SC DEPARTMENT *of* ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

# South Carolina

## Nonpoint Source Management Program

## 2025 Annual Report

SC DEPARTMENT *of*
**ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

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## I. HISTORY OF SC'S NONPOINT SOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Recognizing the growing problem of nonpoint source (NPS) pollution, in 1987, Congress added NPS provisions to the Clean Water Act (CWA) under Section 319. Among other provisions, Section 319 requires each state to develop and maintain a NPS Management Program to comprehensively address nonpoint sources of pollution. Contingent on EPA's approval of the State's NPS Management Plan, Section 319 also provides grants to states for implementing NPS best management practices (BMPs).

The NPS Management Plan has been prepared in accordance with Federal and State regulations and was originally approved by EPA in 1990. The South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (SCDES) has statutory authority to enforce the NPS Management Program provisions of 33 U.S. Code § 1329 through the SC Pollution Control Act, S.C. Code Ann. § 48-1-10, and the regulations and permitting programs promulgated pursuant to the Pollution Control Act. Additionally, the South Carolina Coastal Zone Management Act of 1977, S.C. Code Ann. § 48-39-10, provides additional authority in the coastal counties of the State. South Carolina received full coastal program approval by EPA in 2008. Since the original South Carolina NPS Program was developed, the NPS Management Plan has been updated twice. The SC NPS program is continuing to implement the 2020-2024 NPS Management Plan. An updated NPS Management Plan is currently in review with EPA following delays related to guidance updates.

## II. NONPOINT SOURCE PROGRAM MISSION AND GOALS

### MISSION

*The South Carolina Nonpoint Source Program will protect high quality waters from NPS threats and restore waters impaired by NPS pollution.*

GOALS:

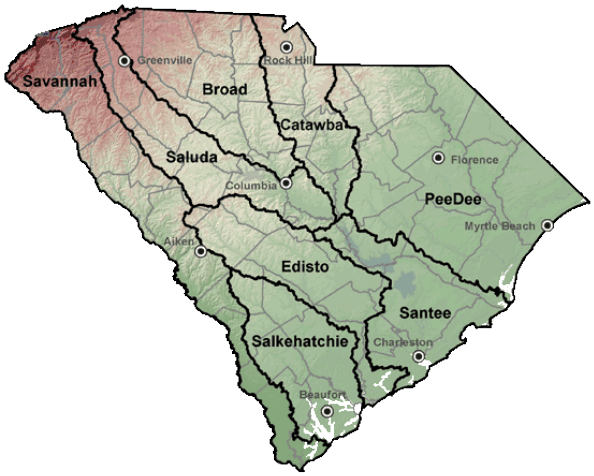
1. **Restoration of SC Waters** – to restore waterbodies that are impaired by nonpoint sources so that they meet water quality standards
2. **Protection of SC Waters** – to prevent nonpoint source-related impairments of unimpaired waterbodies

SCDES has established five guiding principles (see below) to help implement strategies to achieve NPS Management Program goals and objectives. In order to quantitatively measure progress towards SCDES long-term goals, objectives with measurable milestones have been developed that further define the direction and activities related to achieving the intent of each goal.


## III. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

### A. WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

As seen to the right, SCDES divides South Carolina into eight major river basins: Broad, Catawba, Edisto, Pee Dee, Salkehatchie, Saluda, Santee, and Savannah. Together, these river basins contain over 26,000 miles of stream, 393,000 acres of lake, and 280 acres of estuary. These eight basins are broken into 12-digit Hydrologic Unit Codes (HUCs). EPA requires the use of watershed plans for 319 implementation projects and has issued specific guidelines regarding nine required elements that must be included in those plans. In order to focus efforts and most effectively target stakeholders during the project, SC's NPS Management Program looks at watersheds based on 12-digit HUCs. Specifically, both watershed plan development and 319 project solicitations specify that proposals should have a limited




**South Carolina's Eight Major Watersheds**

watershed size to provide a workable focus area during the limited project time. Most accepted proposals cover a reasonable geographic scope of one to four 12-digit HUCs.

