

life or property, or because the violation is transitory in nature, a stay would seriously interfere with enforcement of the ordinance. In that case, enforcement proceedings shall not be stayed except by a restraining order, which may be granted by a court. If enforcement proceedings are not stayed, the appellant may file with the administrator a request for an expedited hearing of the appeal, and the board of adjustment shall meet to hear the appeal within 15 days after such a request is filed. Notwithstanding the foregoing, appeals of decisions granting a permit or otherwise affirming that a proposed use of property is consistent with the ordinance shall not stay the further review of an application for permits or permissions to use such property; in these situations the appellant may request and the board may grant a stay of a final decision of permit applications or building permits affected by the issue being appealed.

(h) Subject to the provisions of subdivision (g) of this section, the board of adjustment shall hear and decide the appeal within a reasonable time.

(i) The administrator shall be present at the hearing as a witness. The appellant shall not be limited at the hearing to matters stated in the notice of appeal. If any party or the town would be unduly prejudiced by the presentation of matters not presented in the notice of appeal, the board shall continue the hearing. The board of adjustment may reverse or affirm, wholly or partly, or may modify the decision appealed from and shall make any order, requirement, decision, or determination that ought to be made. The board shall have all the powers of the administrator.

(j) The parties to an appeal that has been made under this section may agree to mediation or other forms of alternative dispute resolution.

Section 15-92 Variances. (AMENDED 11/10/81; 4/21/87; 12/05/89; 4/23/96; 10/24/06; 6/26/12; 10/21/14; REPEALED & AMENDED 3/24/09; REWRITTEN 10/26/10)

(a) An application for a variance shall be submitted to the board of adjustment by filing a copy of the application with the administrator in the planning department. Applications shall be handled in the same manner as applications for special use permits-B in conformity with the provisions of Sections 15-48, 15-49, and 15-56.

(b) Subject to the remaining provisions of this section, when unnecessary hardships would result from carrying out the strict letter of this ordinance, the board of adjustment shall vary any of the provisions of the ordinance upon a showing of all of the following:

- (1) Unnecessary hardship would result from the strict application of this ordinance. It shall not be necessary to demonstrate that, in the absence of the variance, no reasonable use can be made of the property.
- (2) The hardship results from conditions that are peculiar to the property, such as location, size, or topography. Hardships resulting from personal circumstances, as well as hardships resulting from conditions that are common to the neighborhood or the general public, may not be the basis for granting a variance

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- (3) The hardship did not result from actions taken by the applicant or the property owner. The act of purchasing property with knowledge that circumstances exist that may justify the granting of a variance shall not be regarded as a self-created hardship
- (4) The requested variance is consistent with the spirit, purpose, and intent of the ordinance, such that public safety is secured, and substantial justice is achieved.
- (c) No change in permitted uses may be authorized by variance.
- (d) Appropriate conditions may be imposed on any variance, provided the conditions are reasonably related to the variance.
- (e) A variance may be issued for an indefinite duration or for a specified duration only.
- (f) In determining whether a variance should be granted from any of the provisions of Article XVI, Part I, the board of adjustment shall consider the following factors, each of which shall be addressed in a written report that accompanies the application.
 - (1) The danger that materials may be swept onto other lands to the injury of others;
 - (2) The danger to life and property due to flooding or erosion damage;
 - (3) The susceptibility of the proposed facility and its contents to flood damage and the effect of such damage on the individual owner;
 - (4) The importance of the services provided by the proposed facility to the community;
 - (5) The availability of alternative locations, not subject to flooding or erosion damage, for the proposed use;
 - (6) The compatibility of the proposed use with existing and anticipated development;
 - (7) The relationship of the proposed use to the comprehensive plan and floodplain management program for that area;
 - (8) The safety of access to the property in times of flood for ordinary and emergency vehicles;
 - (9) The expected heights, velocity, duration, rate of rise, and sediment transport of the floodwaters expected at the site; and

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- (10) The costs of providing governmental services during and after flood conditions including maintenance and repair of public utilities and facilities such as sewer, gas, electrical and water systems, and streets and bridges.

(g) Any applicant to whom a variance is granted from the provisions of Article XVI, Part I, shall be given written notice specifying the difference between the Base Flood Elevation (BFE) and the elevation to which the structure is to be built and that such construction below the BFE increases risks to life and property, and that the issuance of a variance to construct a structure below the BFE will result in increased premium rates for flood insurance up to \$25 per \$100 of insurance coverage. Such notification shall be maintained with a record of all variance actions, including justification for their issuance.

(h) With respect to the provisions of Article XVI, Part I, the administrator shall maintain the records of all appeal actions and report any variances to the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the State of North Carolina upon request.

- (i) With respect to the provisions of Article XVI

Part I:

- (1) Variances shall not be issued when the variance will make the structure in violation of other Federal, State, or local laws, regulations, or ordinances
- (2) Variances shall not be issued within any designated floodway or non-encroachment area if the variance would result in any increase in flood levels during the base flood discharge
- (3) Variances shall only be issued upon a determination that the variance is the minimum necessary, considering the flood hazard, to afford relief
- (4) Variances shall only be issued prior to development permit approval
- (5) The Town shall notify the Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Crime Control and Public Safety that a variance has been requested at least 30 days prior to consideration of the application by the board of adjustment

(j) If the board votes to grant a major variance from any of the provisions of Section 15-266, dealing with requirements peculiar to areas within the University Lake Watershed or Jordan Lake Watershed Protection District, the administrator shall forthwith prepare and send to the Environmental Management Commission a record of the proceedings before the board. The variance shall not be issued until it is approved by the EMC. For purposes of this subsection, a major variance is one that authorizes a relaxation of greater than 10% of any requirement set forth in Section 15-266.

(k) If the board votes to grant a major variance from any of the provisions of Part III (Water Quality Buffers) of Article XVI, the administrator shall forthwith prepare and send to the Environmental Management Commission a record of the proceedings before the board. The variance shall not be issued until it is approved by the EMC. For purposes of this subsection, a major variance

is one that pertains to prohibited activities that will impact that portion of Zone One of the riparian buffers that lies within 30 feet of the surface waters subject to buffer requirements of the Jordan Reservoir.

(l) The administrator shall keep a record of all variances granted during any calendar year from the provisions of Sections 15-266 or Part III of Article XVI and shall submit the record of such variances on or before January 1 of the following year to the Division of Water Quality. The record shall contain a description of each project receiving a variance and the reason for granting the variance.

(m) If the board votes to grant a major variance from the provisions of Section 15-263, the board shall then prepare a preliminary record of the hearing and submit it to the Environmental Management Commission for review and approval. If the Commission approves the major variance or approves with conditions or stipulations added, then the Commission shall prepare a Commission decision which authorizes the board to issue a final decision which would include any conditions or stipulations added by the Commission. If the Commission denies the major variance, then the Commission shall prepare a Commission decision to be sent to the board. The board shall prepare a final decision denying the major variance. For all proposed major and minor variances from the other local governments having jurisdiction within the Jordan Lake Watershed Area and any local governments using Jordan Lake as a water supply for consumption. Appeals from a board decision on a major or minor variance request are made on certiorari to the local Superior Court. Appeals from the Commission decision on a major variance request are made on judicial review to Superior Court. For purposes of this subsection, a major variance is one that authorizes a relaxation by more than five percent of any requirement set forth in Section 15-263.

Section 15-92.1 Special Exception Permits. (AMENDED 6/21/94)

[PLEASE REFERENCE "APPENDIX H"]

(a) An application for a special exception permit shall be submitted to the board of adjustment by filing a copy of the application with the administrator in the planning department.

(b) All of the provisions of this article applicable to the processing of variance applications shall also apply to special exception permit requests, except the provisions of Subsections 15-92(b) and 15-96(b) and (c).

