotic and nuisance vegetation will be mapped
Project boundary		Semi-annual	Locations of fence damage, vegetation damage, boundary encroachments, etc. will be mapped

Monitoring Schedule/Requirements Table

Vegetation Monitoring

After planting was completed, an initial evaluation was performed to verify planting methods were successful and to determine initial species composition and density. Eight sample vegetation plots (10-meter by 10-meter) were installed and measured within the Site as per guidelines established in *CVS-EEP Protocol for Recording Vegetation, Version 4.2* (Lee et al. 2008) (Figure 3, Appendix A). Vegetation plots are permanently monumented with 6-foot metal T-posts at each corner, and a ten foot tall pvc at the origin. In each sample plot, vegetation parameters to be monitored include species composition and species density. Visual observations of the percent cover of shrub and herbaceous species will be documented by photograph. Baseline vegetation plot information was collected December 11, 2013 and can be found in Appendix B. Initial stem count measurements indicate an average of 496 planted stems per acre across the Project.

4.0 MAINTENANCE AND CONTINGENCY

NCEEP shall monitor the Project on a regular basis and shall conduct a physical inspection of the Project a minimum of once per year throughout the post-construction monitoring period until performance standards are met.

Vegetation

If vegetation success criteria are not achieved based on average density calculations from combined plots over the entire restoration area, supplemental planting may be performed with tree species approved by regulatory agencies. Supplemental planting will be performed as needed until achievement of vegetation success criteria.

5.0 SITE PROTECTION INSTRUMENT

The land required for the construction, management, and stewardship of this mitigation project includes portions of the following parcels. The State of North Carolina holds a conservation easement in perpetuity on all 12.14 acres of the Project area. The underlying deed is held by the Triangle Greenways Council (Figure 4, Appendix A).

Parcel	Landowner	PIN	County	Site Protection Instrument	Deed Book/Page Number	Acreage Protected
1		0851-03-33-3914				1.19
2		0851-03-33-1937				0.79
3		0851-03-33-2686				0.74
4		0851-03-33-1700				0.86
5		0851-03-23-9712	Durham	Conservation Easement and	007156 / 000758	0.91
6	Triangle Greenways Council	0851-03-23-9513				0.92
7		0851-03-23-9313				0.92
8		0851-03-23-9112				1.00
9		0851-03-33-0098		Right of Access		0.79
10		0851-03-33-1440				2.50
11		0851-03-22-6975				1.22
29		0851-03-23-6160				0.22
					TOTAL	12.14

Project Land Information Table

5.0 **REFERENCES**

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- North Carolina Division of Water Quality (NCDWQ). 2007. Redbook, Surface Waters and Wetlands Standards. North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Division of Water Quality. Raleigh, North Carolina.
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- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). 2012. National Hydric Soils List by State, North Carolina (online). Available: ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/NSSC/Hydric_Soils/Lists/hydric_soils.xlsx
 [January 18, 2013]. United State Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service.

United States Geological Survey (USGS). 1974. Hydrologic Unit Map - 1974. State of North Carolina.

Appendix A. General Tables and Figures

Table 1. Project Components and Mitigation Credits
Table 2. Project Activity and Reporting History
Table 3. Project Contacts Table
Table 4. Project Attributes Table
Figure 1. Project Location
Figure 2. Project Assets
Figure 3. Monitoring Plan View
Figure 4. Site Protection

Table 1. Project Components and Mitigation CreditsLittle Lick Creek Buffer Restoration

Mitigation Credits^								
Туре	Riparian	Buffer		Nut	trient Offset			
Totals	106,331 ft² (2	16,331 ft ² (2.44 acres)		106,331 ft² (2.44 acres) 221,429 ft² (5.08 acres) [minimum, see ** be Nitrogen: 11,547 lbs Phosphorous: 742		low] lbs		
	Projects Components							
Project Component/ Reach ID	Restoration/ Restoration Equivalent	Restoration Acreage	Mitigation Ratio	Pounds of Nitrogen Treated Over 30 Years	Pounds of Phosphorus Treated Over 30 Years	Comment		
*Riparian Buffer	Restoration	106,331 ft ² (2.44 acres)	1:1	**5546 lbs	**356 lbs	Invasive/nuisance species removal and		
***Nutrient Offset	Restoration	221,429 ft ² (5.08 acres)	1:1	11,547 lbs	742 lbs	planting with native hardwood trees.		

