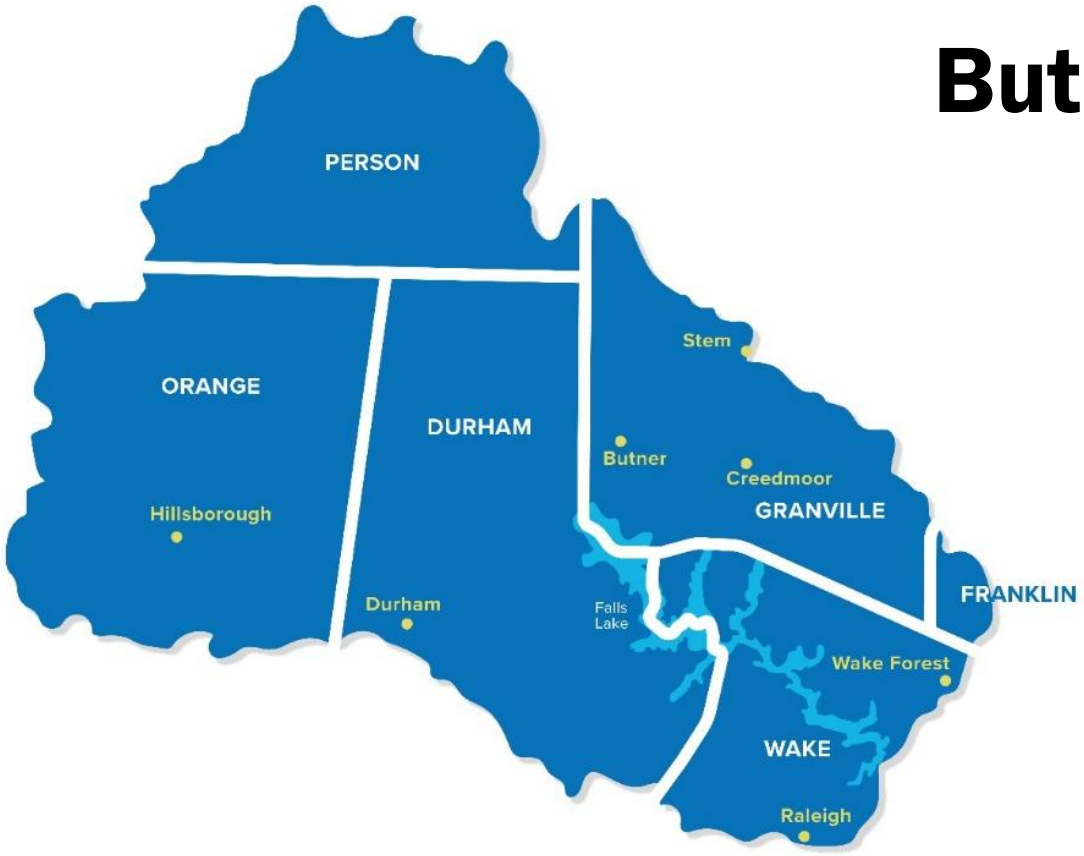
UNRBA Board Meeting
January 21, 2026

Butner Town Hall



January 16, 2026, UNRBA Board Agenda

- **Opening—Wendy Jacobs, Chair**
- **Action Items**
  - Approval of November 19, 2025, Meeting Minutes
  - Approval of the Treasurer's Report
  - Officer Elections for 2026
  - Personnel Committee Report
- **Status Reports and Informational Items**
  - Background for New Members
  - Status of the Falls Lake Rules Readoption Process
  - Continued Rule Development for Jordan Lake and High Rock Lake Watersheds
  - Budget Considerations for FY2027
  - Previously Approved Board Meeting Dates for 2026
  - Communications Support
  - Ongoing Discussions/Issues
- **Closing Comments**

Opening

Opening

- Introductions, Board member changes, and announcements
- Roll call for quorum
- Identification of any conflicts
- Review and approval of agenda

Action Items of UNRBA Board of Directors

Approval of November 19, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Approval of the Treasurer's Report

