

\$370 MILLION SPENT ON STREAMS AND WETLANDS

In 13 years the state has spent more than \$370 million restoring streams and wetlands in river basins endangered by pollution caused by development. The money essentially restores or preserves streams and wetlands elsewhere in the basin to make up for what was destroyed by development, but a recent \$911,000 contract to reduce pollutants in the Neuse River Basin raises questions about whether the state is paying twice for the same work.

In all cases, developers can either:

- Do the mitigation themselves.
- Buy mitigation credits from a company that has created a bank of restored streams, wetlands or buffers.
- Pay the state's Ecosystem Enhancement Program, which hires contractors to do the restoration or purchases mitigation credits from companies that have already done the work.

\$339.4 million

Stream mitigation and wetland mitigation. Combined cost to restore or preserve 2.9 million linear feet of streams and 29,572 acres of wetlands.

Year began: 1997

Fees: Streams range from \$260 to \$344 per linear foot. Wetland fees range from \$155,998 per acre in coastal areas to \$23,528 per acre in areas not adjacent to bodies of water.

\$19.7 million

Riparian buffers. Cost to build or preserve 21.5 million square feet of stream buffers.

Year began: 1999

Fee: 96 cents per square foot.

\$10.9 million

Nutrient offsets. Cost to remove 1.4 million pounds of nitrogen from the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico river basins and 10,293 pounds of phosphorus from the Tar-Pamlico river basin.

Year began: 2002, but private businesses could not sell credits until 2007

Fees: Nitrogen reduction costs \$28.35 per pound in the Neuse basin and \$21.67 per pound in the Tar-Pamlico; phosphorus reduction costs \$286.20 per pound in the Tar-Pamlico.