^Calculated in accordance with DWR Memorandum (Appendix D).

*These areas are between 0-100 feet from top of bank and will either be used for Riparian Buffer Mitigation OR Nutrient pound reduction, not both.

**Additional nutrient removal potential if used in lieu of Riparian Buffer square footage.

***This area is between 100-200 feet from top of bank and can ONLY be used for Nutrient Offset pound reduction.

Table 2. Project Activity and Reporting HistoryLittle Lick Creek Buffer Restoration

	Data Collection	Completion
Activity or Deliverable	Complete	or Delivery
Mitigation Plan/Planting Plans		April 2013
Pine Removal & Invasive Species Control		August 2013
Bushhogging		November 2013
Invasive Species Controls		November 2013-present
Planting		December 2013
Baseline Monitoring Document (Year 0)	December 2013	February 2014

Table 3. Project Contacts Table Little Lick Creek Buffer Restoration

Entre Elex Creek Buller Restoration				
Designer	Axiom Environmental, Inc.			
	218 Snow Avenue			
	Raleigh, NC 27603			
	Grant Lewis			
	919-215-1693			
Planting/Vegetation	River Works, Inc.			
Maintenance/Invasive Species Control	6105 Chapel Hill Rd.			
Contractor	Raleigh, NC 27607			
	George Morris			
	919-818-3984			
Baseline Data Collection	Axiom Environmental, Inc.			
	218 Snow Avenue			
	Raleigh, NC 27603			
	Grant Lewis 919-215-1693			

Table 4. Project Attribute TableLittle Lick Creek Buffer Restoration

Project Information					
Project Name Little Lick Creek					
Project County	Durham				
Project Area	12.1434 acres				
Project Coordinates 35.9852 °N, 78.8208 °W					
Project Watershe	d Summary Information				
Physiographic Region	Piedmont				
Project River Basin	Neuse				
USGS 8-digit HUC	03020201				
USGS 14-digit HUC	03020201050020				
NCDWQ Subbasin	03-04-01				
Project Drainage Area	6.0 square miles				
Project Drainage Area Impervious Surface	>14%				
Reach Summary Information					
Parameters	Little Lick Creek	UT to Little Lick Creek			
Length of Reach (linear feet)	1254	510			
Drainage Area (square miles)	6.04	0.27			
NCDWQ Index Number	27-9-(0.5)	27-9-(0.5)			
NCDWQ Classification	WS-IV, NSW	WS-IV, NSW			
Dominant Soil Series	Chewacla and Wehadkee				
Drainage Class	Somewhat Poorly to Poorly	Drained			
Soil Hydric Status	Hydric				
Slope	0-2 percent				
FEMA Classification	100-Year Floodplain				
Native Vegetation Community	Piedmont/Low Mountain A	lluvial Forest			
Percent Composition of Exotic Invasives	5.6				
Regulator	y Considerations				
Regulation	Applicable				
Waters of the U.S. –Sections 404 and 401	No				
Endangered Species Act	d Species Act No				
Historic Preservation Act	No No				
CZMA/CAMA	No				
FEMA Floodplain Compliance	No				
Essential Fisheries Habitat	No				