(c) The board of adjustment may issue a special exception permit for the purposes and under the circumstances set forth in the remaining subsections of this section if it concludes, in addition to any other findings required below, that:

- (1) Issuance of the permit will not create a threat to the public health or safety; and
- (2) Issuance of the permit will not adversely affect the value of adjoining or neighboring properties. If the applicant presents a petition, signed by the owners of all properties entitled to receive notice of the hearing on the application pursuant to Section 15-102(2), and stating that such property

owners believe their property values will not be adversely affected by the proposed use, this shall be sufficient evidence from which the board may (but shall not be required to) make the required finding. The board may also make the required finding based on other competent evidence.

(d) The board of adjustment may issue a special exception permit under this section to allow a reduction of up to 50% in the required distances that buildings must be set back from lot boundary lines under Subsection 15-184(a)(4), provided that:

- (1) The reduction may be permitted only for buildings on lots used for conforming residential purposes in residential districts, where (i) the building in question has existed for at least three years prior to the application for the special exception permit, or (ii) the lot is to be developed or redeveloped using the residential density bonus for affordable housing provided for elsewhere in this chapter at Section 15-184. **(Amended 5/14/02)**
- (2) In no case may the reduction allow a building to be located closer to a lot boundary line than a distance equal to one-half of the minimum building separation requirement established by the North Carolina State Building Code or allow the location of a building in such proximity to a pre-existing building as to violate the minimum building separation requirement of the North Carolina State Building Code;
- (3) Reductions may be allowed under this section only for setbacks from lot boundary lines, not setbacks from street right-of-way lines.

(e) The board of adjustment may issue a special exception permit to authorize a structure to encroach upon a setback required under Section 15-184 if it finds that:

- (1) The proposed encroachment results from an addition to or an extension of an existing structure that already is nonconforming with respect to the requirements of section 15-184; and
- (2) The proposed addition or extension will not encroach upon any required front, rear, or side yard to a greater extent than the existing structure on that lot.

Section 15-93 Interpretations. (REWRITTEN 10/21/14)

(a) The administrator is authorized to interpret the official zoning map and to pass upon disputed questions of district boundary lines and similar questions.

(b) Where uncertainty exists as to the boundaries of districts as shown on the Official Zoning Map, the following rules shall apply:

Section 15-184 Building Setback Requirements

- (a) Subject to Section 15-187 (Architecturally Integrated Subdivisions) and the other provisions of this section, no portion of any building or any freestanding sign may be located on any lot closer to any lot line or to the street right-of-way line or centerline than is authorized in the table set forth below: **(AMENDED 1/22/85)**
- (1) If the street right-of-way line is readily determinable (by reference to a recorded map, set irons, or other means), the setback shall be measured from such right-of-way line. If the right-of-way line is not so determinable, the setback shall be measured from the street centerline.
- (2) As used in this section, the term “lot boundary line” refers to lot boundaries other than those that abut streets.
- (3) As used in this section, the term “building” includes any substantial structure, which, by nature of its size, scale, dimensions, bulk, or use tends to constitute a visual obstruction or generate activity similar to that usually associated with a building. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the following structures shall be deemed to fall within this description:
- a. Gas pumps and overhead canopies or roofs.
 - b. Fences, walls or berms running along lot boundaries adjacent to public street rights-of-way if such fences, walls or berms exceed three feet in height and are substantially opaque except that fences, walls or berms shall not be regarded as “buildings” within the meaning of this subsection if they are located along the rear lot line of lots that have street frontage along both the front and rear of such lots. **(AMENDED 5/19/98)**
 - c. Pergolas, except that a pergola will not be considered a “building” for purposes of this section if it consists merely of an insubstantial frame, no larger than 15 feet long on any side, presents itself visually more as a part of the landscape than as a building. **(AMENDED 10/22/13)**
 - d. Facilities that house and/or contain domesticated livestock except that the building setbacks for rabbits and fowl shall adhere to the requirements in Chapter 10, Article III, Domesticated Livestock and Wild Animals, of the Town Code. **(AMENDED 2/28/17)**
- (4) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, signs that do not meet the definition of freestanding signs may be erected on or affixed to structures (e.g., some fences) that are not subject to the setback requirements applicable to buildings only if such signs are located such that they satisfy the setback requirements applicable to freestanding signs in the district where located. **(AMENDED 5/26/81; 12/7/83; 2/4/86; 11/14/88; 5/15/90; 4/16/91; 1/16/01)**

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- (5) Notwithstanding the foregoing, the first three feet of roof overhang on a residential structure constructed in a residential zoning district is not considered a building for the purposes of this section and is not subject to the building setback requirements. **(AMENDED 4/22/14; 10/22/19)**
- (6) Notwithstanding the foregoing, exterior steps whether of masonry or wood construction may extend up to 50-percent into the building setback for the property boundary lines on residentially zoned lots so long as the height of the steps and associated landing are no taller than three feet above the finished grade as determined by Section 15-185(g)(1). The landing may be no larger than five feet in width by five feet in length, and the combined length of the landing and steps no longer than ten feet. The minimum separation from buildings on adjacent lots as required by the fire code must be maintained. **(AMENDED 4/19/22)**

ZONE	Minimum Distance from Street Right of Way line		Minimum Distance from Street Centerline		Minimum Distance from Lot Boundary Line
	Building	Freestanding Sign	Building	Freestanding Sign	Building and Freestanding Sign
C	25	12.5	55	42.5	20
WR	35	17.5	65	47.5	20
RR	40	20	70	50	20
R-20	40	20	70	50	20
R-15	35	17.5	55	47.5	20
R-10	25	12.5	55	42.5	12
R-S.I.R.	25	12.5	55	42.5	10
R-7.5	25	12.5	55	42.5	10
R-3	15	7.5	45	37.5	8
B-1(c)	--	--	30	--	--
B-1(g)	--	--	30	--	--
B-2	15	7.5	45	37.5	10
B-3	15	7.5	45	37.5	15
B-3-T	15	7.5	45	37.5	15
B-4	30	15	60	45	10
CT	--	--	30	--	--
B-5	40	20	70	50	20
M-1	--	--	30	--	--
M-2	--	--	30	--	--
WM-3	30	15	60	45	20
O	15	7.5	45	37.5	15
O/A	15	7.5	45	37.5	15

pre-existing multi-family units, except to the extent that such reconstruction or renovation of multi-family residences increases the number of dwelling units or bedrooms within any such residential development. (AMENDED 10/08/96)

Section 15-198 Open Space. (AMENDED 4/24/84; 3/26/85; 12/10/85; 11/11/86;
REWRITTEN 6/27/95; 6/20/06; AMENDED 3/24/09; 3/23/10)

(a) The Council finds that when land is developed for residential purposes, the public health, safety, and welfare are best served when substantial portions of the tracts so developed remain as common open space. The preservation of such open space areas serves the following important objectives, to the benefit of the residents of such developments as well as the general public:

- (1) Preservation of open vistas, providing relief from an urban landscape;
- (2) Preservation of environmentally sensitive lands;
- (3) Preservation of habitat for wildlife;
- (4) Preservation of historically or archaeologically significant areas;
- (5) Provision of areas for passive recreation, such as walking or jogging.

(b) For purposes of this section:

- (1) Open space refers to an area that:
 - a. Is not encumbered with any substantial structure;
 - b. Is not devoted to use as a roadway, parking area, or sidewalk;
 - c. Is not part of any privately owned lot that is used or intended for use for residential purposes;
 - d. Is legally and practicably accessible to the general public or to the residents of the development where the open space is located.
- (2) Narrow strips of common area that separate lots within a development from each other, from streets, or from adjoining tracts shall generally not be regarded as open space within the meaning of this section unless such areas:
 - a. Are at least 50 feet in width and capable of functioning as a substantial visual buffer; or
 - b. Are configured and/or improved (e.g. through the installation of trails) in such a way as to be conducive to actual use for passive recreational purposes (i.e. walking or jogging) by residents of the development where located.

