



North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources
Division of Water Quality

Beverly Eaves Perdue
Governor

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Guidelines for Hurricane Irene Cleanup in the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico Buffers
August 2011

The Division of Water Quality will adhere to the following procedures during cleanup from Hurricane Irene in the protected Neuse and Tar-Pamlico Riparian Buffers:

1. A variety of exemptions in the buffer rules allow for cleanup to occur without having to obtain verbal or written permission from the Division of Water Quality. These exemptions include:
 - Removal of debris.
 - Pruning forest vegetation. The rules require that normal pruning should be done in a way that does not compromise the health and function of the forest vegetation. DWQ will assume that trimming needed to remove hurricane-damaged tree branches or other hurricane-damaged vegetation is exempt.
 - Removal of individual trees which are in danger of causing damage to dwellings, other structures or human life. These trees should be cut at ground level without removing or disturbing the root mat.
 - Construction of temporary roads that disturb less than or equal to 2,500 square feet, provided that vegetation is restored within six months of initial disturbance.
 - Issuance of a DCM emergency permit. When the Division of Coastal Management (DCM) issues an emergency permit to rebuild or replace hurricane damaged structures, impacts in the protected riparian buffer must be in the same footprint as the original impact and not exceed the original square footage. Alternatively, impacts in the protected riparian buffer that do not exceed the original square footage may be moved back away from the water's edge or CAMA marsh.

DWQ will interpret these exemptions broadly to allow foresters, municipalities, homeowners and their contractors to quickly complete cleanup of hurricane debris in the impacted areas. Property owners are not expected to re-plant trees in buffer areas affected by the hurricane, but exposed areas need to be stabilized to avoid erosion. These exemptions are comprehensive and allow for cleanup of damaged areas affected by the hurricane, including the use of mechanized equipment. If heavy equipment is used or temporary roads constructed, those activities need to avoid creation of new ditches or other features that would drain water through the buffer and into the adjoining surface waters. When practicable, all stormwater through the protected buffers shall be diffuse or discharged in a way as to not cause erosion or further damage to the protected buffer.

2. There are several uses in the buffer rules that allow for cleanup to occur after receiving written approval from DWQ. These approvals will be handled by DWQ's Central Office and Regional Offices and will be processed as quickly as possible. Some of these uses include:
 - Protection of structures, facilities and streambanks if *additional disturbance* of the riparian buffer or stream channel is required.
 - Streambank stabilization. Please note that in coastal counties, these approvals may be granted by DCM.
 - Construction of temporary roads that disturb greater than 2,500 square feet or for bridge construction or replacement.

3. Any impacts to wetlands and streams beyond the scope of the Neuse or Tar-Pamlico Riparian Buffer Rules, including the use of heavy equipment in wetlands, may require coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Wilmington District Corps' Office issued a public notice of their emergency procedures on August 26, 2011, which can be found at: http://www.saw.usace.army.mil/wetlands/Notices/2011/Irene/PN-SAW_Hurricane_Irene_Emergency_Procedures_8-26-11.pdf. The Corps' Regulatory Field Offices can be reached at:
 - Corps' Raleigh Regulatory Field Office: 919-554-4884
 - Corps' Washington Regulatory Field Office: 910-251-4555
 - Corps' Wilmington Regulatory Field Office: 910-251-4633

Should you have any questions, please contact the Division of Water Quality at your local NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Regional Office or the Central Office:

Counties	Contact
Chatham, Durham, Edgecombe, Franklin, Granville, Halifax, Johnston, Lee, Nash, Northampton, Orange, Person, Vance, Wake, Warren, Wilson	Raleigh Regional Office at 919-791-4200
Beaufort, Bertie, Camden, Chowan, Craven, Currituck, Dare, Gates, Greene, Hertford, Hyde, Jones, Lenoir, Martin, Pamlico, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Pitt, Tyrrell, Washington, Wayne	DWQ Central Office at 919-807-6300 (Amy Chapman at amy.chapman@ncdenr.gov or 919-807-6400) (Karen Higgins at karen.higgins@ncdenr.gov or 919-807-6360) (Ian McMillan at ian.mcmillan@ncdenr.gov or 919-807-6364) or the Washington Regional Office at 252-946-6481
Brunswick, Carteret, Columbus, Duplin, New Hanover, Onslow, Pender	Wilmington Regional Office at 910-796-7215

More information about the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico Riparian Buffer Rules may be found at <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/wq/swp/ws/401/riparianbuffers>.