

Upper Neuse River Basin Association (UNRBA) Board of Directors (BOD) Meeting Agenda
January 21, 2026, 9:30 AM to Noon
In Person Meeting at Butner Town Hall, Camp Butner Room
Remote Access Option (see page 6 for instructions)

Materials related to this BOD Meeting have been placed on the UNRBA website unless noted otherwise on the [Meeting Page](#). See items under the January 21, 2026, meeting date.

- I. **Opening—Wendy Jacobs, Chair**
 - A. **Introductions, Note Board Member Changes and Announcements**
 - B. **Roll Call for Quorum**
 - C. **Identification of any Conflicts**
 - D. **Review and Approval of Agenda**

- II. **Action Items**
 - A. **Approval of [November 19, 2025, Draft Board Minutes](#)**
 - B. **Approval of the [Treasurer's Report](#)**

C. Officer Elections for 2026: Nominating Committee Recommendations

Item Summary (Carl Rist): The [UNRBA Bylaws](#) call for its Annual Meeting to be held in January to provide for the election of Association Officers for the calendar year. The Board appointed a Nominating Committee during the November 19, 2025, Board Meeting to make recommendations at the January Meeting: Carl Rist, Terry Hackett, Ed Buchan, and Georgana Kicinski. [A summary of the recommendations of the Nominating Committee will be provided for consideration of the Board.](#)

D. Personnel Committee Report

Item Summary (Wendy Jacobs): The Personnel Committee met December 3, 2025, and reviewed the work of the UNRBA during 2025 and the support provided under the Executive Director Services Contract. Ms. Jacobs will provide the Committee's report and make recommendations to the Board on behalf of the members of the Committee. [The Board will discuss the report and consider approval of the Personnel Committee recommendations.](#)

III. Status Reports and Informational Items

A. Background for New Board Members

Item Summary (Forrest Westall): An overview of history of the UNRBA is provided on the last two pages of this agenda. [We will not cover this in detail during the meeting but will take questions on the work to date.](#)

B. Status of the Falls Lake Rules Readoption Process

Item Summary (Forrest Westall): The UNRBA continues to work with DWR on a rule package that can be submitted to the Environmental Management Commission (EMC) Water Quality Committee (WQC). The UNRBA draft rules reviewed by the Board in October 2025 have not been revised. DWR indicates they are in agreement with the compromises that the UNRBA made with DWR leadership on October 7, 2025, regarding the Purpose and Scope Rule, Existing Managed Lands Rule, and New Development Rule. UNRBA's October drafts reflect these compromises, and DWR indicates they are considering the October drafts in their work products. The UNRBA support staff met with DWR staff in December to discuss the Existing Managed Lands Rule and New Development Rule. We are scheduling meetings with DWR staff to discuss the Purpose and Scope Rule. We will summarize progress during the Board meeting.

During the [September 17, 2025 Board meeting](#) (slides 31 to 43), we summarized the challenges the UNRBA members are facing with respect to the Wastewater Rule and the UNRBA's proposal for addressing these challenges. While this rule regulates the wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) in the watershed, it impacts the growth and economic development for nearly all of the UNRBA members. The current rules and permits limit the WWTPs to discharge only a fraction of their permitted capacity due to very low nitrogen allocations.

The UNRBA has been meeting with DEQ/DWR leadership and the EMC Chair since September 2025 to discuss the Wastewater Rule and work toward a compromise that can provide the WWTPs with enough nitrogen allocation to cover at least the next rules readoption cycle. Regardless of the discussions and outcomes of these meetings, the UNRBA members will have to decide whether or not to accept a compromise. During the October 7, 2025, meeting, DWR requested documentation of the amount of nitrogen load reduction that has been achieved since the baseline year (2006). UNRBA developed this documentation which shows a reduction of nearly 400,000 pounds per year of nitrogen since the baseline year (2006). Forrest distributed a revised version of this document to the Board ahead of this meeting (revisions do not change the overall findings). The UNRBA also met with DEQ and DWR Leadership and the EMC Chair on December 2, 2025, and January 13, 2026, to continue discussions. During the December 2nd meeting, DWR requested information to justify why additional nitrogen load allocation would be needed above the baseline loads to cover the next ten years (before the next rules readoption cycle which occurs every ten years). We worked with the WWTP operators on this document and provided it to DWR ahead of the January 13th meeting and to the Board ahead of this meeting. During the January 13th meeting, DWR requested additional information to justify the flow projections based on population growth and planning documents. We are continuing to work with the WWTP operators and others on compiling their planning information. Forrest will provide an updated version of the projections document to the Board when available. The next meeting with DEQ and DWR Leadership and the EMC Chair is scheduled for February 2, 2026.