- (3) The following areas shall be regarded as open space if such areas satisfy at least the criteria set forth in Subdivision (1) a, b, and c of subsection (b) of this section:
- a. Utility easements located outside of street rights of way;
 - b. Cemeteries located on a tract prior to its development.
 - c. Areas used for the growing of crops, such as hay, corn, or vegetables, if and to the extent that such uses occur within an area that is subject to the control of a homeowners association and such uses are approved by the homeowners association. **(AMENDED 5/25/99)**
- (4) The term “primary conservation areas” shall mean: **(AMENDED 5/25/99; 6/20/99)**
- a. Areas containing slopes greater than 25%
 - b. Hardwood areas as designated in the Geographic Information System (GIS) of the Town of Carrboro. **(AMENDED 3/24/09)**
 - c. Wetlands as defined pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act
 - d. Floodplains
 - e. Water quality buffers on perennial and intermittent streams. **(AMENDED 3/24/09)**
 - f. Lakes and ponds;
 - g. Road buffers as required by Section 15-312 of this Chapter, except for those portions of the buffers that must be included in road or utility crossings.
- (5) The term “secondary conservation areas” shall mean: **(AMENDED 5/25/99)**
- a. Areas containing slopes greater than 15% but not more than 25%;
 - b. Wooded areas other than hardwood areas as designated in the Geographic Information System (GIS) of the Town of Carrboro. **(AMENDED 3/23/10)**
 - c. Vistas along entranceways to the town;
 - d. Other areas containing unusual natural features (such as major rock formations);

- e. With respect to streams designated on the adopted Stream Classification Map of the Town of Carrboro, those areas within an average perpendicular distance of sixty feet from the edge of the floodway of the stream, if the floodway is designated on the “Flood Boundary and Flood Map” prepared by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development or sixty feet from the centerline of the stream where the floodway is not designated on the map.
- f. Other environmentally, historically, or archaeologically significant or unique areas, including water quality buffers on ephemeral streams. **(AMENDED 3/24/09)**

(c) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (j) and Section 15-203, every residential development in zoning districts other than the R-2, OR-MU, B-1(c), B-1(G), B-2, and CT zoning districts shall be developed so that at least forty percent (40 percent) of the total area of the development remains permanently in open space. Every residential development in the R-2 and OR-MU district shall be developed so that at least twenty percent (20 percent) of the total area of the development remains permanently as open space. **(AMENDED 9/05/95; 6/20/06; 6/12/07)**

(d) Subject to subsection (g), every residential development containing at least 25 lots or dwelling units shall contain, as part of its required open space, one or more areas that are relatively flat, well drained, grassed, and otherwise well suited for use as a play field:

- (1) Each such area shall contain a minimum of 20,000 square feet configured in such a manner as to be useful as a play field.
- (2) Every development covered by this subsection shall set aside in one or more play fields meeting the criteria of this subsection a minimum of 400 square feet of area per lot or dwelling unit within the development.
- (3) Play fields provided under this section shall be located with due regard for the safety and convenience of those using such facilities as well as the welfare of residents living nearby. The play fields required by this subsection shall be located such that 90% of the lots or dwelling units within any development that is required to install such play field are within 1,500 feet of a play field installed to meet the requirements of this subsection, unless the developer demonstrates by clear and convincing evidence that adherence to this requirement would not be feasible.
- (4) Play fields constructed to meet the requirements of this subsection may be used by the developer to satisfy the active recreational requirements set forth in Section 15-196 as well as the open space requirements of this section. However, the recreation points assigned to such play fields shall be based upon the actual cost of constructing such play fields, exclusive of land costs. **(AMENDED 5/25/99)**

PART III. WATER QUALITY BUFFERS

Section 15-269 Findings, Purpose and Applicability (REPEALED AND REWRITTEN 3/24/09; REWRITTEN 10/26/10; AMENDED 3/4/14)

(a) The Council finds that:

- (1) Soil and pollutants carried overland from upstream land uses can be effectively trapped by leaving a relatively undisturbed strip of vegetation parallel and adjacent to a drainage feature.
- (2) Properly managed overland water flow can be directed into this water quality buffer area in a manner that will minimize the concentration of flow and promote diffuse flow and infiltration of the water.
- (3) Sediments and other pollutants carried by water will be reduced as a result of the dispersion and infiltration of flow and associated filtering, absorption, and uptake of pollutants.

(b) The purpose of this part is to protect, preserve, and enhance water quality buffers in order to maintain their pollutant removal functions and protect the quality of surface waters and water supplies. With regard to the Jordan Buffer Rules, it should be noted that nutrient removal is the primary function of riparian buffers. The NC Division of Water Quality shall administer the portion of these requirements of Rule 15 A NCAC 02B .0267 and .0268 (Jordan Water Supply Nutrient Strategy: Protection of Existing Riparian Buffers and Mitigation of Existing Riparian Buffers, respectively) for activities conducted under the authority of the State, the United States, multiple jurisdictions, or local units of governments, and forest harvesting and agricultural activities. The Town of Carrboro shall administer those provisions for all other landowners and shall administer the remaining provisions of this Article for all other land disturbing activities and developments.

(c) Wetlands adjacent to surface waters or within 50 feet of surface waters shall be considered as part of the water quality buffers but are also regulated pursuant to other State and Federal regulations.

Section 15-269.1 Definitions.

For purposes of this part, the following terms shall have the meaning as indicated:

- (a) 'Access Trails' means pedestrian trails constructed of pervious or impervious surfaces, and related structures to access a surface water including boardwalks, steps, rails, signage.

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- (b) 'Archaeological Activities' means activities conducted by a Registered Professional Archaeologist (RPA).
- (c) 'Buffer' means a water quality buffer, or an undeveloped area parallel and adjacent to a drainage feature to protect and enhance water quality.
- (d) 'DBH' means diameter at breast height of a tree measured at 4.5 feet above ground surface level.
- (e) 'Development' means the same as defined in Rule 15A NCAC 2B .0202(23).
- (f) 'Diffuse flow' means flow that generally moves down slope via sheet flow rather than concentrating in rills, gullies, and ditches and in doing so is able to infiltrate into the soil and plant root zone.
- (g) 'Ditch' means a human-made channel other than a modified natural stream.
- (h) 'Ephemeral stream' means a drainage feature that carries only surface runoff in direct response to precipitation. An ephemeral stream may or may not have a well-defined channel and the stream bed is always above the water table. An ephemeral stream lacks the biological, hydrological, and physical characteristics commonly associated with perennial or intermittent streams.
- (i) 'Existing development' means development, other than that associated with agricultural or forest management activities that meets one of the following criteria:
 - 1. It either is built or has established a vested right based on statutory or common law as interpreted by the courts, for projects that do not require a state permit, as of the effective date of either local new development stormwater programs implemented under Rule 15A NCAC 2B .0265 (Jordan Water Supply Nutrient Strategy: Stormwater Management for New Development) or, for projects requiring a state permit, as of the applicable compliance date established in Rule 15A NCAC 2B .0271 (Jordan Water Supply Nutrient Strategy: Stormwater Management for New Development), Items (5) and (6); or
 - 2. It occurs after the compliance date set out in Sub-Item (4)(d) of Rule .0265 (Jordan Water Supply Nutrient Strategy: Stormwater Management for New Development) but does not result in a net increase in built-upon area.
- (j) 'Greenway / Hiking Trails' means pedestrian and bicycle trails constructed of pervious or impervious surfaces and related structures including but not limited to boardwalks, steps, rails, and signage and that generally run parallel to the shoreline.
- (k) 'High Value Tree' means a tree that meets or exceeds the following standards: for pine species, 14-inch DBH or greater or 18-inch or greater stump diameter; or for

hardwoods and wetland species, 16-inch DBH or greater or 24-inch or greater stump diameter.