1/6/2026

Balance Forward: (per bank statement - 11/30/2025)	Checking	$	718,578.99
	Savings		1,296,664.82
Debits:			
Winston, Williams, Creech & Evans		$	1,910.00
Brown & Caldwell (Oct Invoice)		$	38,994.31
Brown & Caldwell (Nov Invoice)		$	46,662.46
Barnes & Thornburg			7,045.00
Brown & Caldwell (Dec Invoice)			22,326.30
McGill & Associates			12,032.50
Total Debits		$	128,970.57
Credits: Interest (checking)		$	81.39
Interest (savings)			3,307.85
Account Balance (per bank statement - 12/31/2025)	Checking	$	589,689.81
	Savings		1,299,972.67
Total UNRBA Account Balances:		**$**	**1,889,662.48**
Outstanding invoices/deposits in process since the close of bank statement (12/31/2025):			
Debits:			
Smith, Anderson, Blount, Dorsett, Mitchell & Jernigan		$	18,438.75
Credits:			
Current Account Balances:	Checking	$	571,251.06
	Savings		1,299,972.67
Total UNRBA Account Balance :		**$**	**1,871,223.73**

Legal Fund Balance

$588,204.92	24/25 YE
$100,000.00	25/26 Allotment
$688,204.92	Total
$ (43,856.99)	B&T contract
$ (50,000.00)	Smith Anderson contract
$594,347.93	**Balance**

Officer Elections for 2026

- The Nominating Committee was appointed at the November 19, 2025, Board meeting:
  - Carl Rist
  - Georgana Kicinski
  - Ed Buchan
  - Terry Hackett

- The Nominating Committee will provide recommendations for the officers of the UNRBA for 2026

Board of Directors will elect officers during the January 2026 Board Meeting as required in the UNRBA Bylaws.

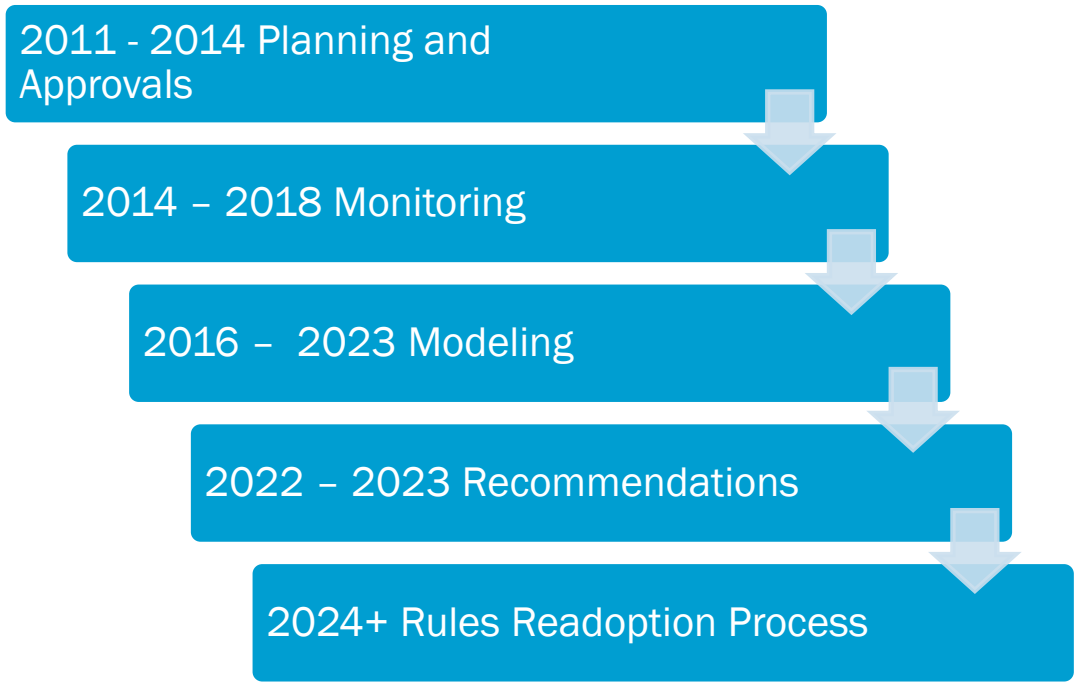
Personnel Committee Findings and Recommendations

- 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.
- The Committee will summarize their report and make recommendations to the Board on behalf of the members of the Committee.