SCDES has developed a suite of tools to assist stakeholders in the creation and implementation of watershed plans. South Carolina's watershed approach takes a holistic view of NPS pollution, addressing all sources within a watershed using complementary practices. The NPS Program continues to look for ways to coordinate and target resources from multiple program areas in watersheds with NPS problems, helping to ensure that maximum water quality benefits are achieved.

Watershed Coordinators work in each region of South Carolina to supports watershed planning and water quality improvement projects to protect and restore waterbodies. Watershed Coordinators work closely with community stakeholders to develop and implement plans to address nonpoint sources of pollution. Successful development and implementation of watershed plans depend upon the involvement and support of local stakeholders. Watershed Coordinators work with SCDES staff, local governments, other state agencies, academia, conservation organizations, landowners, and citizens in addressing chronic NPS problems throughout the state through appropriate use of BMPs. Watershed Coordinators also provide technical assistance in the identification, assessment, and long-term management of NPS pollution problems affecting waters of the state, primarily through the 319-grant process.

### B. REGIONAL NONPOINT SOURCE RESPONSE

Due to increased population growth and drastic changes in land usage, acute NPS incidents are increasing in both frequency and potential water quality impacts. SCDES regional staff investigate NPS-related complaints, including issues from silviculture, agriculture, stormwater, and runoff from construction sites.

Personnel attempt to prevent any further impact and work toward mitigation of offsite impacts with the responsible party and other interested entities. Uncooperative or recalcitrant parties are referred to the SCDES Bureau of Water Enforcement Section for violations of the Pollution Control Act and the State's Antidegradation Regulations.

### C. NONPOINT SOURCE PROGRAM

The SCDES NPS program had an exceptionally successful year of outreach, engagement, project successes, and partnership in 2025. NPS program staff presented on the NPS program, grant opportunities, and technical assistance at the National Nonpoint Source Conference, SC Conservation Partnership Conference, SC Rural Water Association Meeting, SC Association of Conservation Districts regional meetings, regional water quality information sessions, and hosted a virtual informational webinar on grant opportunities.

NPS staff worked closely with internal and external partners and participated in educational workshops, SC Envirothon, stakeholder meetings, watershed coalition meetings, and BMP trainings. Site visits were conducted across the state and held regular meetings with grantees, stakeholders, and potential partners.

## D. CHAMPIONS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

In the 2024-2025 school year, thirteen winners were selected for projects ranging from habitat restoration to sustainable gardening. Six schools addressed the impacts of NPS pollution on water quality.

Students at Pendleton High School in Anderson County and CE Williams North Middle School in Charleston County learned how sustainable garden practices such as drip irrigation and organic fertilization reduce water pollution by minimizing runoff and soil erosion. Additionally, four schools studied how water in hydroponic gardening systems is captured and reused rather than being allowed to runoff.

Students at Clay Hill Elementary School in Dorchester County, The Montessori School of Columbia in Richland County, Doby's Mill Elementary School in Kershaw County, and Riverwalk Academy in York County mixed nutrient solutions, adjusted water levels, tracked plant growth, and cleaned the systems between plantings.

For 32 years, Champions of the Environment has rewarded environmental awareness and action in South Carolina's Kindergarten through 12th grade students. Champions is sponsored by SCDES, Sylvamo, and Dominion Energy, with assistance from the Environmental Education Association of South Carolina. For more information, visit the Champions website.

## E. SC ADOPT-A-STREAM

South Carolina Adopt-a-Stream (SC AAS) is a statewide volunteer water quality monitoring program where participants learn to assess the health and water quality of their local waterways. SC AAS provides education about stream health, pollution, and the connections between land use and water quality to people across South Carolina. The program also encourages behavioral changes to protect water quality and create opportunities for watershed stewardship.


Volunteer water quality monitors help South Carolina by collecting data on waterways that may not be regularly monitored otherwise. This data establishes baseline conditions, indicates possible water quality concerns, and is used for education. Volunteers enter data into a free, publicly accessible database. Sharing this information can lead to greater protection and restoration of the State's waters. Data can be used by anyone to increase community awareness, spark investigation with local partners when pollution threats emerge, conduct research, advocate for water quality, construct watershed plans, and more.

