

North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Office of the Secretary



2009-2013 STRATEGIC PLAN

August 2009

Implementing DENR's Strategic Plan

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It was with great pleasure earlier this year that I accepted Gov. Perdue's appointment as Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources. During my tenure as Secretary I have found DENR to be a dynamic and innovative organization. Our employees are working to meet the high expectations public service requires and to provide quality service to the citizens of the state.

I am pleased to announce the department's strategic plan for the next four years. Clearly outlining DENR's goals and objectives and describing how we are going to accomplish them is important. This strategic plan strengthens our proactive approach to doing business and allows us to allocate our resources more effectively. Most importantly, it is the best means for us to internally clarify what we need to achieve and demonstrate to the department's customers how we are meeting our obligation to serve them.

The strategic plan identifies goals for the department that will support conserving and protecting the state's natural resources, while maintaining a high quality of life and fostering economic development. Broad supporting actions accompany each of the goals. These supporting actions serve as a starting point for divisions and programs to create measurable accomplishments.

The plan has been developed with an emphasis on accountability, demonstrating that we as an agency are responsible for ensuring that these action items are completed. We've also made teamwork a hallmark of our actions. Internally, the plan calls for more coordination and partnership. In addition, the plan complements and supports the challenging work and new initiatives underway in other departments in state government.

Please take time to review the plan and provide me with any input you believe will strengthen the important work in which we as a department are involved. The future is bright and full of opportunity, and I look forward to working with each of you to realize DENR's potential as North Carolina's premier environmental organization.

Dee Freeman



Secretary

N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources



N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation

Mission

To conserve and protect North Carolina's natural resources and to maintain an environment of high quality by providing valuable services that consistently support and benefit the health and economic well-being of all citizens of our state.

Vision

Through innovation, teamwork, customer focus and partnerships, we lead the way to accomplish our mission and to secure the future of:

- a cleaner environment;
- sustained natural resources;
- healthier lives;
- thriving ecosystems;
- a stronger economy; and
- a valued state agency.

Values

- **Integrity** – We are truthful, ethical and lawful in carrying out our mission.
- **Accountability** – We are responsible for our decisions and reliable in producing results.
- **Commitment** – We meet the department's mission and vision and the needs of our customers.
- **Respect** – We regard everyone with dignity and provide consistent services to each other and our customers.
- **Quality** – We effectively and efficiently provide services and products that serve the department's mission.
- **Transparency** – We use the expectations of our customers and partners as the focal point for communicating, educating setting priorities, developing programs and executing our business processes and services.
- **Professionalism** – We meet our mission by always conducting ourselves with the highest standards of professionalism.
- **Teamwork** – We are a valued and integral member of the team of departments that comprise North Carolina state government.

N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

GOALS

Goal:

Better manage the entire water cycle to prepare for the future by developing and implementing sustainable solutions based on sound science that effectively: protects water at its source; treats it to the highest standards; delivers it to homes and businesses; encourages its efficient use; and then collects and again treats the wastewater before reintroducing it safely back into the environment.

Sustaining Water for the Future

Ensuring a clean, safe water supply through increased efficiency and conservation and the development of new water sources is a critical requirement for the state to mitigate the impacts of both drought and demand from growth to ensure North Carolina's environmental and economic well-being. The department must continue its efforts to maintain our state's water quality through management of both point and non-point source pollution. It is essential that the department more effectively manages our state's surface water resources to meet the multiple needs of agriculture, municipalities, our ecosystems and recreational users, while retaining the ability to support future growth and economic development. Equally important is the protection and management of groundwater through working with the legislature, other state agencies and local governments to strengthen the state's overall management of groundwater resources.

