



North Carolina Chapter of the American Fisheries Society

23 May 2017

The Honorable Speaker Tim Moore
NC House of Representatives
16 W. Jones Street, Room 2304
Raleigh, NC 27601-1096

The Honorable President Pro Tempore Phil Berger
NC Senate
16 W Jones Street, Room 2007
Raleigh, NC 27601-2808

Dear Speaker Moore and President Pro Tem Berger:

We are writing you concerning Senate Bill 434 "An Act to Amend Certain Environmental and Natural Resources Laws," and any impending House legislation, to provide comments on behalf of the North Carolina Chapter of the American Fisheries Society (NCAFS). We highlight concepts we consider important for maintaining and improving North Carolina's fisheries and aquatic resources, and address areas of concern.

As a subunit of the 8,000 member American Fisheries Society dedicated to sustainable management and conservation of fisheries and aquatic resources, the NCAFS represents more than 170 fisheries professionals in North Carolina, with members from natural resources management and regulatory agencies, academia, non-governmental organizations, and industry.



For more than a century, it has been well-accepted by the natural resource management community at large that intact riparian zones are critical to protecting surface water quality. Recognizing this, North Carolina's General Assembly enacted statutes requiring vegetated buffer zones along waterways to protect water quality in many of the state's most sensitive and economically important waters.

- Riparian buffers limit the direct inputs of nutrients, fine sediments, and other toxicants to water supplies.
- They are among the most cost-effective measures to maintain surface water quality.
- Because of the existing buffer rules, nutrients in the Neuse River have successfully been reduced, leading to fewer fish kills and outbreaks of pfiesteria.
- State and local stream buffers have helped protect the Catawba River watershed during the fastest population growth in North Carolina's history.

Alternately, lax enforcement of buffer rules have led to continued sediment and nutrient loading, leading the NCGA to seek expensive and thus far ineffective clean up alternatives (e.g., Jordan Lake). Degraded water quality has direct health and economic impacts on human populations living near and relying on such impaired waterbodies for their drinking water supply. Thus, we are deeply concerned about the humanitarian and environmental justice implications of S 434 and any potential companion House Bill.

The NCAFS implores the General Assembly to reconsider the proposed action on riparian buffers. We encourage constructive discussion on this issue and pledge our willingness to contribute our viewpoints and expertise on the issue. Please contact us if we can provide further assistance (Environmental Concerns Committee Chair: jennifer.m.archambault@gmail.com).

Respectfully,

Environmental Concerns Committee and Executive Committee, NCAFS
CC: NC General Assembly, NC Department of Environmental Quality