

INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES OF THE NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURE COST SHARE PROGRAM FOR NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION CONTROL

Introduction

North Carolina's Agriculture Cost Share Program, which is administered by the Division of Soil and Water Conservation (Division) in the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, has been applauded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a model of success and a program that "makes North Carolina a national leader...." Support of the Cost Share Program resounds throughout the agricultural community and the general public and public interest groups have praised the progress of the Program.

The Cost Share Program was initiated in 1984 as a pilot program to address nonpoint problems in the "nutrient sensitive" waters of Jordan Lake, Falls Lake, and the Chowan River. Additional targeted basins were included over the years in the Cost Share Program and statewide expansion was finalized in July 1989. During the past 17 years, over 41,500 contracts have been signed to install BMPs affecting almost 2 million acres of agricultural lands. Over six million tons of soil will be saved for the next 10 years (nearly 500,000 tons saved annually). Nearly 5,000 animal waste management systems will store millions of pounds of nitrogen and phosphorous that can be properly utilized as a soil supplement.

The major cause of water quality problems in North Carolina and in much of the United States is nonpoint source pollution. In many places, damage to our water resources comes from soil erosion, excessive fertilizer use, animal waste contamination, and improper use of agricultural chemicals. The Cost Share Program helps address nonpoint pollution by providing technical and financial resources.

The key to the success of the Cost Share Program has been decentralization: turning over local administration of the Cost Share Program to the Districts. Districts have worked with other local governments to target critical watersheds for protection and to prioritize funding allocations.

Objectives

The objectives of the North Carolina Agriculture Cost Share Program are to reduce the delivery of agricultural nonpoint source pollution into the watercourses of the state by:

- Properly managing nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorous) to make them less available to runoff;
- Reducing sediment delivery into streams, rivers, lakes, and estuaries;
- Managing farm pesticides in an environmentally sound manner; and
- Reducing freshwater loading in Primary Nursery Areas.

Increase technical assistance in the Soil and Water Conservation District (District) offices is to help landowners install Best Management Practices (BMPs) that will improve offsite water quality.

Financial assistance is offered to landowners as cost share, up to 75% of the average cost. These assist landowners in implementing BMPs.

The BMPs provided improve water quality with secondary production benefits to ensure continuous use.