On November 12, 2025, the UNRBA provided an information item to the EMC Water Quality Committee (WQC) regarding approval of the UNRBA Models. The UNRBA submitted the modeling reports for the watershed and lake models to EMC and DWR for review and approval in December 2023 and December 2024, respectively. DWR provided email confirmation that the models were developed in accordance with the DWR-Approved UNRBA Modeling Quality Assurance Project Plan in July 2024 and February 2025. The UNRBA developed a [summary](#) of the re-examination efforts relative to the requirements of the adaptive management provision of the Falls Rules. This document demonstrates the extensive effort that the UNRBA conducted to build updated scientific tools and incorporate feedback from stakeholders into the re-examination process and revised Falls Rules. We did not ask the EMC to approve our models at the January WQC meeting.

C. Continued Rule Development for Jordan Lake and High Rock Lake Watersheds

Item Summary (Forrest Westall): We continue to monitor DWR's draft proposal for nutrient management rules for the High Rock Lake Watershed and their rules readoption process for the Jordan Lake Watershed.

D. Budget Considerations for FY2027

Item Summary (Forrest Westall): The UNRBA continues development of draft rules for Falls Lake and fiscal information to support the regulatory impact analysis. In FY2027 (July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027), the

UNRBA will continue to support this process including presentation of the rule package to the EMC (hopefully with DWR), a formal comment period, public hearing(s), and ultimately readoption of the rules (likely in the mid-2027). As discussed at the [November 19, 2025, Board meeting](#), unallocated funds from the FY2025 and FY2026 Modeling and Regulatory Support and Communications Support project can be used to offset dues for FY2027. The level of funding set aside for modeling was not fully expended in FY2025. It is likely that the full FY2026 budget will also not be fully expended because charges did not begin until January 2026 (instead of July 2025 as originally contracted). UNRBA Board members have requested a budget amount to consider during the local government annual budgeting process. During the November 19, 2025, meeting, the Board discussed a planning-level budget of \$769,400 for FY2027 to be reduced by \$160,000 for a dues funding level of \$609,400. The PFC plans to finalize their recommendation for the FY2027 budget by March and will bring a final recommendation to the Board at their March meeting.

After the rules are submitted to the EMC and the formal stakeholder process is underway, the UNRBA will transition to development of a water quality protection plan (WQPP) to provide guidance on how the rule requirements can be met. This plan will include the elements listed in [§ 143-214.14](#) including coordination of monitoring in the watershed. The UNRBA will likely need to design and implement some level of monitoring in the future. This would require updates to the previously developed monitoring program and monitoring quality assurance project plan. In the future, the UNRBA will need to provide reporting and assessment of the data to support the evaluation of changes in the watershed. The UNRBA will also work with DWR and stakeholders on development of a site-specific chlorophyll-a standard for Falls Lake as described in [§ 143-214.3](#). These future efforts were included in the five-year budget projections discussed by the Board in November.

E. Previously Approved Board Meeting Dates for 2026

Item Summary (Forrest Westall): During the November 19, 2025, meeting, the Board approved the meeting dates for UNRBA Board Members and the Path Forward Committee (PFC) for [2026](#).

F. Communications Support

Item Summary (Forrest Westall): The work with DWR on the revised Falls Lake Rules continues. As we have continued to do, we encourage our jurisdictions to identify additional communication needs and to request support from the UNRBA team as needed. Recent, ongoing, or upcoming activities are noted below:

- Reviewing existing information for jurisdictional use in developing presentations and handouts
 - [Infographic](#)
 - [Fact Facts](#)
 - Presentation materials as requested
- DWR established a [list serve for Falls Lake](#)
- Coordinating with DWR on an all stakeholders meeting prior to submission of rules to the EMC
- Providing status updates to the EMC
- Planning for a Falls Lake rules status presentation at the Water Resources Research Institute Annual Conference March 25 and 26, 2026
- Planning for a workshop for UNRBA members on implementation of Falls New Development Rules

The “open” nature of all UNRBA meetings remains a key component of a transparent communications approach. We encourage member representatives and interested individuals to speak up about ideas and opportunities to

communicate our work and the importance of our recommendations on a revised strategy and a site-specific standard. We also continue to look to our engaged membership representatives to use materials developed to help with communication within their jurisdictions. We remain available to assist with any presentations/meetings that are set up to discuss Falls Lake and the status of our work and the rules readoption process.

