



2025 Climate Strategy Report

Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

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Introduction

About the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

The North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) manages, promotes, and enhances the things that people love about North Carolina – its diverse arts and culture, rich history, libraries, and spectacular natural areas. Through its programs, the Department enhances education, stimulates economic development, improves public health, expands accessibility, and strengthens community resiliency.

DNCR manages over 100 locations across the state, including 28 historic sites, eight history museums, two art museums, five science museums, four aquariums, 35 state parks, four recreation areas, dozens of state trails and natural areas, the North Carolina Zoo, the State Library, the State Archives, the N.C. Arts Council, the North Carolina Music Office, the African American Heritage Commission, the American Indian Heritage Commission, the State Historic Preservation Office, the Office of State Archaeology, the Highway Historical Markers program, the N.C. Land and Water Fund, and the Natural Heritage Program. These programs and places unite North Carolinians, create a shared identity, and provide common ground.

Department of Natural and Cultural Resources' Vulnerabilities to Climate Change

Impacts of a changing climate are evident across the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources' many sites, from mountainous state parks to our aquariums along the coast. The vulnerabilities faced by each site are unique, both based on geographic region and the site's specific purpose, but one thing is clear: climate change impacts are universally felt across our state.

Climate change negatively impacts DNCR sites through increased staff time and funding needed for storm preparation, recovery, and repairs to property and buildings, review and revision of disaster plans, and making changes to protect assets from future damages. As an example, Hurricane Helene resulted in months-long site closures and caused catastrophic damage to buildings, roads, equipment, trails, streams, and trees on DNCR properties. The growing frequency and intensity of wildfires is also an indication of climate change in our state. In addition, with a warmer climate, invasive species are moving into North Carolina, harming native plants and wildlife in state parks and natural areas.

Climate change also affects our visitors, the communities we serve, and our cultural and archival resources. As the most public-facing agency in the state, our site visitation is often impacted by the weather and shifting climate patterns. Hurricanes, heavy precipitation, heat waves, and other climatic impacts can decrease visitation (ex: site closures during storms and recovery periods, or due to more extreme temperature highs and lows) and require staff to change strategies on which natural areas our parks and conservation division prioritize for protection. One might immediately think about state parks and extreme heat illnesses, which is an issue park staff frequently encounter. However, the scale of possible impacts is far wider. For example, our coastal aquariums often receive higher visitation on rainy

days, but during a drought, those attendance numbers (and thus our revenue) go down. In a state park or recreation area, lake water levels might be too low for use in summer drought conditions. Cultural and archival resources such as state and local historic sites, museums, and archival collections are irreplaceable, making those located near the coast vulnerable to sea level rise and the increasing frequency and severity of heavy precipitation and flooding.

DNCR is active across all 100 counties in North Carolina, and resources are limited. The threats of climate change impacts and risks are growing, increasing pressures on the department's finances, staff capacities, and mission.

[Department of Natural and Cultural Resources' Approach to Fulfilling the Strategies in the Climate Risk Assessment and Resilience Plan](#)

Sustainability and climate resilience are key to DNCR's mission to enrich people's lives through education and stewardship of North Carolina's natural and cultural resources. To implement the strategies from the Climate Risk Assessment and Resilience plan, DNCR has pursued several measures over the past year, including those related to building modifications, constituent education, protecting essential records, and disaster response programs. Many of those strategies are outlined in the report. Our agency also coordinates a DNCR Green Team that meets every other month and includes representation from many of our divisions. This group works to organize site-specific and agency-wide sustainability initiatives. In addition, several of our sites run their own green teams to organize internal environmental stewardship efforts.

In DNCR's 2025-2029 Strategic Plan, our Goal 5 is to "support western North Carolina's recovery from Hurricane Helene and integrate climate resilience from future disasters and preservation of natural and working lands throughout DNCR programs and operations." Within that goal, we have multiple objectives and performance measures outlining strategies to evaluate climate hazards and manage resilience and adaptation. We look forward to implementing and tracking these measures throughout the next few years.

[Department of Natural and Cultural Resources' Progress Toward Reducing Emissions](#)

DNCR has an Energy Manager within our Capital Projects division. Our most recent data to report is a reduction in FY24/25 total energy usage (BTU) by 41.5% from our baseline, which is FY02/03. Energy reduction across our 100 sites is an ongoing priority for our agency, whether that's within our site infrastructure or through employee practices, like encouraging staff to turn off computers in the evening. When we renovate or replace something, it is always our goal to replace it with a more energy efficient unit. This includes switching to LED lights, water fixtures with low flows, tanked water heaters switching to tankless, backup generators switching from diesel fuel to natural or propane gas, and updating HVAC to more efficient systems. The same approach is used with new facilities that are under construction.

Goals, Strategies, and Actions

1.0. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions

1.1 Reduce energy consumption per square foot in state-owned buildings by at least 40% from fiscal year 2002-2003 levels

In 2025, DNCR met the Executive Order 80 target to reduce energy consumption per square foot in DNCR-owned buildings by at least 40% from fiscal year 2002-2003 levels. The FY24/25 total energy usage (BTU) data showed a 41.5% energy consumption reduction from the baseline. Although the goal has been met, DNCR will continue to reduce energy consumption. Examples of these strategies are listed below.

1.1.1 Energy reduction at NC Museum of Natural Sciences

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

Through the NC Museum of Natural Sciences' Green Team and Facilities Management, the museum actively works to continually reduce energy consumption. Activities include continually retrofitting light sensors to be motion activated and replacing all lights with LEDs. These actions will continue along with implementing other energy efficiency and reduction of resource use activities.

1.1.2 Reduce NC Zoo's energy consumption

Status: Underway

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

The Zoo is actively working to reduce energy consumption across our facilities. In 2025 all CFL bulbs in the main Zoo administration building were replaced with LEDs with variable power consumption settings to allow further reduction of energy consumption beyond that of a traditional LED bulb.

1.1.3 Support sustainable energy sources at the NC Zoo

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

As one of the Randolph Electric Membership Cooperative's largest consumers, the North Carolina Zoo encourages additional purchases from carbon-neutral sources. Currently, 60% of all energy purchased from REMC is derived from carbon-neutral sources.

The North Carolina Zoo continues work with Randolph Electric Membership Cooperative on an educational display at the Solar Pointe picnic kiosks and "Power Kids" exhibit near the Prairie Habitat inside the Zoo. These educational displays highlight the sustainable energy use at the Zoo and encourage guests to increase their sustainable practices.