- (l) 'Intermittent stream' means a well-defined channel that contains water for only part of the year, typically during winter and spring when the aquatic bed is below the water table. The flow may be heavily supplemented by stormwater runoff. An intermittent stream often lacks the biological and hydrological characteristics commonly associated with the continuous conveyance of water.
- (m) 'New development,' for the purpose of this Article, means any development project that does not meet the definition of existing development set out in this Section.
- (n) 'Perennial stream' means a well-defined channel that contains water year round during a year of normal rainfall with the aquatic bed located below the water table for most of the year. Groundwater is the primary source of water for a perennial stream, but it also carries stormwater runoff. A perennial stream exhibits the typical biological, hydrological, and physical characteristics commonly associated with the continuous conveyance of water.
- (o) For purposes of this Article only, 'Public utility' means any governmental entity, nonprofit organization, corporation, or any entity defined as a public utility for any purpose by Section 62.3 of the North Carolina General Statutes that is engaged in the production, generation, transmission, delivery, collection, or storage of water, sewage electricity, gas, oil, or electronic signals 'Riparian buffer enhancement' is defined as the process of converting a non-forested riparian area, where woody vegetation density is greater than or equal to 100 trees per acre but less than 200 trees per acre, to a forested riparian buffer area. The enhanced, forested riparian buffer area shall include at least two native hardwood tree species planted at a density sufficient to provide 320 trees per acres at maturity, and diffuse flow through the riparian buffer shall be maintained.
- (p) 'Riparian buffer restoration' is defined as the process of converting a non-forested riparian area, where woody vegetation density is less than 100 trees per acre, to a forested riparian buffer area. The restored, forested riparian buffer area shall include predominately native hardwood tree species planted at a density sufficient to provide 320 trees per acres at maturity, and diffuse flow through the riparian buffer shall be maintained.
- (q) 'Shoreline stabilization' is the in-place stabilization of an eroding shoreline. Stabilization techniques which include "soft" methods or natural materials (such as root wads or rock vanes) may be considered as part of a restoration design. However, stabilization techniques that consist primarily of "hard" engineering, such as concrete line channels, riprap or gabions, while providing bank stabilization, shall not be considered stream restoration.
- (r) 'Stream' means a body of concentrated flowing water in a natural low area or natural channel on the land surface.

- (s) 'Stream restoration' is defined as the process of converting an unstable, altered or degraded stream corridor, including adjacent riparian zone and flood-prone areas to its natural or referenced, stable conditions considering recent and future watershed conditions. This process also includes restoring the geomorphic dimension, pattern, and profile as well as biological and chemical integrity, including transport of water and sediment produced by the stream's watershed in order to achieve dynamic equilibrium. 'Referenced' or 'referenced reach' means a stable stream that is in dynamic equilibrium with its valley and contributing watershed. A reference reach can be used to develop natural channel design criteria for stream restoration projects.
- (t) 'Stump diameter' means the diameter of a tree measured at six inches above the ground surface level.
- (u) 'Surface waters' means any ephemeral, intermittent, or perennial stream, lake, pond, or reservoir, and including waters of the state as defined in G.S. 143-212 except underground waters".
- (v) 'Temporary road' means a road constructed temporarily for equipment access to build or replace hydraulic conveyance structures or water dependent structures, or to maintain public traffic during construction.
- (w) 'Tree,' for the purposes of this Part, means a woody plant with a DBH equal to or exceeding five inches or a stump diameter exceeding six inches.
- (x) 'Water dependent structures' are those structures for which the use requires access or proximity to or siting within surface waters to fulfill its basic purpose, such as boat ramps, boat houses, docks and bulkheads.

Section 15-269.2 Required Buffers.

(a) Subject to the remaining provisions of this part, the water quality buffer areas described in this section are hereby designated as described below. The width of these buffers shall be as prescribed in Section 15-269.3. Disturbance of the area within, or outside causing hydrologic impacts upon, these buffers is restricted or prohibited as provided in Sections 15-269.4 and 15-269.5.

(b) Buffers shall be established adjacent to all surface waters designated as such on either the most recent version of the soil survey map prepared by the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, ii the most recent version of the 1:24,000 scale (7.5 minute) quadrangle topographic maps prepared by the United States Geologic Survey (USGS), or iii other more accurate mapping approved by the Geographic Information Coordinating Council (GICC) and the N.C. Environmental Management Commission (EMC). Prior to approving a map under item iii., the EMC shall provide a 30-day public notice and opportunity for public comment.

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- (1) If surface water is not designated as such on any of the foregoing maps, then the buffer requirements of this article applicable to perennial streams, intermittent streams, lakes, or ponds that are shown on such maps shall not apply, but buffers applicable to ephemeral streams may apply.
- (2) Where the specific origination point of a stream is in question, a publication of the N.C. Division of Water Quality entitled *Identification Methods for the Origins of Intermittent and Perennial Streams* shall be used by town representatives who have successfully completed the Division's Surface Water Identification Training Certification course to establish that point.
- (3) When a landowner or other affected party believes that surface waters shown on the above described maps have been inaccurately depicted as perennial streams, intermittent stream, lakes or ponds, then such landowner or other affected party may have an on-site evaluation completed by a party who has successfully completed the NC Division of Water Quality *Surface Water Identification Training Certification* course, its successor, or other equivalent training curriculum approved by the Division, and submit the results of that evaluation to the town. Any disputes over onsite determinations made according to this Item shall be referred to the Director of the Division of Water Quality c/o the 401 Oversight Express Permitting Unit, or its successor, in writing. The Director's determination is subject to review as provided in Articles 3 and 4 of G.S. 150B.

(c) Buffers shall also be established adjacent to all ephemeral streams and ponds not shown on the above described maps that have a contributing drainage area that is at least five acres in size, as depicted in the Town's GIS database.

- (1) When a landowner or other affected party believes that the designation of an area by the town as an ephemeral stream or pond with a contributing drainage area of at least five acres is in error, such landowner or other affected party may request that Town staff perform an onsite visit and/or submit to the Town data sufficient to make this case. Upon request, Town staff shall make a site visit and consider the information submitted by the landowner or other affected party as well as other relevant information.
- (2) The decision as to the existence of an ephemeral stream or pond with a contributing drainage area of at least five acres shall be made by the permit issuing authority when it makes a final decision on the issuance of the permit.

(d) The administrator may require that the precise location of any surface water be surveyed and accurately shown on development plans whenever necessary to ensure that a proposed development complies with the provisions of this article.