G. Ongoing Discussions/Issues:

Item Summary (Forrest Westall):

- NCSU streambank erosion loading website and spatial data available soon
- Upcoming presentation by NC State University on the UNRBA and Jordan Lake One Water research study
- Impacts on implementation of nutrient requirements in light of PFAS/PFOS and other emerging requirements on wastewater management costs to local governments

H. Closing Comments—Board Members and Chair

Next PFC Meeting: February 3, 2026, 9:30 AM to Noon, Virtual

Next Board Meeting: March 18, 2026, 9:30 AM to Noon, Butner Town Hall

This schedule may be revised, and notices will be provided about any change.

Remote Access Instructions Follow on the Next Page

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Remote Access Guidelines

- If you dial in through your phone, mute your computer microphone and turn down your speakers to **avoid feedback**
- Unless you are speaking, please mute your computer/device microphone or phone microphone to **minimize background noise**
- UNRBA meetings are open meetings; however, please **limit the discussion to UNRBA Board Members** to facilitate moving through action items

Background for New Board Members (to be presented under Agenda item III. A.)

Item Summary (Forrest Westall): The UNRBA was formed in 1996 to promote water quality protection in the basin. The [Falls Lake Nutrient Management Strategy](#) (aka the Falls Lake Rules) was passed in 2010 by the State. The nutrient management strategy specified two stages of nitrogen and phosphorus reductions to the lake. The State developed watershed and lake models to determine the required amount of nutrient reductions. Based on the state's [Fiscal Analysis](#) (link is currently broken and under repair) of the Rules, the strategy was estimated to cost over \$1.5 billion.

The goal of the Falls Lake Rules was to meet the chlorophyll-a standard of 40 micrograms per liter. Chlorophyll-a is a green pigment used by plants and algae for photosynthesis. It is an indicator for algae in water but does not correlate to designated uses like fishing, swimming, and water supply. While algae form the base of the food chain, excessive amounts can cause water quality issues.

The State set the [chlorophyll-a standard](#) in the 1970s under its delegated authority under [Section 303\(d\)](#) of the [Federal Clean Water Act](#). Authorized states and tribes can establish their own water quality standards and assessment methodologies. Waters that do not meet a standard are placed on the 303(d) list. The state or tribe must develop a plan to remove the waterbody from the list. The NC chlorophyll-a standard applies to all locations in all waterbodies at all times unless a site-specific standard is developed and approved by the State.

The Falls Lake Rules also require implementation of stormwater projects so new development does not increase nutrient loading to Falls Lake. The New Development Rules have been implemented by every local government since mid-2012. New development projects must use a State-developed tool called the [Stormwater Nitrogen and Phosphorus \(SNAP\) tool](#) to ensure the stormwater projects meet the requirements of the New Development Rules. Local governments in the Falls Lake Watershed manage the New Development programs with oversight from the NC Division of Water Resources (DWR). Construction activities are governed by [State Sediment and Erosion Control Rules](#) and where delegated, the local government erosion control programs (these local requirements must be consistent with state requirements).

After the Falls Lake Strategy was passed, the UNRBA focused on supporting its members with implementing Stage I existing development requirements and reexamining Stage II. While agriculture and wastewater treatment plants were able to meet their Stage I reduction requirements, the existing development requirements were difficult to quantify. Reduction credits for State-approved practices were relatively low and difficult to retrofit on existing development. In 2013, the UNRBA began its [Nutrient Credit Project](#) to expand the types of projects with State-approved nutrient reduction credits for water quality improvement. This project added practices and sizing variants to provide more flexibility to local governments. However, the local governments and DWR were not able to agree on the amount of nutrient reduction required under Stage I. Fortunately, the wastewater treatment plants in the watershed had reduced their nutrient loads by much more than required under Stage I and many times more than the potential range of existing development requirements. Staff from local environmental advocacy and land conservation groups recommended a new approach for Stage I compliance that would focus on project implementation rather than counting pounds of nutrients. This innovative program would be voluntary and use investment to track compliance. DWR and UNRBA agreed this would be a helpful approach and a good pilot for the reexamination. Over the next three years, the UNRBA developed a program called the [Stage I Existing Development Interim Alternative Implementation Approach \(IAIA\)](#). All UNRBA members voluntarily joined the Compliance Group Committee (CGC) which was formed under amended [UNRBA Bylaws](#) to implement the program. The IAIA is in the fourth year of implementation. Members are required to collectively invest at least \$1.5 million per year in eligible projects and activities. Over the first three years of implementation, the participants were required to cumulatively invest approximately \$4.5 million. Total investments have exceeded \$13 million over this period, nearly 3 times the required amount.