1.1.4 Use solar energy at the NC Zoo

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

The North Carolina Zoo currently has 9,600 square feet of solar panels generating up to 104 kW/hr, enough to power 12 homes for a year. The current installation is grid-connected, so the Zoo receives cost-saving credits from its electricity provider (Randolph Electric Membership Cooperative). REMC can accept additional energy generated on site, or this may be used in-house to reduce incoming energy demand.

1.1.5 Make energy reductions at State Library

Status: Underway

Expected Completion Date: 2026

DNCR is working to replace fluorescent lights in the Government & Heritage Library stacks with motion-detection LED fixtures and add UV protection to all windows in the reading room.

Design is underway with construction starting in early-2025 and will be completed in 2026. As we continue the renovations in the Archives & Library Building, we continue to replace old fluorescent lights fixtures with LED light fixtures. We are looking to add the change out of the fluorescent light fixtures in the East Mezzanine to LED to match the rest of the Mezzanine already switched to LEDs.

1.1.6 Complete energy-efficient capital projects at the North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA) and NCMA Winston-Salem

Status: Planned

Expected Completion Date: 2028

Upcoming projects at NCMA in Raleigh and NCMA Winston-Salem will update buildings to balance HVACs and install LED and low-energy fixtures by 2028.

1.2 Support the use and expansion of energy efficient and clean energy resources

1.2.1 Use VW Settlement Funding for DNCR EV Charging Stations

Status: Underway

Expected Completion Date: December 2025

Several DNCR sites have received funding through Phases 1 & 2 of the VW Settlement – Level 2 Charge Program. The total funding from the grant is \$239,365 plus DNCR's match of \$323,385. The total is being distributed across the following sites:

1. NC Museum of Natural Sciences at Whiteville
2. Prairie Ridge Ecostation (NC Museum of Natural Sciences)
3. Umstead State Park – Crabtree entrance in Raleigh
4. Umstead State Park – Reed Creek entrance in Cary
5. Polk State Historic Site
6. NC Transportation Museum
7. Aquarium at Fort Fisher
8. Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores
9. Jennette's Pier (2 EV Charging Stations)

Currently, DNCR does not charge a fee for the use of charging stations. This project is under construction and chargers are expected to be completed by December 2025.

1.2.2 Acquire EV charging stations for the NC Aquariums

Status: Underway

Expected Completion Date: 2028

In 2022-2023 all three NC Aquariums added hybrid and electric vehicles (Chevy Bolt) to their fleet. Construction is underway to install publicly accessible EV charging stations at three of the sites, with the hope of eventually installing stations at all four aquariums. EV Charging Stations at Fort Fisher Aquarium, Jennette's Pier, and Pine Knoll Shores Aquarium were completed in late summer/early autumn this year (2025). Some functionality issues are still being worked out but are expected to be resolved by the end of the year.

1.3 Increase the number of registered Zero Emission Vehicles to at least 1,250,000 by 2030 so that 50% of in-state sales of new vehicles are zero-emission by 2030

DNCR focuses on reducing greenhouse gas emissions with Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEVs) and reports on them in Section 1.4 of this report.

1.4 Prioritize Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEVs) in the purchase or lease of new vehicles and for agency business travel

1.4.1 Purchase and lease ZEVs throughout DNCR whenever feasible

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

DNCR intends to lead by example to increase state employees' familiarity with Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEVs), prioritizing ZEVs and hybrids in the purchase or lease of new vehicles. DNCR also encourages employees to use ZEVs for agency business travel when feasible.

As an agency, DNCR owns 9 electric cars/trucks, 7 hybrid cars/trucks, and 11 electric carts. DNCR also leases vehicles from the Department of Administration, including 8 electric cars/trucks and 20 hybrid cars/trucks.

1.4.2 Use ZEVs at the NC Zoo

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

As of June 2024, the Zoo now has 61 fully electric vehicles, four gasoline/electric hybrids and two gasoline/propane hybrid vehicles. When looking at EVs only, 19% of the Zoo's vehicle fleet is now fully electric.

In August 2022, the North Carolina Zoo was awarded a VW-L2 transit vehicle grant. Administered by the Department of Environmental Quality, this grant funded the purchase of two fully electric Thomas-Built 44 Passenger Jouley Buses, along with charging infrastructure, to replace two older diesel shuttle buses. The buses were delivered in May 2024 and are operational, though we are relying on off-site charging facilities until our in-house charging facility is completed. The whole system – both buses and chargers – will be completed and fully operational in 2026.

1.5 Initiate other initiatives to decarbonize the transportation sector

1.5.1 Pilot EV Tractor at the NC Zoo and Promote its Use Through the NC Electric Membership Cooperative

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

In 2024, in cooperation with the North Carolina Electric Membership Cooperative, the Zoo conducted a pilot project to evaluate a Solectrac E25 full electric tractor for horticultural work on-site. That project is now complete, and the tractor has demonstrated it to be an effective and sustainable solution for several needs. It is currently regularly in use. Across the state, roughly 50% of North Carolina's population is served by an Electric Membership Cooperative (NCEMC), and the success of our test provides evidence of the suitability of electric equipment in the agricultural field. By participating with NCEMC and their constituent agencies, the coops can cite our study to encourage others to employ electric farm equipment wherever suitable.

1.6 Initiate other projects aimed at reducing statewide greenhouse gas emissions

1.6.1 Administer the Atlantic Conservation Coalition

Status: Underway

Expected Completion Date: September 2029

The Atlantic Conservation Coalition (ACC) is a \$421 million grant under the Environmental Protection Agency's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant program administered by DNCR. The program will fund nature-based projects that will sequester an estimated 27 million metric tons of CO₂ by 2050 across North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland by 2050.

For more information, see Action 2.4.1 below.

1.6.2 Waste Reduction at NC Museum of Natural Sciences

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

New for 2025, NC Museum of Natural Sciences implemented a waste diversion system for Birthday Parties, Summer Camps, and Curiosity Classes with compost, container recycling, and paper recycling. Birthday Parties also started providing all compostable tableware. The Museum also joined the Environmental Stewardship Initiative and had waste, energy, and water assessments completed. We partnered with a local artist who uses Techno Trash in his art to divert our Techno Trash from the landfill. Other efforts include composting and vermicomposting waste, including restaurant locations using reusable or compostable plates and installing water bottle refilling stations.