Section 15-269.3 Width of Buffers

(a) ZONES OF THE RIPARIAN BUFFER. The protected riparian buffer shall have two zones as follows:

- (1) A streamside zone ('Zone 1') shall consist of an undisturbed area except as provided for in Section 15-269.5. The function of the streamside zone is to protect the physical and ecological integrity of the stream ecosystem, and filter runoff received from Zone 2. The desired vegetation for Zone 1 is mature forest. The location of Zone 1 shall be as follows:
 - a. Zone 1 shall begin at the most landward limit of the top of the bank. Zone 1 shall extend landward on either side of perennial and intermittent stream, and ephemeral streams with clearly defined streambanks, as indicated in Table 1, measured horizontally on a line perpendicular to a vertical line marking the origin of the buffer as defined above. For ephemeral streams without clearly defined streambanks, Zone 1 shall be measured from the centerline of the stream.
 - b. For ponds, lakes and reservoirs, Zone 1 shall begin at the most landward limit of the normal water level and extend landward as indicated in Table 1, measured horizontally on a line perpendicular to a vertical line marking the edge of the surface water.
- (2) Zone 2 shall consist of an undisturbed area except as provided for in Section 15-269.5. The functions of this zone are to: protect the streamside zone, to filter runoff from upland development, and deliver runoff to Zone 1 in a dispersed fashion. Grading and revegetating Zone 2 is allowed provided that the health of the vegetation in Zone 1 is not compromised. Zone 2 shall begin at the outer edge of Zone 1 and extend landward as indicated in Table 1 as measured horizontally on a line perpendicular to the surface water. The desired vegetation for this zone is mature native vegetation; forest cover is encouraged.
- (3) The total buffer width shall be the sum of the widths of the two zones, as indicated in Table 1, and shall extend on all sides of the waterbody.

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Table 1: Required Minimum Buffer Width (*)

Waterbody type	Zone 1 width		Zone 2 width		Total width	
	Watershed	Outside of Watershed	Watershed	Outside of Watershed	Watershed	Outside of Watershed
Perennial Streams, Ponds, Lakes, Reservoirs	100'	50'	--	50'	100'	100'
Intermittent Streams, Ponds	60'	30'	--	30'	60'	60'
Ephemeral Streams, Ponds	--	--	30'	15'	30'	15'

* “Watershed” means within the University Lake Watershed, and “Outside of watershed” means the remainder of the Town’s planning jurisdiction. For streams, the width indicated is in one direction from the stream channel; the total width is therefore twice the width indicated.

- (4) Notwithstanding the other provisions of this section, in no case shall the width of any buffer be less extensive than the special flood hazard area for the same stream, pond, or lake drainage feature designated in accordance with the provisions of Part I of this article.

Section 15- 269.4 Diffuse Flow Requirement.

Concentrated runoff from new ditches or human-made conveyances shall be converted to diffuse flow at non-erosive velocities before the runoff enters the buffer, and maintained in the buffer by dispersing runoff that has concentrated into rills, gullies, and ditches, and reestablishing vegetation where concentrated flow has displaced vegetation. Corrective action to restore diffuse flow shall be taken if necessary to impede the formation or expansion of erosion rills or gullies. Where site conditions constrain the ability to ensure diffuse flow through both Zones 1 and 2, emphasis will be placed on ensuring diffuse flow through Zone 1, as provided for in 15-269.3. No new engineered stormwater devices or conveyances are allowed in the buffers except as provided for in Section 15-269.5.

Section 15-269.5 Exempt and Allowable Activities.

(a) The table set forth in subsection (d) below sets out the activities and their designation under this part as exempt, allowable, or allowable with mitigation, except as provided for in 15-269.2. All activities not designated as exempt, allowable, or allowable with mitigation are prohibited within the buffer unless a variance is granted pursuant to Section 15-269.8.

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(b) Activities designated in the table below as exempt, allowable, and allowable with mitigation shall be subject to the following requirements. All activities shall be designed, constructed and maintained to minimize soil and vegetation disturbance and to provide the maximum water quality protection practicable, including construction, monitoring, and maintenance activities. Activities designated in the table as allowable and allowable with mitigation require written authorization from the Town.

- (1) Exempt. Activities designated as exempt are allowed within the buffer. In addition, exempt uses shall meet the requirements listed in the table and the accompanying notes for the specific use.
- (2) Allowable. Activities designated as allowable are permissible within the buffer provided that there are no practical alternatives to the requested use as determined in accordance with Section 15-269.6.
- (3) Allowable With Mitigation. Activities designated as allowable with mitigation are permissible within the buffer provided that there are no practical alternatives to the requested use as determined in accordance with Section 15-269.6, and an appropriate mitigation strategy has been approved pursuant to Section 15-269.7.

(c) For public utilities as defined in this Article, the activities and their designation as set forth in the table in subsection (d) apply to expansions and extensions. The requirements do not apply to routine or emergency maintenance and repairs.

(d) Table of Exempt and Allowable Activities in Water Quality Buffers (AMENDED 3/4/14)

[illegible]

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Activity	Exempt	Allowable	Allowable with Mitigation
• Drainage of a pond in a natural drainage way provided that a new riparian buffer that meets the requirements of this section is established adjacent to the new channel. [Ponds that are not in a natural drainage way are not subject to the buffer requirements of this part.] AMENDED 2/21/12)	X		
Scientific studies and stream gauging	X		
Stormwater BMPs:			
• Constructed wetlands in Zone 1, if not closer than 30' to surface waters and diffuse flow is provided into the remainder of Zone 1.		X	
• Wet detention, bioretention, and constructed wetlands in Zone 2 if diffuse flow of discharge is provided into Zone 1		X	
See Wetland, stream and buffer restoration			
Shoreline stabilization, including armoring of stream banks with rip rap or retaining walls			X
Temporary sediment and erosion control devices provided that the disturbed area is restored to preconstruction topographic and hydrologic conditions and comparable vegetation is replanted immediately after construction is complete. Tree planting may occur during the dormant season; the restored buffer shall comply with Section 15-269.7(g) within five years:	X		
• In Zone 2, provided that the vegetation in Zone 1 is not compromised, that discharge is released as diffuse flow in accordance with Section 15-269.5 , and that ground cover is established within time frames required by the Sedimentation and Erosion Control Act In Zones 1 and 2 to control impacts associated with uses approved by the Town or that have received a variance provided that sediment and erosion control for upland areas is addressed, to the maximum extent practical, outside the buffer.		X	
• In-stream temporary erosion and sediment control measures for work within a stream channel that is authorized under Sections 401 and 404 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act.	X		
• In-stream temporary erosion and sediment control measures for work within a stream channel.		X	
Water dependent structures where installation and use result in disturbance to riparian buffers.		X	

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Activity	Exempt	Allowable	Allowable with Mitigation
Water wells <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single family residential water wells • All other water wells 	X	X	
Wetland, stream and buffer restoration that results in impacts to the riparian buffers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wetland, stream and buffer restoration that requires DWQ approval for the use of a 401 Water Quality Certification • Wetland, stream and buffer restoration that does not require DWQ approval for the use of a 401 Water Quality Certification 	X	X	
Miscellaneous			
Archaeological activities	X		
Fences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fences provided that disturbance is minimized and installation does not result in removal of trees as defined in Section 15-316 • Fences provided that disturbance is minimized and installation results in removal of trees as defined in Section 15-316 	X	X	
Grading and revegetation in Zone 2 only provided that diffuse flow and the health of existing vegetation in Zone 1 is not compromised and disturbed areas are stabilized until they are revegetated		X	
Maintenance access on modified natural streams: a grassed travel way on one side of the water body where less impacting alternatives are not practical. The width and specifications of the travel way shall be only that needed for equipment access and operation. The travel way shall be located to maximize stream shading.		X	
Mining activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mining activities that are covered by the Mining Act provided that new buffers that meet the requirements of this section are established adjacent to the relocated channels Mining activities that are not covered by the Mining Act OR where new buffers that meet the requirements of this section are not established adjacent to the relocated channels Wastewater or mining dewatering wells with approved NPDES permit 	X	X	X

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Activity	Exempt	Allowable	Allowable with Mitigation
Preservation or maintenance of historic or cultural sites	X		
Protection of existing structures, facilities and stream banks when this requires additional disturbance of the riparian buffer or the stream channel		X	
Removal of previous fill or debris provided that diffuse flow is maintained, a stabilizing ground cover sufficient to restrain erosion is established, and any woody vegetation removed is restored		X	
Wildlife passage structures		X	