The program granted a total of 869 certifications in 2025, including both new and annual recertifications in the freshwater stream, tidal saltwater, lake, and macroinvertebrate monitoring programs. These certified volunteers have generated data for 291 sites across South Carolina last year. For more information, visit the SC Adopt-a-Stream website.


In 2025, SC AAS continued to expand across the state with the reallocation of a program coordinator position to the Upstate. The program's mission, vision, and goals were established and are available to view at www.scadoptastream.org. A brand-new edition of the tidal saltwater monitoring handbook was created along with updated data collection forms. A year-round, on-demand, online recertification process was launched.

Team members represented the program at the Southeastern Wildlife Exposition, the Palmetto Sportsmen's Classic, the

Environmental Education Association of South Carolina (EEASC) Annual Conference, the SC Environmental Assistance Conference, and other events at universities, nature centers, parks, and festivals across the state. SC AAS was also featured in publications such as SC Wildlife Magazine and the Friends of Lake Keowee Society Magazine.

A partnership was established with EEASC to create Friends of SC AAS, a donor platform supporting kits, chemical refills, workshops, and other program essentials for volunteers. SC AAS also nurtured relationships with Clemson Extension, SC State Parks, SC Master Naturalists, SC Green Step Schools, the SC Association of Agricultural Educators, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, SCDES regional offices, and many other organizations. Partner collaboration allowed for increased kit loan availability statewide, student engagement, and outreach opportunities.

### F. SC WATERSHED ATLAS

The SC Watershed Atlas brings the agency's most current and comprehensive watershed and water quality information into a user-friendly, statewide application. This searchable atlas includes watershed boundaries and descriptions, 319 projects, approved watershed plans, success stories, Bureau of Water permits and advisories, public water supply, water quality monitoring stations and assessments, water classifications, floodplains, National Wetland Inventory, National Land Cover Data, Municipal Separate Storm Sewers (MS4s), TMDLs, and more. A selection of base maps, measuring and drawing tools, map-making and printing capabilities, and an instructive help section are also available.


General maintenance of the SC Watershed Atlas is designed to be as self-sustaining as possible. Bureau of Water program layers on the Atlas are updated by program area staff in GIS, working with IT's GIS staff as needed. During 2025 several enhancements were implemented: Best Management Practice (BMP) information was added to each Section 319 Project, an informational postcard was updated to highlight available features and includes a QR codes, and multiple tutorials were presented during the year to support users.

## G. ADVISORY PROGRAMS

### Freshwater Swimming Advisories

The Watershed Program educates citizens about current NPS health risk advisories, how they can reduce their NPS contributions, and encourages adherence to advisory guidelines. A website, outreach materials, and 1-800 information line increase awareness of health risks associated with swimming in impaired waters. They are also used as a springboard for increasing awareness of NPS issues and steps citizens can take to reduce their contributions to runoff pollution. Staff work with Central and Regional SCDES offices to address concerns from the public about these advisories.

### Saltwater Swimming Advisories

In addition to freshwater swimming advisories, SCDES staff issue advisories for coastal waters from May through October to inform recreational users about potential bacteria risks from NPS pollution. SCDES routinely collects water samples at over 120 locations on SC beaches in accordance with federal standards. Advisories may be issued due to high bacteria counts or rainfall. SCDES uses multiple outlets to advertise advisory information including newspapers and television at affected beaches. The SC Beach Guide is a GIS layered map that shows where advisories exist along the coast.

### Fish Consumption Advisories

SCDES collaborates with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to educate citizens about the potential risks of eating fish due to mercury and PCB contamination. SCDES collects and tests a variety of fish from South Carolina lakes, rivers, streams, estuaries, and offshore waters and issues recommendations about which types of fish are safe and how much fish is safe to eat from each waterbody. Advisory information is communicated to the public and at-risk groups via a comprehensive website and, when funding is available, booklets and brochures. For more information, visit the SCDES Fish Consumption Advisories page.