2.0. Increase statewide resilience to the impacts of climate change

2.1 Evaluate the impacts of climate change on the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources' programs and operations

2.1.1 Complete the NC Shorescape Archaeological Survey

Status: Completed

Completion Date: January 2025

In FY2023-2025, the Office of State Archaeology (OSA) undertook a North Carolina Shorescape Survey to identify and document archeological resources within state-owned and managed lands in multiple coastal counties (Beaufort, Bertie, Brunswick, Carteret, Craven, Dare, Hyde, New Hanover, Onslow, Pamlico, Pender, and Tyrrell) that are most at risk of being damaged by storm events. The focus is on identifying and documenting terrestrial and underwater sites within 200 ft (60 meters) of each side of the shoreline. The Shorescape Survey project particularly aimed to characterize and evaluate the impacts of Hurricanes Florence and Michael on archaeological resources.

Survey projects are now complete, having surveyed 36.4 miles over 1,126 acres of shoreline and 212.2 linear miles of submerged bottomlands. These surveys allowed OSA to determine the location and extent of shoreline archaeological resources, the conditions of these sites and their associated shorelines, the historical significance of these resources, and management strategies to preserve these shoreline archaeological resources. The project also furthered the ongoing effort to digitize existing paper records.

Specifically, the shoreline stability assessment combined field observations with a digital assessment to determine average erosion rates and potential inundation under different short-term sea level rise scenarios. The management recommendations stemming from this project cover site-specific recommendations and regional recommendations. At the site-specific scale, management recommendations include continued monitoring and documentation of sites and any changes, communication with agencies and tribes concerning specific areas and sites on next steps, and potential nature-based solutions to shoreline stabilization. At a regional level, management strategies include prioritizing site monitoring and site discovery, developing partnerships to conduct new research and test nature-based solutions at shorelines sites, and developing agency and citizen science training programs to garner support and assistance in completing monitoring activities.

2.1.2 Inventory and monitor state nature preserves

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

Field Biologists monitor rare species as they conduct biological inventories of lands under consideration for protection as state nature preserves. Special attention is paid to species and habitats that are most vulnerable to a changing climate and natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, and landslides. During the field season of 2024, Natural Heritage Program (NHP) staff worked closely with NC Department of Public Safety, NC Wildlife Resources Commission, and NC Plant Conservation Program to survey natural areas and propose new state nature preserves on state-owned land.

Last year, the Natural Heritage Program surveyed recently acquired lands at Brogden Bottomlands (Johnston), Grandfather Mountain State Park (Avery), Lake Waccamaw State Park (Columbus), Maggie Valley Sanitary District (Haywood), and Mayo River State Park (Rockingham), as well as many additional sites.

During the upcoming year, the Natural Heritage Program plans to survey lands at Green Swamp Game Land (Brunswick), Sandhills Game Land (Scotland), Shoebuckle State Forest (Stokes), Thurmond Chatham Game Land (Wilkes), Weymouth Woods State Natural Area (Moore), and many other new and expanded state nature preserves.

In June 2025, the Natural Heritage Program published an update to the Natural Areas Inventory of Chatham County, which was originally published by NC NHP in 1992. With funding provided by Chatham County and permission from local landowners, NHP biologists surveyed 65 parcels totaling 7,575 acres. The final report identified conservation priorities and assessed threats from all sources including climate change, habitat fragmentation, and invasive species.

2.1.3 Conduct a NC coastal cemetery archaeological survey

Status: Underway

Expected Completion Date: January 2025

This study conducted by the Office of State Archaeology identify, document, and assess the condition of historical cemeteries on state lands in nine coastal NC counties. In addition to treefall and wind-borne debris damage, fragile and environmentally sensitive historic cemeteries and their features are under threat from erosion, subsidence, flooding, and storm surge. Particular attention was directed toward recording those cemeteries traditionally associated with enslaved and African American communities, which are underrepresented in state records.

The goal of the project was to complete a resiliency survey to determine what kind of impacts are found in cemeteries across the coastal region, to test landscape models for locating unmarked, poorly marked, and previously unknown historic African American cemeteries, and provide support for state land managers as they create cemetery management plans.

State lands were selected by examining hurricane impacts, flooding and storm surge models, environmental features, as well as number of historical and archaeological sites that may be impacted in future weather and climate events. Field work consisted of pedestrian reconnaissance surveys to document cemetery features and storm, environmental, and human impacts. Fourteen cemeteries and one site were recorded, and new information was added to the statewide cemetery survey.

2.2 Integrate climate change adaptation practices and resiliency planning into Department of Natural and Cultural Resources' policies and operations

2.2.1 Host the DNCR Green Team

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

The DNCR Green Team meets every other month and includes representation from many of our divisions. This group works to organize site-specific and agency-wide sustainability initiatives and recognize ongoing work. In addition, several of our sites run their own green teams to organize internal environmental stewardship efforts.

We have started a Sustainability Highlights section in the DNCR all-staff newsletter to feature staff and site projects that model our stewardship mission. We are also working to organize a 2026 statewide cleanup across our agency.

Information sharing through the Green Team and Sustainability Highlights allows for divisions across the agency to learn about and adopt best practices related to resilience and sustainability. All of these efforts seek to support our sites to plan for future climate hazards.

2.2.2 Release DNCR Sustainability Best Practices resources

Status: Ongoing

Completion Date: Ongoing

In early January 2025, previous DNCR Secretary Reid Wilson sent out a document to all staff titled “2025 DNCR Best Practices.” This document provided the following information:

- Internal definition of sustainability
- Office and site guidelines for sustainable practices and procurement
- Teleworking guidelines for resource conservation
- Native Plants Policy
- Creating site-specific environmental statements

This information provides a resource and encourages employees and division to adopt best practices into DNCR operations and activities and shows that support for adopting such activities comes from the Secretary’s Office. Moving forward, the DNCR Green Team intends to create more resources to host within our internal intranet and external sustainability webpage.

2.2.3 Enact and maintain the DNCR Native Plants Policy

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

To meet its mission of preserving the natural heritage of our state, the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources enacts the Native Plants Policy by using native plants at all DNCR sites and all project sites funded by the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF), unless otherwise excepted. This policy is reinforced by and supports the state-wide Native Plants Policy in NC Executive Order 305, signed in February 2024.

Two examples to highlight this policy: The NC Aquarium on Roanoke Island has an exclusively native plant Pollinator Garden which fulfills the National Wildlife Federation's Wildlife Habitat Certification, and Monarch Watch's Certified Monarch Waystation. Also, the Fort Fisher Aquarium expansion beginning in 2026 will only be installing native plants as per the DNCR Native Plants Policy.

