



# The N.C. Ecosystem Enhancement Program

## Overview

Clean water and thriving natural habitats are fundamental indicators of a healthy environment. Protecting North Carolina's ecosystems is critical to maintaining the state's quality of life, its economic growth and the health and well-being of its residents.

As our state has grown and evolved, a clear understanding of the value of our wetlands, streams, rivers, lakes and oceans has changed over time. State and federal regulations to protect water quality in wetlands and waterways now include specific safeguards to avoid and minimize unavoidable environmental damage to streams and wetlands from transportation improvements and other economic development. Fixing or protecting wetlands or streams in the same general area – a process known as mitigation – must also offset any damage that is not avoidable.

## What is EEP?

The N.C. Ecosystem Enhancement Program (EEP) was created to collaborate with landowners to provide this stream and wetland mitigation. Working together, EEP and landowners can:

- Protect wetlands, streams and natural areas through the EEP Preservation Program.
- Improve water quality through EEP Enhancement Projects
- Repair wetlands and waterways with EEP Restoration Projects

## Collaboration

EEP begins this process by working with local governments, landowners, land trusts and other stakeholders to examine the health of local wetlands and waterways. Once areas that are in need of help are identified, EEP contacts stream and wetland owners and invites participation through a range of conservation options. Landowners may retain ownership of property through a voluntary conservation agreement, or may sell or donate all or part of the property to the state. EEP's objective is to help our partners decide on best options for the benefit of landowners, the state and – ultimately – all North Carolinians.

## Information

To assist in this aim, EEP has produced a series of fact sheets to provide information about stream and wetland restoration, enhancement and protection. Topics include:

- Frequently Asked Questions
- Landowner Options
- Project Eligibility
- Elements of an EEP Restoration Project
- Understanding Stream Restoration
- Understanding Wetland Restoration
- Understanding Watershed Planning
- What EEP Will Pay For
- Stormwater Facts and Management Tips for Homeowners

## Participation

Landowners choosing to work with EEP will help to restore, enhance and protect our state for future generations; create healthier ecosystems across North Carolina; and help to balance responsible growth with environmental protection. Together, we can create a clean water legacy that we *all* can live with!