The Falls Lake Rules included an adaptive management provision that allowed for reexamination of Stage II if an interested party conducted at least three years of water quality monitoring and developed revised watershed and lake models. This allowance for a reexamination was based on the Consensus Principles developed by the UNRBA members. The members had agreed to implement Stage I, but that a reexamination of the Stage II requirements was needed. The technical work of the reexamination was led by the UNRBA Path Forward Committee (PFC) and several workgroups like the Modeling and Regulatory Support Workgroup (MRSW).

Planning for the reexamination began in 2011 and included several planning-level documents including a [Communications Plan](#), a [Decision Framework](#), and a [Description of the Modeling Framework](#) to guide the process. It also included quality assurance project plans for [monitoring](#) and [modeling](#) to ensure best practices. These documents were approved by DWR as required. Monitoring included monthly monitoring at [38 locations](#) in the watershed as well as special studies designed to help build the lake models. The [Final UNRBA Monitoring](#)

[Report](#) provides a comprehensive summary of the data and studies. Modeling included a watershed model and three lake models. The UNRBA selected the same types of models that DWR had used to establish the nutrient reduction requirements. The Watershed Analysis Risk Management Framework ([WARMF](#)) was used for the watershed modeling and one lake model. The Environmental Fluid Dynamics Code ([EFDC](#)) was developed as a more complex lake model. There is also a data-driven, statistical model to understand how water quality impacts designated uses in Falls Lake. This model also informs development of a site-specific chlorophyll-a standard for Falls Lake.

The UNRBA submitted their [final watershed model report](#) in December 2023 and [final lake model report](#) in December 2024. DWR has responded that the reports have been accepted and approved under the reexamination provision of the Falls Lake Rules. The UNRBA applied information from the monitoring and modeling to develop its **recommendations** for a revised Nutrient Management Strategy and revised Falls Lake Rules. The [UNRBA Concepts and Principles for a Revised Nutrient Management Strategy](#) summarizes key findings from the reexamination activities and recommends an investment-based, watershed health approach for long-term protection of Falls Lake. The recommendations were condensed into a two-page set of revised consensus principles. [Consensus Principles II](#) was approved unanimously by every UNRBA member and the Association. On November 22, 2023, the UNRBA submitted both of these documents to DWR and the Environmental Management Commission (EMC), and on November 27, 2023, the Southeast Regional Director submitted a letter of support for the UNRBA recommendations. The NC Collaboratory also submitted its recommendations to DWR, the EMC, and the General Assembly in December 2023. The [NC Collaboratory](#) was formed in 2016 by the NC Legislature to study nutrient management issues in NC in general and for Falls and Jordan Lakes specifically.

Submittal of recommendations by the UNRBA and NC Collaboratory initiated the rule making process conducted by DWR. While this process is managed and carried out by the agency, the UNRBA is fully committed to remaining an active participant. The UNRBA initiated an informal stakeholder process started in December 2024 with four rule [workgroups](#). A summary of the drafts produced by the workgroups and later updated by the PFC and stakeholders has been discussed by the PFC at their May 6, 2025; June 3, 2025; July 1, 2025; August 5, 2025; September 2, 2025; October 7, 2025; November 4, 2025; December 2, 2025; and January 6, 2026, meetings. On June 24, 2025, DWR hosted a Falls Rules Readoption Stakeholder Meeting. DWR provided the UNRBA with their draft rules on August 25th. The Executive Director, support team, and PFC Co-Chairs met with DWR staff on August 28th, August 29th, and September 16th to discuss DWR's drafts. In September, the UNRBA updated their draft rules to include the DWR language that was consistent with Consensus Principles II. The October drafts were updated to reflect the compromises discussed at the October 7, 2025, meeting with DWR Leadership. As of January 2026, UNRBA and DWR continue to work toward a rule package that DWR can submit for consideration by the EMC WQC with support from UNRBA. In October 2025, the UNRBA issued a contract for legal support to support the rule readoption process led by DWR or to submit a petition to the EMC for rulemaking if needed.