2.2.4 Create and maintain a Seed Library

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

The State Library (SLNC) has created a Seed Library for public use, housed within the Government and Heritage Library (GHL) located in the DNCR building in downtown Raleigh. The SLNC Native Seed Library focuses on seeds for plants indigenous to North Carolina and the surrounding region. Native plants play a crucial role in supporting native species and maintaining the balance of an ecosystem. By concentrating on native seeds, the SLNC Native Seed Library aims to support the growth of plant varieties that existed in the region before European settlement. Native plants contribute significantly to the local food web and have beneficial relationships with native insects, microbes, birds, mammals, and other indigenous species. These native plants are uniquely adapted to the region's climate conditions, including sunlight, temperature, precipitation patterns, and soil composition. Native plants are central to promoting sustainable and resilient gardening practices.

Government and Heritage Library staff have promoted the SLNC Native Seed Library through outreach events and programming over the past year to increase awareness of the seed library and the importance of native plants. For example, GHL staff participated in the Coharie Seed Swap in April, tabled at the Durham Farmers' Market in June 2025, and collaborated with colleagues at the NC Museum of Natural Science to lead walking tours of the native plant gardens located at DNCR sites in Downtown Raleigh. At these events and others, library staff shared about DNCR, our native plant policy, the SLNC Native Seed Library, and other SLNC resources. SLNC GHL distributed more than 1,000 packets of native plant seeds during fiscal year 2024-2025. Many of these seeds were saved from the DNCR Native Plant Meadow located in front of the DNCR Building.

After collaborating with library staff, Umstead State Park and Grandfather Mountain State Park both launched their own native seed libraries, and rangers at other State Park sites are exploring hosting native seed libraries at their parks. We hope to see these efforts expand!

2.2.5 Complete stream restoration projects at the NCMA Raleigh and NCMA Winston-Salem

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: 2030

The NCMA in Raleigh is completing Phase 1 of its stream restoration project with a completion goal of Fall 2025. This phase stabilized the stream habitat on site and replanted the riparian plant community along a 2,000 linear foot section of the unnamed tributary. This restoration project will help reduce flooding and erosion downstream, improve water quality, and improve resilience to extreme weather events associated with climate change. The NCMA in Raleigh is now preparing the design for Phases 2 and 3 of this project. NCMA in Winston-Salem has received a stream restoration planning grant from the Land and Water Fund and has just identified its designers. In the next 12 months, we will implement Phase 2 restoration in Raleigh and in Winston-Salem.

Additionally, stormwater retention in the form of rain gardens was incorporated into the design for the capital improvement projects at both NCMA Raleigh and Winston-Salem.

2.2.6 Complete resiliency projects at Historic Sites to address hurricane damage

Status: Underway

Expected Completion Date: May 2025

Several state-owned historic properties have received federal and/or state funding, including Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund (ESHPF) funding to address damage from Hurricanes Florence and Michael and provide greater resiliency for projects underway. The properties include:

- Galen Stone Hall at Charlotte Hawkins Brown State Historic Site: Design and construction of slate roof repair and building foundation drainage systems to prevent basement flooding that the building experienced during Hurricane Florence. Project completed.
- Douglas Complex at Tryon Palace: Address damaged flooring and brick sheathing, mold eradication, and water runoff control. Expected completion in late-2025/early-2026.
- Harper House at Bentonville Battlefield State Historic Site: Installation of a state funded emergency generator to maintain power to the HVAC system during severe wind-driven rainstorm events will avoid future problems like the week-long period post-Hurricane Florence where the building could not be adequately dried out and developed mold and plaster issues. Repair damaged siding and windows and repaint exterior in documented historic colors. Harper House exterior repairs completed, interior plaster repairs completed. Generator project has been put on hold due to lack of adequate funding.

2.2.7 Complete the Living with Water Project: An Investment in Sustainable Coastal Resilience

Status: Underway

Expected Completion Date: Completed

Through a combination of over \$6 million in federal, state, and local resources, the Living with Water Project at the Battleship North Carolina Memorial on Eagles Island, separated by the Cape Fear River from downtown Wilmington, creates a sustainable and resilient improvement to the Battleship grounds. It incorporates a reconstructed marsh environment and an elevated parking lot with a bioswale that collects rainwater, holds it in an ecofriendly environment, and then discharges it into the newly constructed tidal marsh. The natural tidal marsh holds water in a pattern that mimics natural coastal marshlands. The project not only builds resilience to climatological impacts on the economic viability of the 100% fee-supported Battleship, it also helps preserve native species and supports local and migrating wildlife. The project has become a model for how other coastal sites nationwide can deal with sea level rise.

2.2.8 Protect and restore Historic Sites to be resilient to climate change for visitors to enjoy now and in the future while staying true to historical roots

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

1. Alamance Battleground Reforestation Project

Status: Underway and ongoing

Using a forestry management plan created by the NC Forest Service and advised by DNCR's Natural Heritage Program staff, the site is actively pursuing the removal of invasive species. A partnership with the Natural Heritage Program has resulted in a conservation plan being developed for the site, which is still pending. In 2024 approval was received to transplant ecologically appropriate trees across a one-acre test plot. These projects assist the site's environmental restoration and reforestation project that seeks to restore portions of the 100-acre site to its 1771 appearance. The project is still underway. DNCR has identified the trees to be removed and begun selective cutting. The team is exploring "Products of the Land" revenue from selective logging to continue process. These activities will increase the ecosystem's resiliency benefits such as flood mitigation and increase carbon sequestration potential of the land.

2. Historic Bath Shoreline Protection

Status: Underway

A bulkhead located along Bonner Point and Bath Creek protects the 1,180 feet of state-owned shoreline from erosion. The replacement of the 1980s seawall has been planned and is currently in the bidding process. The bulkhead project is still in construction with the majority of the installation completed. The division, Capital Projects, and the contractor are exploring change options to rectify a design issue that has created a ponding situation behind the bulkhead.

3. Bentonville Battlefield Land Acquisition

Status: Ongoing

Three tracts of battlefield property are currently in the acquisition process from the American Battlefield Trust. Once acquired, these tracts will be turned over to the state for management. These acquisitions will protect these areas from future development, preserving their carbon sequestration and resilience value. They include:

- Morris Tract – 34 acres, preservation underway and should be completed in 2026.
- Langston Tract – 89 acres, preservation underway and should be completed in 2026.
- Halliwell Tract – 70 acres, preservation underway and should be completed in 2026.

