

Protect Our Wetlands!

The Division of Water Resources is holding a public hearing on a rule that will reduce protections for North Carolina wetlands. Your voice matters!

When & Where:

Thursday, June 26, 2025

6:00–9:00 p.m.

In-Person:

Ground Floor Hearing Room, Archdale Building

512 N. Salisbury St., Raleigh

Register onsite starting at 5:30 p.m.

Virtual:

<https://ncgov.webex.com/ncgov/j.php?MTID=mc924957b9d3395883ef8e61c5eda6d54>

Meeting Number: 2425 792 4510

Meeting Password: NCDEQ

Phone: (415) 655-0003

Access Code: 2425 792 4510

Register by noon on June 26 here:

<https://forms.office.com/g/ApH3aQwDQg>

Who:

Anyone may comment. Speakers may be limited to three minutes.

How to Submit Written Comments:

Deadline: June 30, 2025

Email comments to: Sue.Homewood@deq.nc.gov

Use the subject line: “Wetland Definition Amendment”

Don't forget to cc your state legislators—you can find their emails [here](#).

What's Changing with Wetlands Protections?

- For years, North Carolina required a protective permit for development in all wetlands across the state - helping safeguard flood protection, clean water, fisheries habitat, and other critical benefits for North Carolinians.
- In 2023, the North Carolina General Assembly limited state wetland protections to only those that meet the federal definition of “waters of the United States.” Soon after, that federal definition was significantly narrowed, leaving several million acres of North Carolina’s wetlands unprotected.
- Now, the federal government may narrow the definition even further. Relying on this unstable federal standard puts even more of North Carolina’s vital wetlands—and the benefits they provide—at risk.

Why This Hearing Matters:

- This hearing is a critical opportunity to demand strong, consistent protections for North Carolina's wetlands and the communities that rely on them.
- While the EMC can't undo the 2023 law, it *can* send a powerful message to state officials: **the new definition puts millions of acres of wetlands - and flood protection, clean water, and wildlife they support - at risk.**
- North Carolinians must speak up now to show lawmakers the real harm this rule will cause and the need to correct it.

Giving Public Comments: Where Do I Start?

By forcing North Carolina's Environmental Management Commission (EMC) to adopt a rule that ties state wetlands protections to federal limits, the General Assembly is leaving valuable state wetlands vulnerable to being developed without the developer having to apply for a permit that would contain protective conditions. Here are a few issues that the rule will create and examples of why they may matter to you:

Issue	Why It Matters
Flooding: Wetlands absorb and slow floodwaters—protecting communities, especially after storms. One acre can hold up to a million gallons of water. Weakening protections puts more communities at risk.	<i>I live on the coast and have experienced severe floods firsthand, such as [describe your experience]. Recent floods have already caused massive property damage, loss of life, and business interruptions. To cast aside wetlands protections when flooding is on the rise endangers my community and exacerbates a problem we are already struggling to handle.</i>
Insurance: Private insurers are raising rates and sometimes denying coverage for homeowners in high-flood-risk areas.	<i>The premiums I pay for insurance on my house are already expensive; I can't afford higher rates, and losing coverage would be a catastrophe for me and my neighbors.</i>
Water Quality: Wetlands filter drinking water and help recharge groundwater aquifers.	<i>My household relies on groundwater. I worry that development and wetlands loss fueled by this revision will make my water more polluted and deplete aquifers.</i>
Seafood: Wetlands protect water quality vital to healthy fisheries. North Carolina's wild-caught seafood industry supports 5,500 jobs and adds nearly \$300 million to the state's economy.	<i>I make my living in the commercial fishing industry and am concerned that this rule will harm my business. I enjoy recreational fishing and don't want to eat fish from polluted rivers. I love to eat oysters and shrimp.</i>

<p>Irresponsible Development: Under the previous system, most wetland development required permits with basic safeguards to avoid or reduce harm. The revised definition removes those protections, allowing unchecked development and putting communities at greater risk.</p>	<p><i>I have witnessed how flooding gets worse when wetlands are drained, paved, or developed, like what happened when [describe your experience]. We need strong wetlands protections to make sure development is done responsibly and neighboring communities aren't unfairly forced to bear the burden.</i></p>
<p>Wildlife: Wetlands support wildlife that attracts tourists and hunters, especially in rural areas where seasonal income helps sustain local businesses year-round.</p>	<p><i>I am concerned about how reducing wetlands protections will harm wildlife because:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I enjoy recreational hunting and fishing,</i> • <i>I value wildlife and enjoy viewing it,</i> • <i>I make my living in a wildlife-based industry.</i>
<p>Spending: North Carolina spends millions on flood relief, but weakening wetlands protections undermines these investments and worsens flooding.</p>	<p><i>My local government has to spend a lot of money to address flooding as it is. We cannot afford to make this problem worse and more expensive by leaving our state's wetlands unprotected.</i></p>
<p>Lack of Stability: The revised definition ties North Carolina law to shifting federal rules, forcing residents to navigate constantly changing wetlands protections.</p>	<p><i>I own property with wetlands. I worry the revision will foster instability, making it difficult for me to tell when I need a permit to use my land. I prefer a clear, consistent permitting and mitigation system that covers all wetlands. Plus, once development occurs on these wetlands, it can never be undone, even if federal rules become stronger.</i></p>
<p>Lack of State Control: The revised definition hands control to the federal government, leaving North Carolina's wetlands protections to federal priorities—with little regard for the state's unique needs or resources.</p>	<p><i>I want North Carolina to have its own wetlands protections that fully reflect the unique and important role wetlands play in our communities and our economy.</i></p>
<p>Loss of Natural Resources: Wetlands are vanishing three times faster than forests, with eastern North Carolina's Cape Fear watershed among the hardest hit. The revised definition excludes unique wetlands like Carolina bays, pocosins, and cypress savannas—putting irreplaceable natural resources at risk when we can't afford further loss.</p>	<p><i>I care about conserving our state's natural resources and the valuable benefits they provide.</i></p>