Supporting Actions

- Integrate water quality and water quantity data through better coordination between the Division of Water Quality and the Division of Water Resources for purposes of river basin planning and program implementation. (Lead: Division of Water Quality, Division of Water Resources and Division of Soil and Water Conservation).
- Protect the state's water resources by developing a statewide water resources policy that includes implementing provisions of the 2008 drought legislation and evaluating the need for a statewide water withdrawal permitting program. (Lead: Division of Water Resources and Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance)
- Improve the state's response to groundwater contamination incidents through improved coordination among state agencies and local governments, stronger enforcement policies and increased public education. (Lead: Division of Waste Management, Division of Environmental Health and Division of Water Quality)
- Continue the department's work on reducing pollution from non-point sources through implementation of stormwater programs and an increased emphasis on inspections and enforcement within the Erosion and Sedimentation Control program. (Lead: Division of Water Quality and Division of Land Resources)

- Invest in North Carolina's infrastructure and redevelopment by transparent and efficient use of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding for wastewater projects, drinking water projects and cleanup of leaking underground storage tank sites. (Lead: Division of Water Quality, Division of Environmental Health, Division of Waste Management)
- Partner with other water infrastructure agencies to seek adequate funding for water infrastructure projects and to streamline and coordinate infrastructure project applications, requirements and deadlines. (Lead: Assistant Secretary for Environment)
- Partner with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other agencies to maintain existing water resource infrastructure, including multipurpose reservoirs, navigation channels and beaches. (Lead: Division of Water Resources) ▲▲



Goal:

Work to improve air quality of the state for the health and well-being of all its citizens by using sound science, monitoring and input from the public and regulated community.

Sustaining Clean Air for the Future

With passage of the Clean Smokestacks Act, North Carolina became a national leader in reducing air pollution from power plants. Since that time the state has been engaged, over the last several years, in efforts to reduce emissions from automobiles, trucks and construction equipment. The department seeks to lead the way in developing new solutions to reduce mobile emissions. Furthermore, the department needs to examine its current monitoring regime. Finally, the department and state need to better integrate natural resource issues into policy and planning.

Supporting Actions

- Evaluate the feasibility of a "Clean Tailpipes" initiative that would reduce emissions from mobile sources. (Lead: Division of Air Quality)
- Partner with business, the Department of Transportation and the Department of Commerce to effectively reduce diesel emissions from the movement of freight and limit diesel emissions from construction activities. (Lead: Division of Air Quality)
- Partner with the Department of Public Instruction and local governments to grow the state's efforts to reduce diesel emissions from school buses through retrofit programs. (Lead: Division of Air Quality)
- Ensure fire management plans are developed that are acceptable under the Clean Air Act and state regulations while increasing the capacity of land owners to apply fire management treatment – through training, services and financial incentives – to maintain the health of habitats and ecosystems. (Lead: Secretary's Office, Division of Air Quality and Division of Forest Resources)
- Work with local governments, lead regional organizations and state-level decision makers to develop actions to improve air quality in those locations not meeting the new federal ozone standard. (Lead: Division of Air Quality) ▲▲

Goal:

The department will champion evolving, and support existing, primary industries that promote environmental protection and energy independence and use of products, production techniques and services that have minimal impact to the waste stream, while attaining energy independence, resiliency to climate change and economic development in the state, the region and the country.



Growing a Green Economy

As evidenced by the recent federal economic recovery legislation, moving forward with new energy efficiency projects and the development of renewable energy facilities will be a high priority for the new federal administration. This energy focus at the federal level will be demonstrated through climate change proposals, offshore drilling discussions and energy-driven tax incentive packages. At the state level the focus needs to include increased work with landowners in identifying renewable energy projects (hog waste to wind) on agricultural lands. Additionally, the department needs to develop biomass policies that support sustainable biomass production while protecting significant natural resource functions of our forests. The department should continue to build a sustainable materials economy through recovery and reuse of the state's recyclable materials.