4. Bentonville National Park Service Cultural Landscape Report

Status: Underway

Bentonville Battlefield State Historic Site received funding from the National Park Service to complete a Cultural Landscape Report (CLR), covering 2,200 acres owned by the state. Restoring these farmlands to native forests will increase the ecosystem's resiliency benefits such as flood mitigation and increase carbon sequestration potential

of the land. The CLR will guide restorative work on key portions of the site and include recommendations on:

- Removing 40-year-old loblolly pine plantations and replacing them with native and historically accurate ecological habitats, including longleaf pine woodland and a Pocosin swamp – a naturally occurring, freshwater evergreen shrub bog. Native species will be favored for these activities.
- Determining feasibility of thinning existing forest to more appropriate period appearance exposing more original earthworks.
- Exploring strategies to transition any leased farmland identified as a longleaf pine forest during the battle back to forestland. The goal is to restore historic agricultural fields with forests.
- Collecting information for the original battlefield to update the three-decade old battlefield protection plan to incorporate the 2,200 acres owned by the state. Once available information is gathered and analyzed, optional treatments will be considered, especially restoration, and recommendations will be drafted to achieve the goals of the selected treatment.

5. Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson Shoreline Preservation

Status: Underway and ongoing

Wave attenuators have been installed on the banks of the Cape Fear River to protect sensitive, in situ Colonial-era archaeological resources and Civil War earthworks from wave action and hurricane storm surge. Completed phases are being monitored for outcomes under contract with the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. Results to date for prior phases are meeting or exceeding expectations with shoreline stabilization and regeneration as well as native flora and fauna returning. An additional \$2.5 million is being awarded through Congressionally approved Community Project grants, administered by NOAA. This grant funding will begin approximately in February 2025 and facilitate the installation of another ~1,000 linear feet of shoreline by January 2027. Environmental monitoring will be included.

The team just received funding for an additional 500+ feet of shoreline protection. The design-bid-build delivery method will start late this year.

6. Alamance Battleground Land Acquisition

Status: Completed

The division received funding from the Land and Water Trust Fund to purchase 2.35 acres of property from The Conservation Fund. The purchase will prevent further housing development and protect battlefield land, providing flooding resilience benefits and continued carbon sequestration from natural and working lands.

In 2023, DNCR purchased 2.9 acres from The Conservation Fund adjacent to the battlefield to mitigate further housing development and to protect battlefield land.

7. Fort Dobbs Land Acquisition

Status: Underway and completed

With funding made possible by the State Legislature, in 2023 the Friends of Fort Dobbs acquired the Wilson tract of six acres of forested property contiguous with the historic

site. This property will remain forested and a buffer to encroaching housing, providing flood resiliency benefits and continued carbon sequestration from natural working lands. The land is in the process of being transferred to state ownership. With funding from the Land and Water Trust a 5-acre property fronting Fort Dobbs Road to the west of Fort Dobbs State Historic is being acquired. The property is undeveloped acreage and has no structures. The land is entirely open field and grass and will provide a buffer for further development. This property also protects a portion of the 1761 skirmish site.

2.3 Assist the communities served by Department of Natural and Cultural Resources to implement climate change adaptation practices and resiliency planning

2.3.1 Provide support to local governments, state agencies, and higher education institutions prior to and in the aftermath of a disaster

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

The State Archives offers assistance and advice to local governments, state agencies, and higher education institutions regarding records management, resiliency planning, and best practices for disaster preparedness. Staff from the State Archives made site visits dedicated to disaster preparedness and essential records, as well as virtual consultations to walk agencies through small-scale disaster response procedures. Staff also worked with local governments and higher education institutions affected by Tropical Storm Helene to recover damaged records and transfer certain records to the State Archives for permanent preservation.

The North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office supports North Carolina historic property owners and communities engaged in resilience planning, disaster preparation, and disaster response with technical consultation assistance and advice. An existing specialized disaster readiness and response webpage was updated following Hurricane Helene. To aid in recovery, the Office also expedites reviews of hurricane-related submissions under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and NC GS 121-12(a). Members of this Office are also part of the agency's Cultural Resource Emergency Support Team (CREST), and are activated for emergencies affecting cultural institutions, including local history museums, libraries, and historic sites.

2.3.2 Fund land acquisition, restoration, flood risk resilience, innovative stormwater, and planning projects

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

The NC Land and Water Fund (NCLWF) improves water quality, sustains ecological diversity, and protects historic sites and military installations by funding projects to acquire lands, restore the habitat for fish, wildlife, and other species, and enhance the filtering of stormwater runoff to reduce pollutants from entering water supplies. In FY25, the NCLWF Board awarded over \$57 million in new projects. These projects include \$3.2 million in NCDEQ Flood Resiliency Blueprint funds for work specifically designed to increase community resilience to flooding while also protecting and enhancing natural resources. A complete list of funded projects is available here: <https://nclwf.nc.gov/2024-nclwf-awards/open>.

2.3.3 Offer a Hurricane Florence and Michael constituent subgrant program for historic preservation recovery

Status: Underway

Expected Completion Date: December 2026

The NC State Historic Preservation Office (HPO) received \$17 million in federal grant funding to provide recovery assistance to historic resources damaged by Hurricanes Florence and/or Michael that are listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The award allowed the HPO to make available up to \$9.25 million in grants for historic resources located in the 61 eligible counties in North Carolina designated by FEMA for disaster assistance.

The HPO submitted 22 constituent subgrant proposals to the National Park Service (NPS) for funding approval totaling \$9.25 million in cumulative assistance. Two projects were unable to finalize grant agreements, and the funds were reallocated to other approved projects. These projects include three planning projects and 17 brick and mortar projects. The planning and brick and mortar projects were approved by NPS in 2021. Subgrant work is currently underway with individual recipients through FY2026, following an extension for COVID delays.

A number of these individual subgrant projects have been completed and the remainder are underway with expected on-time completion.

2.3.4 Complete historic resilience planning project for local governments and statewide constituents

Status: Underway

Expected Completion Date: 2025

In collaboration with the NC Impact Initiative at the UNC School of Government and NC State University, the State Historic Preservation Office completed a landmark, statewide Historic Resilience Project to better link local disaster planning to historic resource resiliency planning and to create and provide training for state agency personnel, local governments, and non-profit historic sites in best practices for disaster preparedness and response. Project management and advisory group facilitation occurred between December 2021 and February 2024, and design standards were completed in 2023. Additionally, project partners completed a resilience scorecard to integrate hazard mitigation and historic resource resiliency planning. Disaster preparedness training began in November 2023 and continued into early 2025. Online training modules were completed in April 2025.

2.3.5 Provide trainings on identification and protection of essential public records

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

The Division of Archives and Records offered training on the identification and protection of essential public records to records custodians. In the past year, we have offered this training virtually three times and had a total of 198 attendees. We plan to offer this training again in the upcoming year and to continue to specialize this training for certain records custodian positions. During major weather events such as fires or floods that could impact buildings that store essential public records, it is critical that stewards of those records are trained to protect those files and improve resilience through protecting storage practices before these events occur.