Fish Advisories are one component of the agency's broader Mercury Assessment and Reduction Initiative, which identifies ways that the public, industry, interested groups, and the government can collectively monitor, assess, and address mercury in the environment and reduce mercury exposure.

## H. STATE REVOLVING FUND

SCDES sets aside a small percentage of the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) capitalization grant ($200,000 in FY2025) for the development of watershed plans to protect drinking water sources. A request for proposals is issued annually for the development of watershed plans. The plans address ambient surface water pollutants and their impacts on surface water bodies that feed drinking water sources. Proposals are accepted from SRF-eligible borrowers, watershed organizations, soil and water conservation districts, regional planning commissions, and public universities. All SCDES-funded watershed plans contain EPA's nine required elements as well as additional NPS program requirements such as protection efforts. The FY25 watershed plan development grant will open for applications in early 2026.

## I. FORESTRY

The South Carolina Forestry Commission implements a coordinated, statewide BMP Program for forestry-related activities, which is supported, in part, by a portion of the annual 319 grant. The BMP Program focuses on a proactive approach to preventing NPS pollution through aerial detection of harvesting sites

and courtesy exams by trained Forestry BMP Specialists. The courtesy exams provide forest landowners with site-specific BMP information that can be included in timber sale contracts.

The program includes a water quality BMP training program for timber harvesters. The program also incorporates an enforceable mechanism to ensure compliance with the BMPs. Close cooperation with SCDES is essential on sites referred for enforcement action and in correcting problems to ensure compliance with water quality requirements. NPS Staff meet with the Forestry Commission at least annually and conduct an annual visit to a harvesting site to see BMPs that have been implemented.

## IV. EPA SUCCESS STORY

The 2025 NPS success story has been accepted by EPA regional staff and is under final review with EPA headquarters. The narrative submitted for the 2025 success story is below.

### Abstract

Significant streambank erosion and water quality impairments for turbidity, macroinvertebrates, and bacteria in the Upper Saluda Watershed threaten aquatic uses and the health of drinking water sources for Greenville and Easley in upstate South Carolina. In 2019, watershed organization Save Our Saluda (SOS) initiated a water quality improvement program focused on installing agricultural best management practice (BMP) packages to address erosion and sediment pollution. Several project phases and significant local partnership have fostered continued implementation, and various sources of funding have been leveraged to increase the number of projects possible and reduce landowners' financial contributions. To date, BMP packages including combinations of cover crop plantings, heavy use area stabilization, streambank repair, and buffer plantings have been installed at 16 sites. These BMPs have resulted in the reduction of 2,295.7 tons of sediment and 6.98 E+13 CFU of bacteria per year.

### Water Quality Challenge

The project area has multiple impairments for turbidity, macroinvertebrates, and bacteria. The entire Upper Saluda Watershed is also under a TMDL for E. coli, and water quality standards for E. coli have not yet been attained. Primary sources of sediment loading in the North Saluda River include runoff from row crops, livestock farms, and severe streambank erosion. Primary sources of bacteria loading in the watershed include agricultural activities, grazing animals, and failing septic systems.

In 2011-2012, 366,600 cubic yards of sediment were dredged from Saluda Lake at a cost of approximately seven million dollars to Easley Combined Utilities. By 2019, upper parts of the lake had refilled with sediment, and surveys indicated the dredged area of the lake was already two-thirds filled in again. Current sediment removal cost estimates exceed ten million dollars. Understanding the importance of a more sustainable and cost-effective approach, SOS is working to reduce sedimentation and erosion upstream in the watershed through practices such as soil conservation, cover crops, heavy use area stabilization, streambank repair, buffer plantings, and livestock exclusion from creeks, as well as educating farmers on the importance of these practices. Many of these practices have the co-benefit of reducing bacteria.