Status Reports and Informational Items

Background for New Board Members

UNRBA Reexamination of Falls Lake Rules



$11 million of local money funded the UNRBA re-examination.

Stakeholder engagement occurred throughout and continues during rules readoption.

Background for New Board Members

- The last several pages of the agenda include background
  - Summary of the scientific work
  - Re-examination process
  - Status of the rules readoption
- We will not cover this material in detail during the meeting
- We will take questions.
- The next section of the presentation will focus on the rules development process.

Status of the Falls Lake Rules Readoption Process

Status of Development of Draft Rule Language

Rule Section	Status
Purpose and Scope	• DWR and UNRBA are planning to discuss in January
Agriculture	• DWR and NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has drafted rule • Draft Existing Managed Lands Rule developed by DWR allows for **voluntary** participation by farmers and landowners in the investment-based group compliance program in the Draft Existing Managed Lands Rule
New Development, Existing Managed Lands	• DWR has modified their drafts to significantly incorporate UNRBA draft language • DWR/UNRBA met in December to try and reach consensus on draft rules to WQC
Wastewater	• DWR and UNRBA having been discussing since September

Stakeholders will review refined drafts and DWR will host an "all stakeholders" meeting before rules are submitted for consideration by the WQC.

Challenges with the Wastewater (WW) Rule

- September 17, 2025 Board meeting (slides 31 to 43), summarize
  - Challenges with respect to the wastewater rule
  - UNRBA's proposal to address
- Rule regulates the wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) in the watershed
- Impacts the growth and economic development for nearly all of the UNRBA members
- WWTPs are still financing the initial construction and upgrades required to meet Stage I of the Falls Rules
- The current rules and permits limit the WWTPs to discharge only a fraction of their permitted capacity

Discussions with DWR and UNRBA Generated Additional Information – September 2025

- The UNRBA has been meeting with DEQ/DWR leadership and the EMC Chair since September
  - Discuss the wastewater rule
  - Work toward a compromise to provide the WWTPs with enough nitrogen allocation to cover the next rules readoption cycle.
  - UNRBA's draft rule included a total nitrogen allocation of 260,271 pounds per year (lb-N/yr) for the three largest WWTPs
    - Based on 100% of permitted flow capacity and annual average effluent limits of 3 mg-N/L (limits of technology)
    - Included proactive investments in watershed health projects by the WWTPs of $500,000 per year

UNRBA September request: 260,271 pounds per year (lb-N/yr)

Discussions with DWR and UNRBA Generated Additional Information – October 2025

- 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)
- DWR indicated they would review this information and provide a proposal for the UNRBA to consider in response to our request
- Forrest provided this document to DWR on October 27, 2025
  - Reduction of nearly 400,000 pounds per year of nitrogen since the baseline year (2006).
  - Modified request to discharge 90% of permitted flow to align with the 80/90 wastewater rule (15A NCAC 02T .0118) for a total allocation of 234,244 lb-N/yr
- DWR did not provide a proposal following submittal of this document
- Forrest distributed a revised document to the Board ahead of this meeting to correct the load reduction from atmospheric deposition

UNRBA October request: 234,244 pounds per year (lb-N/yr)

Discussions with DWR and UNRBA Generated Additional Information – December 2025

- During the December 2, 2025 meeting, DWR
  - Indicated they would not agree to 90% of permitted flow
  - Requested information to justify why additional nitrogen load allocation would be needed above the baseline loads (160,152 lb-N/yr)
  - Indicated they wanted to cover only the allocation need to get the WWTPs through the next 10-yr rules readoption cycle