2.3.6 Offer Cultural Resources Emergency Support Team (CREST) consultations

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

DNCR staff have worked on multiple fronts to address storm recovery and climate resilience. CREST maintains an active team with regular training. The 2024 annual summit took place August 26, 2024, and included a session with FEMA officials on Interagency Recovery Coordination and specific regional updates. DNCR deploys that team to help institutions statewide recover collections from all types of disasters, including Tropical Storm Helene. In the aftermath of Helene, CREST tracked damage to cultural institutions from the storm and provided support to four of those institutions. CREST is prepared to continue to respond to requests for help with both in-person and remote technical assistance. The 2025 annual summit will be held on August 25, 2025.

2.2.9 Recover from Hurricane Helene with resilience in mind

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

In our recovery efforts post-Hurricane Helene, DNCR staff have worked to recover and rebuild our impacted resources with resilience in mind. Responsible debris removal is important to NC State Parks staff that are stewarding our trail and park system, so as to not further damage existing habitats. Those overseeing our Historic Sites are seeking to preserve the stories and histories of lost resources during the flood. These efforts and more are ongoing and will continue as our state recovers from Helene's catastrophic damages. We're proud that all 18 of our sites that closed after the storm have reopened.

North Carolina's Natural Heritage Program (NCNHP) is entering into an agreement with the US Forest Service under the Good Neighbor Authority. Under this agreement, the NCNHP will partner with the Forest Service to assess impacts of Hurricane Helene on the unique biological and ecological resources of the Pisgah and Nantahala National Forests and adjacent lands with focus on documented rare species populations. The agreement will support six field biologists, one data manager, and one project coordinator (8 staff total) who will advance Forest Service efforts to assess and recover from damage from Hurricane Helene over a 10-year project period. Biologists will assess the status of rare and endemic plants and rare invertebrates identified in the Forest Plan's Species of Conservation Concern List, U.S. Endangered Species, or NCNHP Rare Plant and Animal Lists. These assessments will help to inform recommendations for habitat restoration and management actions. Under this agreement, the State may also work to identify and design restoration projects/opportunities and assist with implementation of recovery actions on the ground based on information from field assessments. Focal areas may include known species locations, sites where emergency actions are or were needed, and new areas identified due to storm impacts. Survey areas may include but are not limited to current and proposed Special Interest Areas; Natural Heritage Program (NHP) Natural Areas; areas where emergency Helene response actions take place; and current, historical, and high probability rare species locations, both on Forest Service and neighboring public and private lands, where the information may be beneficial for aligning work across boundaries.

2.4 Help complete initiatives in the Natural and Working Lands Action Plan and Executive Order 305, An Order to Protect and Restore North Carolina's Critical Natural and Working Lands

2.4.1 Organize and host stakeholder and steering committee meetings for Natural and Working Lands Action Plan updates

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

DNCR staff hold quarterly Steering Committee meetings to coordinate Natural and Working Lands Action Plan activities within and outside of state government. In 2024, these meetings informed the development of a report completed in October 2024 that documented progress on 2020 Natural and Working Lands Action Plan objectives. In 2025, input from steering committee members and more than 80 additional stakeholders was incorporated into the draft of an updated Natural and Working Lands Action Plan for 2025-2030. This updated plan, to be released in December 2025, prioritizes, streamlines, and incorporates additional objectives.

2.4.2 Administer the Atlantic Conservation Coalition

Status: Underway

Expected Completion Date: September 2029

The Atlantic Conservation Coalition (ACC) is a project funded with \$421 million under the Environmental Protection Agency's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant program. DNCR administers the ACC, which is funding nature-based projects that will sequester an estimated 27 million metric tons of CO₂ by 2050 across North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland.

So far, the ACC has supported the acquisition of 4,000 acres of land in NC and MD for peatland and forest restoration. The Nature Conservancy purchased 2,727 acres in Pamlico County, NC, for pocosin restoration at Light Ground Pocosin, contributing to Executive Order 305's restoration goal. A 1,273 acre Potomac Highlands tract was also acquired by TNC in Garret County, Maryland for forest restoration.

In the first year of the grant, efforts have largely been focused on building up our administrative team within the agency. We have started a new division within the Office of the Secretary at DNCR to coordinate the grant over its five-year distribution timeline.

2.4.3 Conserve natural lands with special focus on wetlands

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

The North Carolina Land and Water Fund completed 57 land conservation projects, investing nearly \$33 million in the permanent protection of 15,211 acres between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025. That includes state agency ownership of 3,391 acres for the NC Wildlife Resources Commission, 1,981 acres for the NC Division of Parks and Recreation, and 203 acres for the NC Forest Service.

The Natural Heritage Program worked with land conservation agencies to establish Dedicated Nature Preserves and Registered Heritage Area agreements under the Nature Preserves Act. Total acreage added to state nature preserves are shown below. Almost all new acreage includes a significant proportion of forested wetlands and floodplains.

County	Dedicated Nature Preserve	New Acres
Alamance	Alamance Battleground State Historic Site Dedicated Nature Preserve	45
Ashe	Pond Mountain Game Land Dedicated Nature Preserve	1,171
Burke	Johns River Game Land Dedicated Nature Preserve	2,877
Forsyth	Shallow Ford State Historic Site Dedicated Nature Preserve	125
Gaston	Redlair Plant Conservation Preserve Dedicated Nature Preserve	41
Henderson	Dupont State Forest Dedicated Nature Preserve	708
Henderson & Polk	Green River Game Land Dedicated Nature Preserve	99
Hoke	Samarcand Drowning Creek Dedicated Nature Preserve	55
Johnston	Neuse River Floodplain Dedicated Nature Preserve	22
Orange	Laurel Hill Preserve Dedicated Nature Preserve	12
Scotland	Sandhills Game Land Dedicated Nature Preserve	1,921
Transylvania	Headwaters State Forest Dedicated Nature Preserve	4,646
Tyrrell	Emily and Richardson Poyer Buckridge Coastal Reserve Dedicated Nature Preserve	255
Total		11,977

County	Registered Heritage Area	New Acres
Bladen	Horseshoe Lake and Marshy Bay Registered Heritage Area	3,089
Chatham	White Pines (James Camp) Registered Heritage Area	42
Jackson	Camp Merrie Woode Registered Heritage Area	264
Pender	Moores Creek-Deer Valley (Brown-North) Registered Heritage Area	130
Pender	Moores Creek-Deer Valley (Curriewoods LLC) Registered Heritage Area	147
Pender	Moores Creek-Deer Valley (Debernia North III) Registered Heritage Area	120

