



## N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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### STATE ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVE RECOGNIZED FOR INNOVATION, RESULTS

RALEIGH -- North Carolina's groundbreaking initiative to restore, enhance and protect the state's wetlands and waterways this week earned a national designation as one of the top new innovations in state government.

The Council of State Governments, a Lexington, Ky., organization that focuses on emerging social, economic and political trends, recognized the N.C. Ecosystem Enhancement Program in its 2005 Innovations Awards Program at a meeting in Mobile, Ala. More than 70 state-government initiatives around the United States applied for the awards this year, the 20<sup>th</sup> year that the CSG has sponsored the program designed to highlight efforts in the states to address trends in public policy. The awards are based on criteria including creativity, effectiveness, significance and transferability to other states.

"North Carolina continues to garner recognition for the Ecosystem Enhancement Program because our state's leaders had the vision to break the mold in how we balance environmental protection with responsible economic growth," said Secretary Bill Ross of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources. "The teamwork, innovation and partnerships that characterize EEP are a formula for success that benefits all North Carolinians."

Earlier this year, EEP earned recognition as one of the top 50 new government initiatives out of more than 1,000 applicants nationally from the prestigious Innovations in American Government Awards, sponsored by the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. EEP's work on a local watershed-planning initiative in the Pasquotank River basin also became one of eight winners in the 2005 National Environmental Excellence Awards from the National Association of Environmental Professionals

Established in 2003 under an agreement among NCDENR, the N.C. Department of Transportation and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, EEP works to offset unavoidable environmental effects on the state's wetlands and waterways from transportation-infrastructure improvements. The initiative works with local landowners on a voluntary basis on nearly 400 projects statewide to restore and enhance streams and wetlands.

EEP's partnerships with public and private organizations have resulted in the preservation of more than 30,000 acres of natural areas statewide since its founding, including almost 7,000 acres of wetlands and more than 130 miles of streams. EEP also has launched about 30 local watershed planning efforts across the state with local partners to improve water quality.

More information on EEP is available at the program's Web site at [www.nceep.net](http://www.nceep.net).

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