Discussions with DWR and UNRBA Generated Additional Information – January 2026

- Worked with WWTP operators on projected flows and allocations to cover the next rules readoption cycle
- Provided to DWR ahead of the January 13th meeting
- UNRBA requested sufficient allocation for Durham and SGWASA to discharge 70% of permitted flow and Hillsborough to discharge 80% of permitted flow
  - Estimated increase in chemical costs of $240,000 per year
  - 184,929 lb-N/yr allocation
    - Only 25,000 lb-N/yr more than baseline
    - Compared to the nearly 400,000 lb-N/yr reduction achieved
    - 2% of the year-to-year variability due to rainfall
  - **DWR requested more detailed growth/projection information**

UNRBA January request: 184,929 pounds per year (lb-N/yr)

Follow up to Presentations to EMC WQC
(Environmental Management Commission Water Quality Committee)

- On November 12, 2025, the UNRBA presented an informational item
  - Rules and statutes covering requirements for supplemental models
  - Process for revising nutrient management strategies (draft rules)
  - Updated science as well contributing partners
  - Efforts satisfying adaptive management provisions of Falls Rules (Item (5)(f))
  - DWR's confirmation that the UNRBA models were developed per the DWR-approved Quality Assurance Project Plan
  - Benefits of multiple models (DWRs and UNRBAs, baseline and updated)
- WQC requested additional detail on efforts relative to Item (5)(f)
- UNRBA provided document to the WQC and DWR summarizing
  - Extensive development process for the models
  - Key findings from re-examination and how they inform revised rules
- UNRBA did not request approval of the models at the January 2026 WQC meeting
- Focusing on how to apply what we've learned to the revised rules

Benefits of the UNRBA's Work

- Resulted in strong stakeholder engagement across the basin
  - Representatives from local governments, utilities, agriculture, home builders, environmental interests, and land conservation organizations
  - Fewer requirements on agriculture in proposed rules
  - Investment credit for land conservation
  - Expanded "toolbox" for nutrient reduction credits
- Provides UNRBA members a united front and well-vetted science when negotiating with DWR
- Resulted in more cost effective implementation of existing development rule through development of the Stage I Existing Development Interim Alternative Implementation Approach (IAIA)
  - Investment-based approach being incorporated into revised rules across the state
  - IAIA requires $1.5 million per year compared to $51 million per year under the Falls Rules (based on DWR's 2010 Fiscal Note)
  - Provides local governments flexibility to implement watershed health projects and achieve multiple benefits for their communities like reduced flooding

Continued on next slide

Benefits, continued

- Addressing challenges with WW Rule
  - WWTP have already spent tens of millions of dollars to upgrade to five-stage biological nutrient removal (limits of feasible technology)
  - Current rules would require implementation of unproven/infeasible technology costing over $300 million to construct and several million each year to operate
  - UNRBA is working to negotiate a more reasonable allocation in the near term to provide for growth and economic development
  - UNRBA has proposed to work with DWR on a a site-specific chlorophyll-a standard before the next rules readoption cycle
    - Better reflect impacts of nutrients and chlorophyll-a on designated uses of the lake
    - Provide opportunity for WWTPs to use their permitted flow capacity in the future

UNRBA Revised Timeline Presented to WQC in January

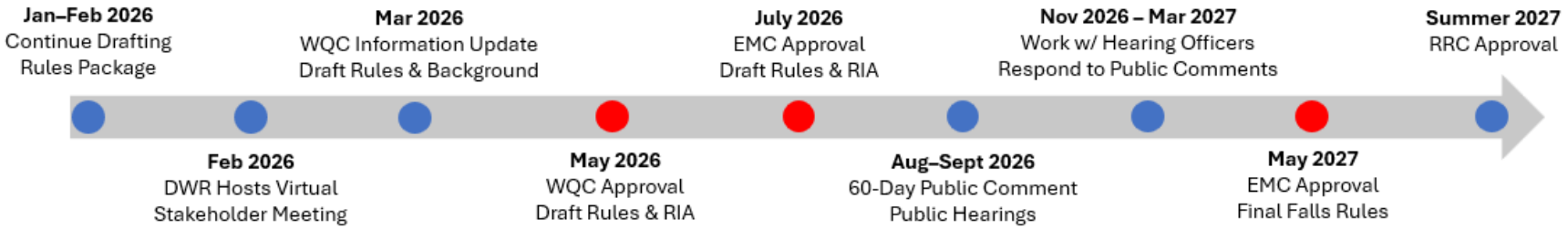
January 2026

- UNRBA and DWR continue discussing a rule package that can be submitted by DWR with UNRBA support