Pender	Moores Creek-Deer Valley (Debernia and Amy North) Registered Heritage Area	47
Pender	Moores Creek-Deer Valley (Wolfe Timber LLC) Registered Heritage Area	1,036
Rutherford	Davenport Road/Mountain View Rare Plant Site Registered Heritage Area	13
Total		4,888

2.4.4 Develop a methodology to update wetland mapping to estimate acres of wetlands that lost protection in 2023

Status: Complete

Completion Date: August 2024

NC Natural Heritage Program staff participated in the DEQ-led committee that focused on developing a methodology to update wetland mapping and estimate acres of wetlands that lost protection in 2023. The methodology for updating wetland mapping includes acquiring the best wetland mapping available in different parts of the state, combining the regional maps into a single basemap, then applying methods to improve the accuracy of the mapping. In accordance with Executive Order 305 Section 3a, DEQ provided a [Methodology to Update Wetland Maps & Determine Sackett's Effect](#) in a report to the North Carolina Governor's Office dated August 2024. This methodology aims to "update existing wetland mapping data for North Carolina that may be employed to estimate the number of acres of wetlands that may lose protections as a result of Sackett v. EPA, and the North Carolina Farm Act of 2023."

2.4.5 Identify baseline acreage of conserved and restored land in each National Land Cover Database Category in 2020 and update annually

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

The Natural Heritage Program assessed land conservation as of July 2020 to provide a baseline for measuring progress toward the Executive Order 305 goal of conserving 1 million new acres by 2040. Acreage of protected land in each National Land Cover Database category was estimated based on land transactions and county parcel data as reported to NC National Heritage Program. Staff analysis estimated that 4,198,871 acres were protected in the 2020 benchmark year, and an additional 219,595 acres were protected by June 30, 2025, bringing the total acreage of land and water protected in North Carolina up to 4,418,466. This amounts to 13.1% of the state, and includes land protected by local, state, federal, and private organizations. This analysis will be updated annually.

2.4.6 Publish Ecosystem Vulnerability Analysis, utilizing Natural Heritage Program data

Status: Underway

Expected Completion Date: February 2027

In October 2025, the Natural Heritage Program will begin updating their comprehensive review of projected climate impacts on North Carolina ecosystems, natural communities, and rare species using information published in the 2020 North Carolina Climate Report and NC Natural Heritage Program's natural heritage inventory database. Staff continue to meet monthly to review projected impacts on each ecosystem throughout the project period. In FY24-25, draft assessments were completed for approximately one third of the ecosystems, with expected completion of the remaining ecosystems by February 2027.

2.4.7 Identify boundaries of pocosins, Carolina Bays, coastal wetlands, mountain bogs, and sea marsh corridors

Status: Complete

Completion Date: February 2025

NC Natural Heritage Program staff participated in the DEQ-led committee that focused on mapping pocosins, Carolina Bays, coastal wetlands, mountain bogs, and sea marsh corridors. This effort was completed and submitted in [a report from NC Department of Environmental Quality to the NC Governor's Office dated Feb 12, 2025](#).

2.5 Initiate other projects aimed at increasing statewide resilience to the impacts of climate change

2.5.1 Acquire Lake Resse Shoreline for NC Zoo land management

Status: Proposed

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

The NC Zoo received a grant from the NC Land and Water Fund to acquire a 340-acre addition to the Ridges Mountain Nature Preserve. This parcel includes two miles of shoreline on Lake Resse and an unnamed tributary. Lake Resse is the primary source of drinking water for the City of Asheboro and is an impounded section of the Uwharrie River in the Yadkin-Pee Dee River Basin. By maintaining this property in its wooden state, the NC Zoo will help maintain part of the riparian buffer for this watershed, minimizing silt deposits to both the lake and river, and will reduce the potential for non-point source pollution to the watershed versus having this property developed into residential space. Avoided development provides flood resiliency benefits and continued carbon sequestration from forested lands.

2.5.2 Host hurricane preparedness workshops for NC Science Museums Grant Program recipients

Status: Complete

Completion Date: 2024

The NC Science Museums Grant Program held two regional meetings for 16 grant recipients in part to discuss hurricane and emergency preparedness and response.

2.5.3 Include climate education in professional development for teachers

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

DNCR's Teacher Ambassador Program is a professional development initiative that empowers North Carolina educators to deepen their content knowledge, build community connections, and amplify student learning through place-based experiences and interdisciplinary collaboration using DNCR sites. As part of the program, teachers engage in immersive sessions with institutions like the NC Museum of Natural Sciences, the Maritime Museum in Beaufort, and Bonehenge where they gain place-based insights into coastal ecosystems, climate resilience, and cultural heritage connections that they take back to their classrooms.

In 2026, South Mountains State Park will host a "NC Resiliency Kenan Fellow," selected from a pool of WNC teachers and who will help design a Teacher's First Responder Toolkit with practical resources to support schools in re-opening, recovering, and thriving after natural disasters. The Fellowship will be a collaboration between a WNC educator stationed at South Mountains, an eastern educator stationed at Core Sound Museum on Harker's Island, and a piedmont educator at the State Resilience Office in the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality.

3.0. Address the public health impacts of climate change

3.1 Increase understanding and awareness of the health impacts of climate change

3.1.1 Complete PATH – Parks and Trails for Health

Status: Complete

Completion Date: 2024

PATH (Parks and Trails for Health) was launched during COVID as an initiative designed to encourage physical activity in North Carolina's parks, greenways, and other outdoor spaces. It was an online campaign connecting people across NC to nature by promoting physical activity, fostering an appreciation for the life-sustaining role of parks and natural areas, promoting accessible experiences, and celebrating varied voices in the outdoors. The PATH initiative aligned with the strategic goal of helping people lead healthier and happier lives and helped promote under-utilized DNCR sites.

During 2023, we partnered with the Great Trails State Coalition to celebrate the Year of the Trail and held Trail Day events in all 100 counties. At the end of 2024, this program was sunset.

Although the PATH program ended last year, DNCR divisions continue to work to expand access to outdoor recreation. For example, the NC Zoo continues to encourage active participation in outdoor recreation, both within the zoo itself and upon the 10+ miles of public hiking trails built on our conservation lands. Employment of two Zoo Fellows allows additional guided hikes for youth and adults. Construction of three additional miles of trail on the Ward Nature Preserve began in March 2024 and is ongoing. These trails provide opportunities at the Ward Preserve for exploration of plant and animal communities and help the Zoo protect water quality in the headwaters of Bachelor Creek, a tributary of the Deep River / Cape Fear River Basin. Additionally, NC State Parks has a program titled “Strive for Access” that seeks to ensure that all North Carolinians have access to outdoor recreation within a 10-minute drive of their home. That initiative is baked into our new strategic plan and is framing our future efforts.

