

NC COASTAL FEDERATION RESTORATION PROJECT:

## NORTH RIVER FARMS

The 6,000-acre North River Farms is located in eastern Carteret County. It sits astride Open Grounds Farm's southern flank and surrounds some of the North River's important creeks.

### The Problem

Over many years, agricultural runoff has polluted many of the creeks, feeding the bay and river with sediment, nutrients and bacteria. Too much sediment eroding from the land can cause turbidity problems, and sediment can smother important underwater plant and fish habitats. Soil can also carry fertilizers and pesticides into the water, creating over-enrichment of nutrients and the potential for harmful algal blooms and the resultant fish kills. Stormwater runoff that carries bacteria into adjacent creeks and sounds can create a health risk for those who eat clams and oysters from those waters. To avoid this risk, high levels of bacteria in the creeks require NC's Division of Marine Fisheries to close many of the shellfishing waters from harvesting.



### Building Partnerships for Restoration

Numerous state, federal, non-profit and private partners have joined efforts to preserve and restore North River Farms (NRF). In addition to purchase of the farm, the long-term plan is to discontinue farming operations, and to rebuild the wetlands to absorb pollutants and bring the creeks and the oysters they nurture back to health.

In 1999, NCCF purchased 1,991 acres of land at NRF for \$1,071,000 with a grant from NC's Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF). In 2002 NCCF purchased an additional 2,168 acres of NRF for



Cypress restoration at North River Farms

\$3,010,000 with additional funds from CWMTF. In 2002 private investors (1804 Wildlife Partners, LLC) purchased 1,435 acres of NRF with intended enrollment in the federal Wetlands Reserve Program, and a private mitigation bank company (Restoration Systems, LLC) purchased 385 acres of NRF.

Numerous granting agencies have participated in the restoration efforts of North River Farms. NOAA, EPA, US Fish and Wildlife Service, FishAmerica Foundation, NC Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Program, and North Carolina Wetlands Restoration Program are among the partners who have contributed to the success of this project.



View of Phase I restoration at North River Farms.  
Photo by George Howard, Restoration Systems, LLC.

## Timeline For Success

The North River Farms Project is the largest restoration project in the state's history and among the largest restoration projects in the nation. This project will be completed in multiple phases, and will reduce polluted runoff currently entering from North River, Wards Creek and Jarrett Bay watersheds.

During the next ten years, up to 5,100 acres of the 6,000-acre farm will be restored to wetlands. Phase 1 of the North River Watershed Restoration was completed in February 2003. The project

restored 250 acres of forested wetlands from prior-converted farmland, and 1.25 acres of brackish marsh. During 2004-2005, more than 120 acres of prior-converted agricultural land is proposed for use to create an enhanced freshwater stream and tidal wetland corridor for pre-treating agricultural runoff, improving water quality, and providing habitat area.



Volunteer planting

Working with the NC Wetland Restoration Program, NC State University, Duke Marine Laboratory, pre-and post restoration monitoring plans have been implemented for wetlands, hydrologic and water quality parameters. It is anticipated that long-term monitoring of this large-scale restoration project will provide valuable lessons in restoration design and strategies, and the viability of selected

site restoration methods to restore water quality and allow re-opening of closed shellfish waters.

The North River Farms Project will provide numerous opportunities for volunteer involvement and community education and recreation. Volunteers can plant native trees and wetlands with NCCF staff, or canoe along numerous creeks and tributaries that border the farm. When restoration of the site is completed, opportunities will be expanded for the public's use of the site as a passive recreational area, to enjoy the site as it may have existed centuries ago.



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## About the North Carolina Coastal Federation

The North Carolina Coastal Federation is the state's largest non-profit working to protect and restore coastal North Carolina. There are many exciting opportunities to get involved in restoration projects and help preserve our coastal environment. If you would like to support our efforts, please consider becoming an NCCF member. You also can learn about volunteer opportunities and other programs by checking out NCCF's website at [www.nccoast.org](http://www.nccoast.org), call 252-393-8185, or come by NCCF headquarters at 3609 Hwy 24 in Ocean, located between Morehead City and Swansboro.