March 2026

- DWR brings draft rules as an information item to the EMC WQC with support from UNRBA

DWR's Prospective Timeline to Bring Draft Rules to the RRC Presented to the WQC in January



Falls Lake Rules Readoption informed by:

- *UNRBA's Updated Falls Lake Watershed & Lake Models*
- *NC Policy Collaboratory Falls Lake Study*
- *Stakeholder Review & Feedback*

Continued Rule Development for Jordan Lake and High Rock Lake Watersheds

Continued Rule Development for Jordan Lake and High Rock Lake Watersheds

- 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

Budget Considerations for FY2027

Budget Considerations for FY2027

- 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 first quarter of 2027).
- 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.

Planning Level Budget FY2027

- 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.

Previously Approved Board Meeting Dates for 2026

Previously Approved UNRBA Meeting Dates for 2026

Board Meeting Dates:

January 21, 2026
March 18, 2026
May 20, 2026
June 17, 2026
September 16, 2026
November 18, 2026

Path Forward Committee:

January 6, 2026
February 3, 2026
March 3, 2026
April 7, 2026
May 5, 2026
June 2, 2026
July 7, 2026
August 4, 2026
September 1, 2026
October 6, 2026
November 3, 2026
December 1, 2026

Meeting dates, times, and locations are subject to change. The times and locations of these meetings will be included in the invitations and announcements for these meetings. Please verify all meeting times and locations on meeting materials posted to the UNRBA website at https://unrba.org/meeting.

Communications Support

Communications Outreach and Preparation to Support Rule Readoption

- Reviewing existing information for jurisdictional use in developing presentations and handouts (see next slides)
  - Infographic
  - Fact Facts
  - Presentation materials as requested to address meeting topic
  - Jurisdictions can identify additional meetings or materials when support from the UNRBA team is needed
- Members can join DWR's list serve for Falls Lake
- Continue to coordinate with DWR
- Additional opportunities for public input during the formal EMC process
- The "open" nature of all UNRBA meetings remains a key component of a transparent communications approach.
- Please speak up about ideas and opportunities to communicate our work and the importance of our recommendations on revised rules and a site-specific standard.

FRONT

Fast Facts

What is the Upper Neuse River Basin Association (UNRBA)?

The UNRBA is a group of local governments and utilities in the basin that drains to Falls Lake. Its mission is to protect and improve water quality in the lake and its basin. UNRBA members are finding better ways to protect and improve water quality. Its members invested $11 million over 12 years to study the lake and its watershed. UNRBA used scientific findings to propose an updated nutrient management strategy. People from affected groups, called stakeholders, worked together to guide this effort.

Why is Falls Lake important?

Falls Lake is a regional asset built to protect downstream areas from flooding. The lake also supplies drinking water, serves as a home for fish and wildlife, and is a fun place to swim and fish.

Why does Falls Lake need an updated nutrient management strategy?

The General Assembly passed the current nutrient management strategy for Falls Lake in 2011. Since then, groups required to follow the strategy have reduced nutrients going into Falls Lake. Conditions have changed over the past two decades. New scientific information is available. To protect Falls Lake in the future, an updated strategy is needed.

Who is regulated?

- **State and federal agencies** that contribute to stormwater runoff
- **Local governments are** required to reduce nutrient loading from developed areas
- **Agriculture** that may grow crops, produce animals, or hold lands in an unmanaged state
- **Wastewater treatment facilities** that discharge treated wastewater into rivers and streams

What does the UNRBA recommend to maintain and improve water quality in Falls Lake?

Based on the latest science and stakeholder input, an updated strategy is needed.