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Recreation			
<p>Access trails: Pedestrian access trails leading to the surface water, docks, fishing piers, boat ramps and other water dependent activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian access trails that are restricted to the minimum width practicable and do not exceed 4 feet in width of buffer disturbance, and provided that installation and use does not result in removal of trees as defined in Section 15-316 and no impervious surface is added to the buffer. • Pedestrian access trails that exceed 4 feet in width of buffer disturbance, the installation or use results in removal of trees as defined in this Section or impervious surface is added to the buffer. 	X	X	
Canoe Access provided that installation and use does not result in removal of trees as defined in Section 15-316 and no impervious surface is added to the buffer.	X		
Greenway / hiking trails ¹ designed, constructed and maintained to maximize nutrient removal and erosion protection, minimize adverse effects on aquatic life and habitat, and protect water quality to the maximum extent practical		X	
<p>Playground equipment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playground equipment on single family lots provided that installation and use does not result in removal of vegetation • Playground equipment installed on lands other than single-family lots or that requires removal of vegetation 	X	X	
Transportation			
Bridges		X	

¹ To the extent practicable, greenway easements shall be located a minimum of 10 feet from the top of bank; surfaces shall be a minimum of 15 feet from the top of bank

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<p>Driveway crossings of streams and other surface waters subject to this Section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual driveway crossings that disturb equal to or less than 25 linear feet or 2,500 square feet of buffer • Individual driveway crossings that disturb greater than 25 linear feet or 2,500 square feet of buffer • Multiple driveway crossings in any development that cumulatively disturbs equal to or less than 150 linear feet or one-third of an acre of buffer • Multiple driveway crossings in any development that cumulatively disturbs greater than 150 linear feet or one-third of an acre of buffer • Driveway impacts other than crossing of a stream or other surface waters subject to this Section 	X	X X	X X
Railroad impacts other than crossings of streams and other surface waters subject to this Part.			X
<p>Railroad crossings of streams and other surface water drainage features subject to this Part:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Railroad crossings that impact equal to or less than 40 linear feet of riparian buffer • Railroad crossings that impact greater than 40 linear feet but equal to or less than 150 linear feet or one-third of an acre of riparian buffer • Railroad crossings that impact greater than 150 linear feet or one-third of an acre of riparian buffer 	X	X	X
<p>Road relocation: Relocation of existing private access roads associated with public road projects where necessary for public safety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than or equal to 2,500 square feet of buffer impact • Greater than 2,500 square feet of buffer impact 		X	X

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<p>Temporary roads, provided that restoration activities, including re-establishment of pre-construction topographic and hydrologic conditions and replanting with comparable vegetation occur immediately after construction. Tree planting may occur during the dormant season; the restored buffer shall comply with Section 15-269.7(g) within five years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than or equal to 2,500 square feet of buffer disturbance • Greater than 2,500 square feet of buffer disturbance • Associated with culvert installation of bridge construction or replacement 	X	X	
<p>Transportation (vehicular, bike) crossings of streams and other surface waters subject to this Section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation crossings that impact equal to or less than 40 linear feet of riparian buffer • Transportation crossings that impact greater than 40 linear feet but equal to or less than 150 linear feet or one-third of an acre of riparian buffer • Transportation crossings that impact greater than 150 linear feet or one-third of an acre of riparian buffer 	X	X	X
<p>Transportation impacts other than crossings of streams and other surface waters subject to this Section</p>			X
<p>Vehicle access roads and boat ramps leading to the surface water, docks, fishing piers, and other water dependent activities, but not crossing the surface water and having a minimum practicable width of not more than 10 feet.</p>		X	

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Utilities			
Electric utility, aerial, perpendicular crossings ^{2,3,4} : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disturb equal to or less than 100 linear feet of buffer • Disturb greater than 100 linear feet of buffer 	X	X	
Electric utility, aerial, other than perpendicular crossings ³ : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts greater than 50 feet from surface waters • Impacts within 30-50 feet of surface waters • Impacts within 30 feet of surface waters^{2,4,5} 	X	X	X
Electric utility, underground, perpendicular crossings ^{3,4,6} : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disturb less than or equal to 40 linear feet of buffer • Disturb greater than 40 linear feet of buffer 	X	X	

² Provided that within 30 feet of surface waters, all of the following BMPs for overhead utility lines are used. If all of these BMPs are not used, then the overhead utility lines shall require a no practical alternative evaluation by the Administrator as defined in Section 15-269.6.

- A zone at least 10 feet wide immediately adjacent to the water body shall be managed such that only vegetation that poses a hazard or has the potential to grow tall enough to interfere with the line is removed.
- Woody vegetation shall be cleared by hand. No land grubbing or grading is allowed.
- Vegetative root systems shall be left intact to maintain the integrity of the soil. Stumps shall remain where trees are cut.
- Riprap shall not be used unless it is necessary to stabilize a tower.
- No fertilizer shall be used other than a one-time application to re-establish vegetation.
- Construction activities shall minimize the removal of woody vegetation, the extent of the disturbed area, and the time in which areas remain in a disturbed state.
- Active measures shall be taken after construction and during routine maintenance to ensure diffuse flow of stormwater through the buffer.
- In wetlands, mats shall be utilized to minimize soil disturbance.

³ Perpendicular crossings are those that intersect the surface water at an angle between 75 degrees and 105 degrees.

⁴ Provided that poles or aerial infrastructure shall not be installed within 10 feet of a water body unless the Administrator completes a no practical alternative evaluation as defined in Section 15-269.6

⁵ Provided that:

- No heavy equipment shall be used within 30 feet of surface waters.
- A tree protection plan shall be developed and approved by Administrator that will protect the buffer to the maximum extent practicable.
- Trees shall be: 1) felled so as not to damage trees not intended for removal or stream banks; and 2) removed by chain.
- No permanent felling of trees occurs in protected buffers or streams.
- Stumps shall be removed only by grinding.
- Construction activities shall minimize the removal of woody vegetation, the extent of the disturbed area, and the time in which areas remain in a disturbed state.
- At the completion of the project the disturbed area shall be stabilized with native vegetation.
- The condition and use of the area within 50 feet of surface waters shall be consistent with Sections 15-269.3 and 15-269.4.

⁶ •A tree protection plan shall be developed and approved by Administrator that will protect the buffer to the maximum extent practicable.

- Trees shall be felled so as not to damage trees not intended for removal or stream banks.
- Construction activities shall minimize the removal of woody vegetation, the extent of the disturbed area, and the time in which areas remain in a disturbed state.
- Stump grinding is allowable only for stumps more than 30 feet from surface waters.

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Electric utility, underground, other than perpendicular crossings ^{3,6} : • Impacts greater than 50 feet from surface waters • Impacts within 30-50 feet of surface waters • Impacts within 30 feet of surface waters ⁵	X	X	X
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• Within 30 feet of surface water, all of the following BMPs for underground utility lines shall be used. If all of these BMPs are not used, then the underground utility line shall require a no practical alternative evaluation by the Administrator, as defined in Section 15-269.6.

- Trees shall be removed by chain. Woody vegetation shall be cleared by hand. No land grubbing or grading is allowed.
 - Vegetative root systems shall be left intact to maintain the integrity of the soil. Stumps shall remain, except in the trench created for the line installation.
 - Underground cables shall be installed by vibratory plow or trenching.
 - The trench shall be backfilled with the excavated soil material immediately following cable installation.
 - No fertilizer shall be used other than a one-time application to re-establish vegetation.
 - In wetlands, mats shall be utilized to minimize soil disturbance.
 - At the completion of the project the disturbed area shall be stabilized with native vegetation.
 - The condition and use of the area within 50 feet of surface waters shall be consistent with Sections 15-269.3 and 15-269.4
- ⁷ All sewer crossings shall be protected from damage and risk of future leakage to the maximum extent practicable using ductile iron and other appropriate construction materials and practices.
- ⁸ The width of the corridor that is maintained to exclude woody vegetation will not exceed 20 feet in width except to accommodate vehicle turnaround, preparedness for emergency situations, and state and federal regulatory standards.