Supporting Actions

- Support Gov. Perdue's energy reform initiative and the growth of green jobs through inter-agency coordination and planning, funding of green infrastructure projects and educating businesses and consumers of the financial benefits of energy efficiency. (Lead: Secretary's Office and Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance)
- Work with the General Assembly and regulatory commissions to develop new environmental protection requirements and guidelines for renewable energy projects that enhance stewardship and promote economic growth. (Lead: Secretary's Office, Division of Air Quality and Division of Forest Resources)
- Partner with the North Carolina Biofuels Center in developing woody biomass as a key fuel development source while protecting natural resources. (Lead: Division of Forest Resources, Division of Air Quality, Division of Natural Resource Planning and Conservation)
- Focus efforts on the state's livestock and poultry operations to promote stewardship and conversion to improved innovative waste management technologies and potential energy production. (Lead: Division of Water Quality, Division of Soil and Water Conservation)
- Continue and support the evaluation and exploration of natural gas resources in the state. (Lead: Division of Land Resources)
- Partner with state universities, Research Triangle Park and others in the development of solar, biomass, wind, alternative fuels and other technologies needed to grow a green economy. (Lead: Deputy Secretary and Assistant Secretary for Environment)
- Develop and implement a DENR Strategic Energy Plan. (Lead: Assistant Secretary for Natural Resources) ▲▲

Goal:
DENR and its One North Carolina Naturally initiative will coordinate public and private efforts to sustain, conserve, restore and protect the state's natural, economic and social resources in a balanced, focused and integrated way for current and future generations.



Conserving Natural Areas and Sustaining Working Lands

The ability to continue to make progress in protecting land must remain a priority for the department. As population increases and development pressure rises, North Carolina continues to lose forestland and farmland at one of the fastest rates in the nation. The department needs to take a multifaceted approach to working with farmers, foresters and military bases related to both state and private lands. The department must identify new opportunities to preserve, restore and protect these lands through alternatives such as tax incentives, broader technical assistance, increased use of variable term and permanent conservation easements on private lands, increased stewardship and better public education. Every effort must be made to develop a management model for maintaining ecosystems, protecting wildlife habitat, supporting industries dependent on natural resources and preserving the quality of life of our citizens that will fit with the complex and rapid changes in the state's demographics, economy and climate. In addition, the department needs to expand alternatives through conservation incentives that meet the needs of landowners while making our programs more cost-effective.

Supporting Actions

- Develop and implement a department strategy for conservation of private working lands in collaboration with our partners in agriculture and forestry that includes tax incentives, conservation easements, technical and financial assistance and a variety of recovery credit incentives. (Lead: Assistant Secretary for Natural Resources)
- Establish a North Carolina Working Lands Group to link the conservation efforts of federal, state and local agencies in the vicinity of military installations to address conservation, economic and sustainability issues that promote the conservation of military, agricultural and forest lands. (Lead: Secretary's Office, Office of Conservation and Community Affairs)
- Reaffirm North Carolina's Million Acre goal to complete acquisition of 1,000,000 total acres of land or easement rights by partnering with other state agencies and local governments. (Lead: Assistant Secretary for Natural Resources)
- Partner with conservation groups by increasing coordination and planning efforts between conservation trust funds to prioritize acquisition opportunities, cultivate unconventional funding partners and increase collaboration with the conservation advocacy community. (Lead: Assistant Secretary for Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation and Division of Natural Resources Planning and Conservation)

- Implement action items of the Coastal Habitat Protection Plan, including identifying Strategic Habitat Areas, continuing quarterly meetings between permitting agencies and promoting success stories. (Lead: Division of Marine Fisheries, Division of Coastal Management, Division of Water Quality and Office of Conservation and Community Affairs)
- Continue to protecting working waterfronts through the Waterfront Access and Marine Industry Fund and other policy initiatives. (Lead: Division of Marine Fisheries) ▲▲



Goal:

To address climate change in North Carolina in a comprehensive way, using mitigation efforts and adaptation strategies to increase the resilience of our state's resources to these complex changes.



Climate Change

The department's work with the Climate Action Panel Advisory Group resulted in multiple recommendations for the residential and industrial sectors. In recent years, the Division of Air Quality has been actively involved in legislative initiatives and other projects focused on climate change, including supporting the Legislative Commission on Global Climate Change and joining the Climate Registry. While the department will continue its work on climate change in various capacities, it is important to develop an internal structure that allows for a more focused approach to address climate change policy actions at the state, regional and federal level. Specifically, a fierce urgency exists for the department to take unified action through mitigation and adaptation to ensure optimum environmental, economic and social resiliency to climate change.