- Work together
- Implement projects
- Spend wisely
- Protect forests and natural lands
- Develop science-based policies
- Provide flexibility
- Adapt to new information

BACK

Watershed and lake successes

- Scientists have studied Falls Lake more than any other water supply lake in North Carolina.
- Fewer nutrients are entering the lake now than when the State began tracking in 2006.
- Wastewater treatment plants have reduced phosphorus loads by 80 percent and nitrogen loads by 40 percent.
- Algal growth is below originally predicted levels.
- People can use the lake for its main purposes: prevent downstream flooding, provide habitat for wildlife, offer space for recreation, and supply drinking water to Raleigh.
- The UNRBA uses a watershed-health approach to improve water quality. This framework allows for the most flexibility. Local governments can select projects that reduce nutrients and address other local concerns.

Constraints of the existing strategy

- Communities have already reduced nutrients going to the lake. As a result, lake water quality has improved and stabilized.
- Most of the land in the watershed (75%) is forests or other unmanaged areas. Reducing nutrient loading from these areas is very difficult.
- A lot of nutrients enter the lake when we have large storms. These intense storms are happening more often.
- Eliminating the nutrient management strategy is not an option. Without appropriate management, water quality in the lake may decline with more frequent storms and population growth.
- The UNRBA estimates that the 2011 strategy will cost more than $1.5 billion. Its requirements are not feasible.

Can the Falls Lake rules be revised?

Yes! The Falls Lake Rules specifically allow for a change of the requirements. Following the required steps, the UNRBA is working with the State of North Carolina and partners across the basin on updated rules.

What steps has the UNRBA taken to update the 2011 rules?

Gathered New Scientific Information
A few groups study Falls Lake and its watershed. One group, the NC Collaboratory, began in 2016 to study both Falls and Jordan Lakes. Another group, the NC Division of Water Resources, has gathered data in the area since the 1980s. The UNRBA collected its own data on water quality for four years. They put together and studied all the available information. They also created computer programs to understand how adding nutrients affects the water quality in Falls Lake.

Collaborated with Diverse Stakeholders
Science alone can't help us figure out how to balance different wants and needs. We're committed to talking with everyone involved in the basin. We'll keep reaching out to all the regulated groups and environmental conservation organizations. The UNRBA will work closely with the NC Division of Water Resources on the new rules. By working together, we can create a plan that improves water quality and gets broad support.

Where can I learn more?

Visit our website **UNRBA.org**

Members of the public are welcome to attend all UNRBA meetings. To join us at an upcoming meeting or review minutes from previous meetings, visit our website at **UNRBA.org**

Last updated May 2024

FRONT OF INFOGRAPHIC

Upper Neuse River Basin Association

Unrba

What is the UNRBA?

The Upper Neuse Basin is the watershed that drains to Falls Lake. The Upper Neuse River Basin Association (UNRBA) is a group of thirteen local governments and utilities in the Upper Neuse River Basin. The UNRBA promotes cooperative approaches to water quality planning and management.

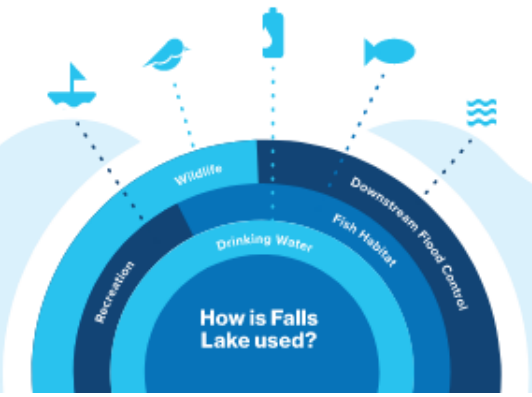
Our Focus

We are committed to protecting and improving water quality in Falls Lake. In 2011, the NC Environmental Management Commission adopted rules to reduce nutrient loading. Water quality in Falls Lake has improved and stabilized. Conditions in the watershed have changed. To continue progress, updated rules are needed.