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<p>Non-electric utility, perpendicular crossings^{3,4,6,7}:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disturb equal to or less than 40 linear feet of buffer with a maintenance corridor equal to or less than 10 feet in width • Disturb equal to or less than 40 linear feet of buffer with a maintenance corridor greater than 10 feet in width • Disturb greater than 40 linear feet but equal to or less than 150 linear feet of buffer with a maintenance corridor equal to or less than 10 feet in width • Disturb greater than 40 linear feet but equal to or less than 150 linear feet of buffer with a maintenance corridor greater than 10 feet in width • Disturb greater than 150 linear feet of buffer 	X	X	X
<p>Non-electric utility, other than perpendicular crossings^{3,6}:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts greater than 50 feet from surface waters • Impacts within 30-50 feet of surface waters • Impacts within 30 feet of surface waters^{5,8} 	X	X	X
Vegetation Management			
Forest harvesting – See Section 15-319.1			
<p>Fertilizer application:</p> <p>One-time fertilizer application to establish vegetation</p>	X		
<p>Vegetation management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency fire control measures provided that topography is restored • Mowing and harvesting of plant products in Zone 2 only • Planting vegetation to enhance the riparian buffer • Pruning forest vegetation provided that the health and function of the forest vegetation is not compromised • Removal of individual trees which are dead, diseased, or damaged, are in danger of causing damage to dwellings, other structures or human life, or are imminently endangering the stability of the streambank • Removal of poison ivy • Removal of invasive exotic vegetation as defined in Smith, Cherri L., 1998 <i>Exotic Plant Guidelines</i>. DENR, Division of Parks and Recreation. Raleigh, N.C. Guideline # 30, or a more recent version or alternative reference approved by the NC EMC. 	<p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p>		

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(e) Additional Setback Requirements for Specific Water Pollution Hazards

The following activities are designated as potential water pollution hazards, and must be set back from any stream or waterbody by the required buffer width provided in 15-269.3 or the distance indicated below, whichever is greater:

Activity	Setback
Above or below ground storage of hazardous substances, petroleum or biofuels	150 feet
Animal feedlot operations	250 feet
Land application of biosolids	100 feet
Solid waste landfills or junkyards	300 feet

(f) **(REPEALED 2/21/12)**

(g) No new lot may be created through a major or minor subdivision process that would be undevelopable under the provisions of this part because of the amount or dimensions of protective buffer land included in it, unless such lot has already been developed, or it plainly appears that such lot is intended to be devoted to permanent open space use.

(h) Areas set aside as protective stream buffers as required by this part may be counted towards required open space as set out in Sections 15-198, so long as they meet all the provisions of that section.

(i) Nothing in this part shall prevent a single family residence (including a mobile home) from being located within the required protective stream buffer areas if such home: 1) replaces a home that had been located within such buffer prior to the effective date of this part and is located on the same location as the previous home; or 2) is located on a mobile home pad or foundation that was in existence on the effective date of this part.

(j) Nothing in this part shall prevent the expansion of an existing single family detached residence (including an attached garage) into any buffer area that adjoins an ephemeral stream, if and to the extent that such area was not a regulated stream buffer under the provisions of this chapter in effect prior to the effective date of this section.

Section 15-269.6 Determination of “No Practical Alternatives”.

(a) Persons who wish to undertake uses designated as allowable or allowable with mitigation under Section 15-269.5 or wish to meet a mitigation requirement provided under Section 15-269.7(g) shall submit a written request to the permit issuing authority for a “no practical alternatives” determination. The applicant shall certify that the criteria identified in subsection (b) are met and may submit any information deemed relevant to the permit issuing authority determination, in addition to the plans and other information submitted as part of the application for a permit under Article IV of this chapter.

(b) The permit issuing authority shall make a “no practical alternatives” determination if, after reviewing the project plans and any other applicable information, it concludes that:

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- (1) The basic project purpose cannot be practically accomplished in a manner that would better minimize disturbance, preserve aquatic life and habitat, and protect water quality, and;
 - (2) Best management practices shall be used if necessary to minimize disturbance, preserve aquatic life and habitat, and protect water quality.
- (c) Requests for a “no practical alternatives” determination shall be reviewed and either approved or denied. The permit issuing authority shall issue the decision in writing.
- (d) If the “no practical alternatives” determination is issued in the context of a zoning permit, then the determination is to be made within 60 days of the submission of a completed application, unless:
- (1) The applicant agrees, in writing, to a longer period;
 - (2) The local government determines that the applicant has failed to furnish requested information necessary to the local government's decision;
 - (3) The applicant refuses access to its records or premises for the purpose of gathering information necessary to the local government's decision.
- (e) Any appeals of determinations regarding determinations of “no practical alternatives” shall be referred to the Director of DWQ. The Director's decision is subject to review as provided in G.S. 150B Articles 3 and 4.

Section 15-269.7 Mitigation for Water Quality Buffers. (REWRITTEN 5/22/12)

- (a) **PURPOSE.** The purpose of this section is to set forth the mitigation requirements for water quality buffer protection in relation to either a use shown in Section 15-269.5(d) as “allowable with mitigation” or a use for which a variance has been granted pursuant to Section 15-92(j).
- (b) **THE AREA OF MITIGATION.** Staff shall determine the required area of mitigation, which shall apply to all mitigation options identified in this section, according to the following:
- (1) The impacts in square feet to each zone of the buffer shall be determined by adding the area of the footprint of the activity causing the impact to the riparian buffer, including any clearing and grading within the buffer necessary to accommodate other activities, and the area of any ongoing maintenance corridors within the buffer associated with the activity.
 - (2) The required area of mitigation shall be determined by applying the following multipliers to the impacts determined in subsection (b)(1) to each zone of the riparian buffer:
 - a. Impacts to Zone one of the riparian buffer shall be multiplied by three;

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- b. Impacts to Zone two of the riparian buffer shall be multiplied by one and one-half.

(c) **THE LOCATION OF MITIGATION.** The mitigation effort shall be located within the Town's planning jurisdiction, and as close to the location of the impact as feasible.

(d) **OPTIONS FOR MEETING THE MITIGATION DETERMINATION.**
(AMENDED 5/22/12)

- (1) For impacts to buffers on intermittent and perennial streams, payment of a compensatory mitigation fee to the Riparian Buffer Restoration Fund (pursuant to 15A NCAC 02B .0269, Jordan Water Supply Nutrient Strategy: Riparian Mitigation Fees to the NC Ecosystem Enhancement Program), contingent upon acceptance of payments by the NC Ecosystem Enhancement Program, or to a private mitigation bank so long as the mitigation programs alternative to the Riparian Buffer Restoration Fund comply with the most current banking requirements of the US Army Corps of Engineers and the most current applicable trading criteria associated with water quality mitigation. For impacts to ephemeral streams, payment may be made only to the Town's Water Quality Enhancement Fund.
- (2) Donation of real property or of an interest in real property pursuant to subsection (f) of this Section;
- (3) Riparian buffer enhancement, or riparian buffer restoration. This shall be accomplished by the applicant after submittal and approval of a restoration plan pursuant to subsection (g) of this Section.