Sewer Easement (No Credit)= 0.50 acres

300

200



Mitigation Credits [^]								
Туре	Riparian	Buffer		Nut	trient Offset		1	
Totals	106,331 ft ² (2	2.44 acres)		221,429 ft ² (5.08 acı Nitrogen: 11,547	res) [minimum, see ** be lbs Phosphorous: 742	elow] lbs		
			Projects (Components				
Project Restoration/ Restoration Restoration Acreage Mitigation Ratio Pounds of Nitrogen Treated Over 30 Pounds of Phosphorus Treated Over 30 Years								
*Riparian Buffer	Restoration	106,331 ft ² (2.44 acres)	1:1	**5546 lbs	**356 lbs	Invasive/nuisance species removal and		
***Nutrient Offset	Restoration	221,429 ft ² (5.08 acres)	x) 1:1 11,547 lbs 742 lbs hardy			planting with nat hardwood tree	tive s.	
 ^Calculated in accordance with DWR Memorandum (Appendix D). *These areas are between 0-100 feet from top of bank and will either be used for Riparian Buffer Mitigation OR Nutrient pound reduction, not both. **Additional nutrient removal potential if used in lieu of Riparian Buffer square footage. ***This area is between 100-200 feet from top of bank and can ONLY be used for Nutrient Offset pound reduction. 								
0 1 1 1 4	- Contine			A STAT				
Dwn. by. KRJ/CLF/PHP FIGURE								



PROJECT ASSETS LITTLE LICK CREEK PROJECT Durham County, North Carolina

0

50

100

Dwn. by. KRJ/CLF/PHP	FIGURE
Date: January 2014	2
EEP Project: 92542	

Feet

400



	Axiom Environmental	CURRENT CONDITION PLAN VIEW	Dwn. by. KRJ	FIGURE
	Raleigh, NC 27603 (919) 215-1693	LITTLE LICK CREEK SITE Durham County, North Carolina	Date: January 2014	3
Axiom Environmental, Inc.			Project: 12-025	



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Appendix B. Vegetation Data

Table 7. Planted Woody VegetationTable 8. Total Planted and All Stems by Plot and SpeciesVegetation Plot Photographs

 Table 7. Planted Bare Root Woody Vegetation

Species	Quantity
American sycamore (Platanus occidentalis)	504
Green ash (Fraxinus pennsylvanica)	466
Hackberry (Celtis laevigata)	56
Red maple (Acer rubrum)	277
River birch (Betula nigra)	458
Swamp chestnut oak (Quercus michauxii)	310
Tulip Poplar (Liriodendron tulipifera)	429
Water oak (Quercus nigra)	300
Willow oak (Quercus phellos)	254
TOTAL	3054

Table 8. Total and Planted Stems by Plot and SpeciesEEP Project Code 92542. Project Name: Little Lick Creek

				Current Plot Data (MY0 2013) A						Ann	Annual Means																			
			925	542-01-	0001	92542-01-0002				92542-01-0003			92542-01-0004			92542-01-0005			92542-01-0006			92542-01-0007			92542-01-0008			MY0 (2013)		
Scientific Name	Common Name	Species Type	PnoLS	P-all	Т	PnoLS	P-all	Т	PnoLS	P-all	Т	PnoLS	P-all	Т	PnoLS	P-all	Т	PnoL	6 P-all	Т	PnoLS	6 P-all	Т	PnoLS	P-all	Т	PnoLS	P-all	Т	
Acer rubrum	red maple	Tree								1 1		L 2	2 2	2 2	2	3 3	3					1 1	1 1				7	7	7	
Betula nigra	river birch	Tree				1	. 1	L 1		1 4	Ļ 4	1				L 1	1					2 2	2 2	2 4	4 4	4 4	12	12	12	
Fraxinus pennsylvanica	green ash	Tree	g	9 9) 9	2	2	2 2	2	1 1		L				L 1	1		4 4	. 4	ŀ			6	6 6	6 6	5 23	23	23	
Liriodendron tulipifera	tuliptree	Tree				1	. 1	L 1	L										3 3	3	3	2 2	2 2	2 2	2 2	2 2	2 8	8	8	
Platanus occidentalis	American sycamore	Tree	1	1	. 1					2 2	2 2	2				2 2	2		1 1	. 1	. 4	4 4	1 4	۱ I	. 1	. 1	. 11	11	11	
Quercus michauxii	swamp chestnut oak	Tree	7	7 7	' 7	2	2	2 2	2			2	2 2	2 2	2	3 3	3		1 1	. 1		1 1	1 1	4	4 4	4 4	20	20	20	
Quercus nigra	water oak	Tree	3	3 3	3 3	1	. 1	L 1		2 2	2 2	2 4	4	1 4	-				1 1	. 1	-						11	11	11	
Quercus phellos	willow oak	Tree				1	. 1	L	2			2	2 2	2 2	2	1 1	1		1 1	. 1		1 1	1 1				6	6	7	
Ulmus alata	winged elm	Tree									-	L																	1	
		Stem count	20) 20	20	8	8	8 9) 10) 10) 11	L 10	10	0 10	11	L 11	11	1	1 11	. 11	. 11	1 11	1 11	. 17	/ 17	/ 17	'	98	100	
		size (ares)		1		1			1			1			1			1			1				1			8		
		size (ACRES)		0.02			0.02		0.02			0.02			0.02			0.02			0.02			0.02			0.20			
		Species count	4	4	4	6	6	6 6	5	5 5	6	6 4	4	1 4	. (6 6	6		6 6	6	i (6 6	6 6	5 5	5 5	5 5	5 8	8	9	
		Stems per ACRE	809.4	809.4	809.4	323.7	323.7	364.2	404.	404.7	445.2	404.7	404.7	404.7	445.2	445.2	445.2	445.	2 445.2	445.2	445.2	2 445.2	2 445.2	688	688	688	495.7	495.7	505.9	

