

**§ 143-215.8D. North Carolina Water Quality Workgroup; Rivernet.**

(a) The Department of Environmental Quality and North Carolina State University shall jointly establish the North Carolina Water Quality Workgroup. The Workgroup shall work collaboratively with the appropriate divisions of the Department of Environmental Quality and North Carolina State University, the Environmental Management Commission, and the Environmental Review Commission to identify the scientific and State agency databases that can be used to formulate public policy regarding the State's water quality, evaluate those databases to determine the information gaps in those databases, and establish the priorities for obtaining the information lacking in those databases. The Workgroup shall have the following duties:

- (1) To address specifically the ongoing need of evaluation, synthesis, and presentation of current scientific knowledge that can be used to formulate public policy on water quality issues.
- (2) To identify knowledge gaps in the current understanding of water quality problems and fill these gaps with appropriate research projects.
- (3) To maintain a web-based water quality data distribution site.
- (4) To organize and evaluate existing scientific and State agency water quality databases.
- (5) To prioritize recognized knowledge gaps in water quality issues for immediate funding.

(b) The North Carolina Water Quality Workgroup shall be composed of no more than 15 members. Those members shall be jointly appointed by the Chancellor of North Carolina State University and the Secretary of Environmental Quality. Any person appointed as a member of the Workgroup shall be knowledgeable in one of the following areas:

- (1) Water Quality Assessment, Water Quality Monitoring, and Water Quality Permitting.
- (2) Nutrient Management.
- (3) Water Pollution Control.
- (4) Waste Management.
- (5) Groundwater Resources.
- (6) Stream Hydrology.
- (7) Aquatic Biology.
- (8) Environmental Education and Web-Based Data Dissemination.

(c) North Carolina State University shall provide meeting facilities for the North Carolina Water Quality Workgroup as requested by the Chair.

(d) The members of the North Carolina Water Quality Workgroup shall elect a Chair. The Chair shall call meetings of the Workgroup and set the meeting agenda.

(e) The Chair of the North Carolina Water Quality Workgroup shall report each year by January 30 to the Environmental Review Commission, to the Cochairs of the House of Representatives and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Natural and Economic Resources, and to the Chancellor of North Carolina State University or the Chancellor's designee on the previous year's activities, findings, and recommendations of the North Carolina Water Quality Workgroup.

(f) The North Carolina Water Quality Workgroup shall develop a water quality monitoring system to be known as Rivernet that effectively uses the combined resources of North Carolina State University and State agencies. The Rivernet system shall be designed to implement advances in monitoring technology and information management systems with web-based data dissemination in the waters that are impaired based on the criteria of the State's basinwide water quality management plans. Water quality and nutrient parameters shall be

continuously monitored at each station, and the data shall be sent back to a centralized computer server.

The Rivernet system shall be coordinated with related data collection and monitoring activities of the Department of Environmental Quality, the Water Resources Research Institute, the North Carolina Water Quality Workgroup, and other research efforts pursued by academic institutions or State government entities. If the North Carolina Water Quality Workgroup chooses to employ a technology for which there are testing procedure guidelines promulgated by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the American Public Health Association, the American Water Works Association, or the Water Environment Federation then the testing procedures shall comply with the appropriate guidelines. If the North Carolina Water Quality Workgroup chooses to employ a technology for which there are no testing procedure guidelines promulgated by any of the groups cited in this subsection, then the North Carolina Water Quality Workgroup may establish testing procedure guidelines.

The Rivernet system shall also have the capabilities to trigger alarms and notify the appropriate member of the Workgroup when monitoring stations exceed defined limits indicating a spill or a significant water quality or nutrient measurement event, which then can be comprehensively analyzed. (2001-424, s. 19.5; 2004-195, ss. 3.3, 3.4; 2015-241, ss. 14.30(u), (v).)