(e) **PAYMENT TO THE WATER QUALITY ENHANCEMENT FUND.** Persons who choose to satisfy their mitigation determination by paying a compensatory mitigation fee to the Water Quality Enhancement Fund as allowed here shall use the following procedure:

- (1) The Town shall establish annually, and include on the Miscellaneous Fees and Charges Schedule, a per square foot buffer mitigation fee. The fee shall be based upon a reasonable estimate of the per square foot cost of accomplishing riparian buffer restoration.
- (2) The amount of the compensatory mitigation fee due shall be determined by multiplying the area in square feet of mitigation calculated in accordance with subsection (b) by the per square foot buffer mitigation fee.
- (3) The required fee shall be submitted to the Town prior to construction plan approval.

(f) **DONATION OF PROPERTY.** Persons who choose to satisfy their mitigation determination by donating real property or an interest in real property to the Town shall meet the following requirements:

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- (1) The donation of real property interests may be used to either partially or fully satisfy the payment of a compensatory mitigation fee to the Riparian Buffer Restoration Fund, the Water Quality Enhancement Fund, or another alternative, private mitigation bank. The value of the property interest shall be determined by an appraisal performed in accordance with subsection (f)(4)d of this Section. The donation shall satisfy the mitigation determination if the appraised value of the donated property interest is equal to or greater than the required fee. If the appraised value of the donated property interest is less than the required fee, the applicant shall pay the remaining balance due.
- (2) The donation of conservation easements to satisfy compensatory mitigation requirements shall be accepted only if the conservation easement is granted in perpetuity.
- (3) Donation of real property interests to satisfy the mitigation determination shall be accepted only if such property meets all of the following requirements:
 - a. The property shall be located within an area that is identified as a priority for restoration in, or is otherwise consistent with the goals of the Basinwide Wetlands and Riparian Restoration Plan for the Cape Fear River Basin developed by the NC Division of Water Quality.
 - b. The property shall contain riparian buffers not currently protected by the State's riparian buffer protection program that are in need of restoration.
 - c. The restorable riparian buffer on the property shall have a minimum length of 1000 linear feet along a surface water and a minimum width of 50 feet as measured horizontally on a line perpendicular to the surface water.
 - d. The size of the restorable riparian buffer on the property to be donated shall equal or exceed the acreage of riparian buffer required to be mitigated under the mitigation responsibility determined pursuant to Item (b) of this Section.
 - e. The property shall not require excessive measures for successful restoration, such as removal of structures or infrastructure. Restoration of the property shall be capable of fully offsetting the adverse impacts of the requested use.
 - f. The property shall be suitable to be successfully restored, based on existing hydrology, soils, and vegetation.
 - g. The estimated cost of restoring and maintaining the property shall not exceed the value of the property minus site identification and land acquisition costs.
 - h. The property shall not contain any building, structure, object, site, district that is listed in the National Register of Historic Places established pursuant to Public Law 89-665, 16 U.S.C. 470 as amended.

Art. XVI. FLOOD DAMAGE PREVENTION, STORMWATER MANAGEMENT, AND WATERSHED PROTECTION

- i. The property shall not contain any hazardous substance or solid waste.
 - j. The property shall not contain structures or materials that present health or safety problems to the general public. If wells, septic, water or sewer connections exist, they shall be filled, remediated or closed at owner's expense in accordance with state and local health and safety regulations.
 - k. The property and adjacent properties shall not have prior, current, and known future land use that would inhibit the function of the restoration effort.
 - l. The property shall not have any encumbrances or conditions on the transfer of the property interests.
- (4) At the expense of the applicant or donor, the following information shall be submitted to the Town with any proposal for donations or dedications of interest in real property:
- a. Documentation that the property meets the requirements laid out in subsection (f)(3) of this Section;
 - b. USGS Survey 1:24,000 scale topographic map, county tax map, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service County Soil Survey Map, and county road map showing the location of the property to be donated along with information on existing site conditions, vegetation types, presence of existing structures and easements;
 - c. A current property survey performed in accordance with the procedures of the North Carolina Department of Administration, State Property Office as identified by the State Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors in "Standards of Practice for Land Surveying in North Carolina." Copies may be obtained from the North Carolina State Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors, 3620 Six Forks Road, Suite 300, Raleigh, North Carolina 27609;
 - d. A current appraisal of the value of the property performed in accordance with the procedures of the North Carolina Department of Administration, State Property Office as identified by the Appraisal Board in the "Uniform Standards of Professional North Carolina Appraisal Practice." Copies may be obtained from the Appraisal Foundation, Publications Department, P.O. Box 96734, Washington, D.C. 20090-6734; and
 - e. A title certificate from a licensed NC attorney.
- (5) The deed conveying the real property interest must be delivered to the Town prior to final plat approval (for mitigation that is required in connection with a subdivision) or to the issuance of a certificate of occupancy (for mitigation that is required in connection with an unsubdivided development) **(AMENDED 5/22/12).**

(g) **RIPARIAN BUFFER RESTORATION OR ENHANCEMENT.** Persons who choose to meet their mitigation requirement through riparian buffer restoration or enhancement shall meet the following requirements:

- (1) The applicant may restore or enhance a non-forested riparian buffer if either of the following applies:
 - a. The area of riparian buffer restoration is equal to the required area of mitigation determined pursuant to subsection (b) of this Section; or
 - b. The area of riparian buffer enhancement is three times larger than the required area of mitigation determined pursuant to subsection (b) of this Section.
- (2) The location of the riparian buffer restoration or enhancement shall comply with the requirements in subsection (d) of this Section.
- (3) The width of the riparian buffer restoration or enhancement site shall comply with Section 15-269.3 as measured horizontally on a line perpendicular to the surface water.
- (4) The applicant shall submit a restoration or enhancement plan for approval. The restoration or enhancement plan shall contain the following:
 - a. A map of the proposed restoration or enhancement site;
 - b. A vegetation plan. The vegetation plan shall include a minimum of at least two native hardwood tree species planted at a density sufficient to provide 320 trees per acre at maturity;
 - c. A grading plan. The site shall be graded in a manner to ensure diffuse flow through the riparian buffer;
 - d. A fertilization plan; and
 - e. A schedule for implementation.
- (5) Within one year after the permit issuing authority has approved the restoration or enhancement plan, the applicant shall present proof that the riparian buffer has been restored or enhanced. If proof is not presented within this timeframe, then the person shall be in violation of the riparian buffer protection program.
- (6) The mitigation area shall be placed under a perpetual conservation easement that will provide for protection of the property's nutrient removal and other water quality enhancement functions.
- (7) The applicant shall submit annual reports for a period of five years after the restoration or enhancement showing that the trees planted have survived and that diffuse flow through the riparian buffer has been maintained. The applicant shall replace trees that do not survive and restore diffuse flow if needed during that five-year period.

(h) The Town may determine that the option described in 15-269.7(e) does not apply to a public utility as defined in this Article if the mitigation options specified above in 15-269.7(f) and (g) are found to not be feasible.

Section 269.8 Permits and Enforcement of Buffer Requirements.

Like the other requirements of this chapter, the provisions of Part III of Article XVI (water quality buffers) shall ordinarily be enforced by requiring compliance as development permits (i.e., zoning, special use permit-B, or special use permit-A) are issued. Accordingly, a determination as to whether a proposed disturbance of a buffer is exempt, allowable, or allowable with mitigation will ordinarily be made in the context of the review process for such a development permit. To the extent that the activities identified in the Table of Exempt and Allowable Activities (set forth in Subsection 15-269.5(d) above) are proposed to be conducted or undertaken under circumstances where no such development permit is likely to be required (e.g., archeological activities or the installation of playground equipment), such activities may not be conducted or undertaken until a buffer disturbance permit has been issued by the zoning administrator. Such permit shall be issued if the administrator concludes, based upon the information submitted with the application for such permit, that the proposed disturbance will be consistent with the requirements of this article.