Color for Density

Exceeds requirements by 10%

Exceeds requirements, but by less than 10%

Fails to meet requirements, by less than 10%

Fails to meet requirements by more than 10%

PnoLS = Planted excluding livestakes

P-all = Planting including livestakes

T = All planted and natural recruits including livestakes

T includes natural recruits

Little Lick Creek (Butler Road) Baseline Vegetation Monitoring Photographs Taken December 2013



















Appendix C. Preconstruction and Asbuilt Photographs

Preconstruction Photographs Taken January 2013



Asbuilt Photo Point Photographs Taken December 2013









Appendix D. DWR Memorandum



North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Pat McCrory Governor Division of Water Resources Water Quality Programs Thomas A. Reeder Director

John E. Skvarla, III Secretary

August 9, 2013

MEMORANDUM

- To: N.C. Ecosystem Enhancement Program
- From: Tom Reeder
- Subject: DWR responses to the EEP document "*Reforms needed immediately in the regulation of riparian buffer mitigation*"

On August 2, 2013, the Division of Water Resources (DWR) received a document from the N.C. Ecosystem Enhancement Program (EEP) titled "*Reforms needed immediately in the regulation of riparian buffer mitigation*". Below is a short summary of each point raised in the document and DWR's response to those points.

I. Riparian Buffer Mitigation Widths – the Ironclad 50' Standard

There are two issues raised under this section: (a) provide mitigation credit for buffers wider than 50 feet and (b) provide mitigation credit for buffers narrower than 50 feet.

Response:

(a) DWR will approve mitigation credit for buffer widths in excess of 50 feet on a prorated basis, up to a maximum of 200 feet, including on pre-existing mitigation sites:

Buffer width (ft)	Percentage of Full Credit
50-100	100%
101-200	25% for area > 100 feet

1617 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1617 Location: 512 N. Salisbury St. Raleigh, North Carolina 27604 Phone: 919-807-6300 \ FAX: 919-807-6492 Internet: www.ncwaterquality.org



Example for restoration of a 1,000 linear foot stream segment:

(b) DWR agrees that mitigation credit should be granted for restored buffer widths less than 50 feet, however this would require a rule change. The draft consolidated buffer mitigation rule (15A NCAC 02B .0295) already has provisions for narrower buffers in urban areas and DWR supports expanding this to non-urban areas.

II. Riparian Buffer Jurisdiction – Map Jurisdiction.

There are two issues raised under this section: (a) the ability to conduct restoration or enhancement on unmapped streams and (b) the ability to conduct restoration or enhancement on all watercourses, including ditches.

Response for the Neuse, Tar-Pamlico, Catawba and Jordan:

Under the current buffer mitigation rules, applicants may "restore or enhance a non-forested riparian buffer..." A riparian buffer is defined within each of the buffer rules. Each rule has an applicability paragraph that defines where the rule shall apply (*e.g.* in the Neuse "*This Rule shall apply to 50-foot wide riparian buffers directly adjacent to surface waters in the Neuse River Basin (intermittent streams, perennial streams, lakes, ponds, and estuaries), excluding wetlands.*") The rule goes on further to clarify that a subject feature must be depicted on either the USGS topo map or the NRCS soil survey and defines the Zones of the riparian buffer.