3.1.2 Conduct extreme heat messaging and awareness across DNCR sites

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

DNCR is actively engaged in educating our visitors on the hazards of extreme heat, especially at our sites that offer opportunities for outdoor recreation. As the most public-facing department in state government, it is our responsibility to inform our visitors about heat safety measures during the summer months. In May 2025, resources were sent to DNCR division leadership and communication teams that included a poster from the NC Department of Health and Human Services on recognizing and responding to heat stroke and exhaustion. This was printed and posted at DNCR sites across the state. We also promoted Heat Awareness Week (May 25-31, 2025) on DNCR social media accounts.

3.1.3 Initiate public health protection measures during extreme heat at the NC Zoo

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

With climate change increasing daily temperatures on average, Zoo guests are increasingly likely to experience heat-related illnesses while visiting the park. Rather than allowing this change to discourage individuals from participating in outdoor activities, the Zoo recently initiated several measures. There are four water bottle refill stations located around the park, which provide no cost access to drinking water. SSA, our food service contractor, allows guests to have their water containers refilled at all food venues at no charge. During the summer months, water stations are set up with iced water and shade for guests to the Zoo. Our ranger staff have retrofitted one of our Electric Golf Carts as a COOL Cart, equipped with water, electrolyte replenishment and cooling towels. These are staffed by our rangers who have been trained to recognize heat emergencies, providing an additional resource for visiting Zoo guests.

3.1.4 Increase drinking water access at NC State Parks

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

DNCR is working with NC Friends of State Parks, a nonprofit partner, to apply for a grant that would enable the installation of more water bottle refill stations within state park visitor centers. This commitment encompasses two goals: to keep visitors safe from extreme heat in our changing climate by increasing free, accessible drinking water sources, and to reduce our reliance on single-use plastics, thereby decreasing litter on trails and promoting environmental stewardship. Our shared goal is for every North Carolina state park to have a water bottle filling station within the next few years.

As part of a broader Plastics Reduction Initiative, DNCR is also piloting the sale of aluminum water bottles in two visitor centers: Raven Rock State Park and Umstead State Park. We hope to expand that pilot to more sites over the next year and ultimately phase out the sale of single-use plastic water bottles.

3.2 Initiate other projects aimed at addressing the public health impacts of climate change

No other initiatives applicable to DNCR.

4.0. Invest in communities to achieve climate and resilience goals

4.1 Increase energy affordability

This section is not applicable to DNCR.

4.2 Create clean energy and resilience related jobs and economic growth

4.2.1 Host NC Zoo Fellowship positions

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

Starting in 2021, the Zoo partnered with AmeriCorps to provide training and programs focused on the environment and climate change. With an AmeriCorps position no longer available to the Zoo, in 2025 we initiated a new Fellowship program to continue providing hands-on professional development for early-career conservation and education professionals while expanding the Zoo's outreach and stewardship efforts. Through these initiatives, to date, we have provided on-the-job experience and training to 13 early-career professionals. These individuals have delivered environmental education programs to nearly 1,000 students and led hikes, canoe trips, and community science events connecting over 1,000 members of the local community with nature. They have enhanced local habitats through pollination stations, rain barrels, and creek cleanups, while increasing public access by maintaining and developing over 13 miles of trails. Additionally, participants have contributed to scientific research through community science programs, combining learning, service, and conservation impact.

4.2.2 Hire staff to support the Atlantic Conservation Coalition

Status: Underway

Expected Completion Date: September 2029

As the agency administering the Atlantic Conservation Coalition, DNCR is working on staffing up the administration team overseeing the grant funding. Over the next year, we anticipate our internal team will grow to at least 14 full-time staff members and the program will support funding additional staff at other state agencies in Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina, as well as our nonprofit partners.

4.3 Alert residents and businesses of state and federal grant opportunities that advance climate and resilience goals

4.3.1 Support local preservation commissions' resiliency efforts

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

The Historic Preservation Office's federal Certified Local Government grant program funded an update to design standards for the local preservation commission in Beaufort to incorporate resilience measures into its oversight for alterations to local historic properties under its oversight and is encouraging other communities to seek similar funding.

4.3.2 Inform the public of grant cycle announcements

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

DNCR manages several annual grant programs for communities and programs in North Carolina. The NC Land and Water Fund (LWF) provides yearly grant cycle announcements via an email list that can be accessed on the website. NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF), and NC Land and Water Conservation Fund (NCLWCF) host their application information on their respective websites. These grants consider added resiliency benefits in their scoring rubrics.

Additional Information

Offer Climate Education Programming at the NC Museum of Natural Sciences

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

The North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences integrates climate education into public events (e.g., BugFest, Science Cafes, etc.) and recycling in public and staff-only areas utilizing graphics provided by DNCR. In 2025, Museum staff led a session at The Play Summit, “Implementing Waste Reduction Strategies in Informal Settings.” Staff also presented a Teen Science Cafe, “Clearing the Air: Misconceptions about Climate Change.”

Run the NC Museum of Natural Sciences Lunchtime Discovery Series

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

In partnership with NC Department of Environmental Quality’s Office of Environmental Education and Public Affairs, the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences hosts the weekly Lunchtime Discovery Series Webinar that includes presentations and public question and answer sessions on current science, conservation, environmental justice, and climate change topics. All sessions are hosted on the NC Museum of Natural Sciences’ YouTube channel.

NC Museum of Natural Sciences – Adopt-A-Stream

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

In 2025, the NC Museum of Natural Sciences partnered with the City of Raleigh’s Adopt-A-Stream program to adopt a portion of Pigeon House Branch in Downtown Raleigh. Over the summer, a team of Museum employees pulled hundreds of pounds of trash from the creek. Additional cleanups will be held at least two times per year.

Add an Environmental Education Center at the NC Museum of Natural Sciences Prairie Ridge location

Status: Underway

Expected Completion Date: 2025

The Museum of Natural Sciences is working on a new environmental education center at the Prairie Ridge facility in Wake County. The Center will aim to engage and educate visitors on environmental science and integrate the environmental science curriculum with the Museum’s other exhibits and overarching mission. Fundraising was completed in 2024 with plans to break ground on construction in 2026.

Composting at the NC Zoo

Status: Ongoing

Expected Completion Date: Ongoing

The Zoo continues to operate its multi-acre composting site, which processes approximately 1,800 tons of organic waste annually. The Zoo's composting efforts are complemented by our near-zero waster food service operations. Almost all food service items are either reusable or compostable, along with 100% of fryer grease from restaurants being recycled.