Supporting Actions

- Establish a DENR Climate Change Adaptation Strategies Group to develop goals that provide consistent, complementary strategies across programs and coordinate strategies with other state, federal and nongovernmental partners. (Lead: Assistant Secretary for Natural Resources)
- Implement appropriate mitigation and adaptation recommendations of the Climate Action Plan Advisory Group and continue to engage with the Legislative Commission on Global Climate Change. (Lead: Division of Air Quality and Assistant Secretary of Natural Resources)
- Integrate the impacts of sea level rise into the department's Beach and Inlet Management Plan. (Lead: Division of Coastal Management and Division of Water Resources)
- Promote the work the department is undertaking through the Climate Ready Estuaries Program. (Lead: Division of Natural Resources Planning and Conservation)
- Partner with local, state and federal agencies to address emergency management preparedness due to natural events and changes in climate. (Lead: Secretary's Office)
- Work with local governments to incorporate specific policies, mitigation and adaptation tools into local land use plans. (Lead: Division of Coastal Management)
- Promote greenhouse gas emission reduction through energy efficiency technical assistance in partnership with the N.C. State Energy Office. (Lead: Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance)



Goal:

To protect the environment by developing and enforcing rules that are clear and consistent and result in business and government, together, preserving the environment and its resources, while growing our economy as well as maintaining the high quality of life for the state's citizens that attracts new companies and retains existing industry.



More Effective Environmental Regulation

Issuing environmental permits, licenses and approvals are a core responsibility of the department and its regulatory agencies. The manner and timeliness in which these permitting decisions are made are a key component of how our agency is viewed by the public and by regulated industries. For many citizens and businesses, this is the first and sometimes only interaction they will have with the department. Coordination, communication and consistency are critical in dealing with our customers professionally. The department needs to work and collaborate with impacted communities, permit applicants, other interested parties, media organizations and industry associations as an integral part of the permit and review processes. The agency needs to be transparent and thorough in its review processes. The department must have robust internal administration methods of review tied to an effective external communications strategy to meet the imperative for the public to understand how and why permitting decisions were reached and the consequences of such decisions.

Internally, we must evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of all of our permitting processes from a broad perspective. The focus on how to better do business should include the increased use of one-stop permit coordinators and the express permitting program; evaluating notice procedures; prioritizing permit applications; and providing staff with more discretion to reach practical solutions to reduce total permitting process time, while still allowing a comprehensive environmental review. Further, the department needs to better balance its compliance tools by recognizing stewardship efforts. The department should examine programs and methods to identify better ways of demonstrating the philosophy that regulated entities must be made aware of the conditions for compliance, made to feel the consequences of non-compliance and provided an opportunity to demonstrate behavior beyond compliance. In addition, the department must be more strategic in its enforcement efforts, such as focusing on repeat or continual offenders who view non-compliance as a cost of doing business. Finally, the department needs to develop a system to integrate the collections programs.

Supporting Actions

- Evaluate regulatory programs for potential duplicative or outdated programs and recommend organizational changes where appropriate. (Lead: Assistant Secretary for Environment)
- Improve the timeliness of permit reviews and increase customer service satisfaction. (Lead: Customer Service Center)
- Establish communication groups to advise the Secretary on environmental and natural resource issues, while serving as a continuing communications link. (Lead: Office of Public Affairs)

- Re-establish the State-Local Partnership by utilizing the N.C. Joint Regional Forum to develop a joint state-local agenda on the environment. (Lead: Secretary's Office)
- Develop surveys to measure point of service satisfaction and overall internal and external customer sector satisfaction. (Lead: Customer Service Center)
- Develop a communications and outreach process for major permitting or enforcement actions to ensure the regulated industry, public and media have a clear understanding of how and why departmental decisions are made. (Lead: Office of Public Affairs)
- Improve the consistency of program processes and decision actions as well as overall customer service among all regional offices of the state. (Lead: Director of Administrative Services)
- Partner with the Department of Commerce to coordinate environmental regulations and permitting with business recruitment. (Lead: Assistant Secretary for the Environment)
- Improve the centralized civil penalty collection process to ensure timely collection. (Lead: General Counsel)
- Ensure consistent application of enforcement policies and proper interpretation of regulations throughout the regional offices. (Lead: Assistant Secretary for the Environment)
- Develop an online Web page where customers may find information in one place for all permitting questions. (Lead: Customer Service Center and Office of Public Affairs)



Goal:

Enrich the quality of citizens' visits to our attractions by further developing the services within our museum, zoo, aquariums, state parks, coastal reserves and state forests. Create a memorable visitor experience that fosters awareness of environmental stewardship in a manner that is efficient, effective and ensures value.