To allow buffer mitigation to occur on non-subject features requires a rule change. DWR does support buffer mitigation on unmapped streams, and the draft consolidated buffer mitigation rule (15A NCAC 02B .0295) already has language to allow for this.

Response for Randleman:

Under the current Randleman buffer mitigation rules, applicants may "restore or enhance a non-forested riparian buffer..." A riparian buffer is defined within the Randleman rules to include unmapped features, as well as ditches or manmade conveyances that "deliver untreated stormwater runoff from an adjacent source directly to an intermittent or perennial stream are subject to the Rule."

DWR will continue to allow buffer mitigation to occur in the Randleman watershed on unmapped features as well as ditches or manmade conveyances that meet the rule.

Response for Goose Creek:

Under the current Goose Creek buffer mitigation rules, unmapped streams may be used to provide buffer mitigation, as well as first order ephemeral streams that discharge/outlet into intermittent or perennial streams.

III. Riparian Buffer Jurisdiction – Stream Calls on Mapped Streams

The issues raised under this section focus on the requirement to have a stream determination made by DWR staff. More specifically, there is a concern that the stream method is not appropriate for modified natural streams that may be severely degraded and that these streams are not eligible for mitigation.

Response:

• DWR will allow all subject streams to be eligible for riparian buffer mitigation.

IV. Restoration Success Criteria – Native Hardwood Trees

The issues raised under this section focus on the requirement to plant a minimum of at least two native hardwood tree species and the current DWR practice of not allowing Sweet Gum or Red Maple to be counted towards meeting this requirement.

Response:

• DWR agrees that as written, the use of Sweet Gum and Red Maple counts towards meeting the minimum requirement of the rule. Mitigation providers will be expected to meet planting criteria established by the IRT in buffer areas that are part of a stream mitigation site.

V. Restoration Success Criteria – Planted Stems

The issues raised under this section focus on the requirement to plant 320 trees per acre and the statement that DWR does not count trees derived from existing seed sources, planted seeds, stump sprouts or other volunteer species towards meeting that 320 requirement.

Response:

• DWR agrees that using 260 stems per acre at the end of the monitoring period would provide more consistency with the federal performance standards for stream and wetland projects; however this would require a rule change. The draft consolidated buffer mitigation rule (15A NCAC 02B .0295) has already incorporated this change.

DWR staff will continue to consider the presence of woody volunteers during closeout of buffer sites.

VI. Restoration and Enhancement Criteria – Measuring Density

The issues raised under this section focus on tree density for determining restoration or enhancement. More specifically, the issues include the inconsistency among rules, the lack of clarity on how to measure density which has resulted in inconsistent calls among DWR staff, and the use of a tree's dripline.

Response:

• DWR agrees that the inconsistency among rules has created confusion and inconsistency in implementation; however this would require a rule change to be consistent among all six rules. The draft consolidated buffer mitigation rule (15A NCAC 02B .0295) has definitions for restoration, enhancement and preservation, which were written to provide clarity and predictability while still allowing DWR staff to use best professional judgment in evaluating potential mitigation sites based on their many years of experience.

In the Jordan and Randleman watersheds, the rules allow for restoration on sites with fewer than 100 trees/acre and enhancement on sites with between 100 and 200 trees. In these two watersheds, DWR will accept established forestry protocols (e.g. fixed radius plot sampling) to be used to determine existing tree densities in any non-forested buffer area. Sufficient numbers of plots should be used to accurately assess stem densities and delineate areas of the site with varying densities. Plot data should not be averaged to determine an overall stem density unless the site is fairly homogeneous in terms of vegetative coverage. Existing forested areas should be delineated out and not included in stem density calculations. DWR has not considered the drip line to represent the outer edge of a wooded area for several years and will not consider it in the future. Existing wooded areas should be delineated at the trunks of the outer edge of the areas.