Successes Achieved Under the 2011 Falls Lake Rules

The regulated entities under the Falls Lake Rules have significantly reduced nutrient loading to Falls Lake. The benchmark year for load comparison is 2006. By 2018, the following reductions had occurred:

- Major wastewater treatment plants reduced total nitrogen loads by 40 percent. These facilities reduced total phosphorus loads by 80 percent.
- Local governments have built more than 350 stormwater projects. These aim to reduce nutrients from land developed before 2012.
- Land developed after 2012 has strict nutrient requirements. Every local government in the watershed implements these rules.
- Atmospheric deposition of total nitrogen has decreased by 20—25%. This source of nitrogen affects every land use and waterbody in the watershed.
- Farmers have reduced nutrients leaving their lands. Practices include nutrient management plans, livestock exclusion, and stream buffer restoration.



Falls Lake is effectively meeting its intended uses. An updated nutrient management strategy is needed to protect this critical resource.

BACK OF INFOGRAPHIC

Achieving Further Water Quality Improvement Is Challenging

The requirements for nutrient load reduction in the 2011 Rules were in two stages. The first stage includes goals that have been met by every sector. The second stage is not appropriate for this watershed: it limits cooperation and further progress. Updated rules are needed to address the constraints and further improve water quality.

For progress to continue, updated rules are needed to address the current constraints.

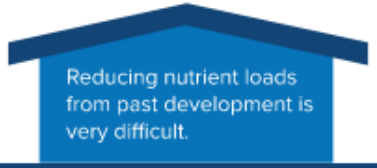
Unmanaged or natural areas, like forests and wetlands, make up **75%** of the watershed. It is very difficult to reduce nutrient loading from these areas.

Many beneficial activities like conserving forests or repairing malfunctioning septic systems don't count towards compliance under the 2011 rules.

Development and agriculture are **25%** of the watershed. Most farms are implementing best practices to reduce nutrients, so further reductions are limited. Less than **1.5%** of the watershed is medium or high intensity development.

The 2011 Rules limit cooperation among regulated entities.

Large rain events flush nutrients from the watershed, particularly from natural areas where organic matter accumulates. In a high rainfall year, delivered nutrient loads to Falls Lake double compared to an average rainfall year.



Reducing nutrient loads from past development is very difficult.

Key Aspects of the UNRBA Recommendations for Continued Water Quality Improvement

In 2018, the UNRBA began working on a new approach. This innovative program focuses on project implementation rather than nutrient tracking. Input from environmental groups and the NC Division of Water Resources was essential. In 2021, the NC Environmental Management Commission approved this program. In the first two years, UNRBA members doubled or tripled their required investments in beneficial projects. This successful program and extensive scientific study are the basis of UNRBA's recommendations for a revised Falls Lake rules. The UNRBA worked with a broad coalition of stakeholders to hone the recommendations and garner support.

- Conserve forests and other unmanaged or natural areas.
- Base compliance on investment in beneficial projects. Provide flexibility and encourage cooperation.
- Account for interactions among land, water, soils, climate, and the atmosphere.
- Consider environmental benefits, costs, and impacts to users of the lake and those asked to pay the cost of regulations.
- Improve water quality throughout the watershed and promote projects with multiple benefits.
- Track progress and update the strategy as conditions change.
- Continue to treat stormwater runoff from new development.
- Continue to track new technologies and optimize wastewater treatment.

Our Science-Based Approach

UNRBA members continue to find science-driven, cost-effective actions to drive progress in the watershed. The Association invested $11 million to study the lake and the watershed. This investment expanded the data and information for making sound decisions.

Next Steps

The UNRBA has worked closely with the NC Division of Water Resources to develop our recommendations. Many stakeholders provided critical input. These include representatives of agriculture, environmental interest groups, local governments, and utilities. The Division is responsible for updating the rules. The UNRBA and stakeholders will continue to work with the Division throughout this process.

Visit UNRBA.org to learn more!

Last updated May 2024

Additional Information and Activities

- Status updates to the EMC
- Planning a meeting with the new Secretary of DEQ
- Planning a meeting with staff from the NC Office of State Budget Management
- Meeting with EPA

Ongoing Discussions/Issues

wastewater management

Ongoing Discussions/Issues

- 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

Closing Comments

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

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