Growing DENR's Visitor Attractions and Nurturing North Carolina's Natural Resources

For many citizens of North Carolina, a visit to our state parks, state forests and other attractions will be their sole interaction with the department. Our state parks, state forests, museum, aquariums and zoo provide unique experiences and create a critical link to the department's role in environmental education. Given the population growth in our state, the demand placed on our attractions will continue to grow and the department needs to prepare to maintain and grow the valuable services these facilities provide to our state.

Supporting Actions

- Initiate and complete a study to determine the feasibility of adding an Asian continent at the zoo. (Lead: Zoological Park)
- Initiate and complete a study to determine the feasibility of constructing an aquarium in Raleigh. (Lead: Aquariums)
- Open and operate the Nature Research Center. (Lead: Museum of Natural Sciences)
- Develop DuPont State Forest as a model to evaluate how the divisions of Parks and Recreation and Forest Resources and the Wildlife Resources Commission can work together to better enhance the use of the forest for recreation, forestry, game lands and scenic areas. (Lead: Assistant Secretary of Natural Resources)
- Open, operate and initiate visitor services at new state parks established as part of the New Parks for a New Century program. (Lead: Division of Parks and Recreation)
- Partner with the departments of Commerce and Agriculture and Consumer Services and other agencies to promote ecotourism and agritourism based on the environment and natural resources. (Lead: Secretary's Office) ▲▼



Goal:

An agency where all actions, services and products are of high quality, and serve the department's mission and vision through continuous improvement, optimum efficiency, effectiveness and customer satisfaction in all operations.



Organizational Effectiveness Supporting DENR's Mission

The dynamic changes in demographics, growth, economic development and fiscal dynamics requires the department to re-evaluate how it does business. Success requires clear information to transition from how we do business now to how we must do business in the future. We need to focus our leadership, our services and most importantly our products on our customers. We need to re-evaluate what we are, what internal and external customers we serve and what they expect. We need to ask "Why we do it this way." We need to continually re-evaluate our mission and programs to ensure effectiveness, accountability and maximum use of available resources.

Supporting Actions

- Evaluate current department administrative staffing levels and processes (Budget Planning and Analysis, Purchase and Services, Human Resources, Information Technology) and determine how we can more efficiently and effectively support the environmental protection and natural resource programs. (Lead: Deputy Secretary, Director of Organizational Effectiveness and Administrative division directors)
- Evaluate the department's structure and staffing for congruence with emerging 21st century process requirements and continuity with the department's strategic direction. (Lead: Secretary's Office and Division of Human Resources)
- Strengthen current customer service training, policies, methods and measurement. (Lead: Customer Service Center)
- Effectively transition the department into its new space at the Green Square Complex. (Lead: Secretary's Office)
- Review all current policies to eliminate duplication and redundancy - including state and federal interaction - and determine their relevance to and impact on our core processes. (Lead: Assistant Secretaries, General Counsel and Director of Organizational Effectiveness)
- Better integrate the roles and diverse missions of the department's many divisions into a formal department environmental education curriculum using the most effective educational curriculum design. (Lead: Office of Environmental Education)
- Centralize the department's information technology system to integrate data in a way that ensures maximum availability across functional lines and ensures that information technology services are timely, consistent and focus on core process priorities. (Lead: Chief Information Officer)

- Support equal employment opportunity and improve the understanding of diversity, manage perceptions and increase the diversity of the work force to improve the effectiveness of our community support in all populations, especially in historically underserved markets. (Lead: Chief Deputy Secretary and EEO Officers)
- Develop a comprehensive employee development and training program for DENR. (Lead: Deputy Secretary and Division of Human Resources) ▲▲