### Story Highlights

Project partnership, including cash and in-kind match, material donation, and collaboration, has significantly increased the reach of the project efforts. Combining Section 319 and NRCS EQIP funding allowed funds to stretch much further. This approach has reduced the portion of 319 funds required from

60% to an average of 27% per project and has reduced landowner contributions to as low as 1% of the total project cost. SOS recruited donations of more than 140 truckloads of blast rock, valued at over $113,000, for use on multiple watershed restoration projects.

Participant recruitment for efforts in this watershed was initially complicated by farmland leases and language barriers. SOS overcame these challenges through personal meetings, educational workshops, and targeted bilingual outreach materials. Through time and persistence, SOS has built trust with members of the farming community, and this has led multiple landowners and operators to participate in the organization's cost-share programs.

Additionally, a crop roller/crimper and no-till seed drill were purchased to allow farmers to add cover crops to their crop rotation and to shift from conventional tillage to no-till management. These practices reduce stormwater runoff and erosion, improve water infiltration, and promote healthy soil. The equipment has been donated to the local Conservation District where it is leased to local farmers at a low cost to cover maintenance.

**Results**



Two phases of implementation have been completed since 2019, including 18 types of BMPs on 16 sites, with a third phase in progress. Completed BMPs thus far have resulted in a load reduction of 2,295.72 tons per year of sediment and 6.98 E+13 CFU of bacteria per year.

Average annual turbidity at one monitoring station within the project area shows some decline since the project began, from a seven-year high of 30.13 NTU in 2019 to a low of 7.25 in the first five months of 2025. The percent of turbidity samples exceeding state standards also shows some decline, from a seven-year high of 58.3% in 2020 to a low of 0% in the first five months of 2025.

Five implementation projects have been completed in combination with the NRCS EQIP program. SOS has developed and maintained strong relationships with local farmers and NRCS staff, provided water quality implementation education and outreach, and assisted with conservation planning processes to connect farmers with financial and technical assistance. Through this combination of federal funding sources, state 319 grants, partner match, and in-kind match, costs to landowners have been reduced, allowing for multiple significant implementation projects to be completed.

## V. MEETING THE OBJECTIVES OF THE NPS PROGRAM

The SC NPS Management Program Management Plan describes multiple long-term goals and milestones that facilitate and promote the state's efforts to manage NPS water pollution. SCDES believes that these strategies direct the NPS Program to activities most likely to result in water quality improvements as well as efficient spending of 319 grant funds.

| Objective | Milestone | Outcome |
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| **Monitoring and WQ Assessment** | | |
| Assess statewide water quality through consistent monitoring to identify waterbodies not fully meeting standards due to nonpoint sources of pollution | a) Collect and analyze monthly samples at 90 sites for the probabilistic monitoring program | Samples from 90 sites across the state were collected and analyzed monthly in 2025. |
| | b) Collect and analyze monthly samples at 235 base sites for routine monitoring | Samples from 243 base sites across the state were collected and analyzed monthly in 2025. |
| | c) Perform macroinvertebrate assessments statewide, typically 70 sites per year depending on hydrology | Macroinvertebrate assessments were performed at 53 regular trend sites across the state in 2025. Replicate sampling was performed at 6 sites and 3 special study sites were also sampled. |
| | d) Measure chlorophyll-a levels at 100 sites monthly May through October | Chlorophyll-a levels were measured monthly at 156 sites from May to October and bi-weekly at 3 sites from April to October 2025 across the state. |
| | e) Collect and analyze monthly water quality samples at established SCDES monitoring | Monthly water quality samples were collected and analyzed at one |

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| | sites in at least one current NWQI watersheds | monitoring site in NWQI implementation watersheds in 2025. |
| | f) Collect fish tissue samples at approximately 60 sites statewide and obtain other samples through partnering agencies and events. Analyze 900 tissue samples per year for mercury | Fish tissue samples were collected from 62 sites and 842 samples were analyzed for mercury in 2025. |
| Implement and update sanitary surveys based on coastal water quality monitoring data | a) Collect monthly water quality samples at 450 sites to be used to establish shellfish classifications | 5,371 monthly water quality samples were collected at 467 sites in 2025. |
| | b) Perform sanitary surveys, identify needed corrective actions, and develop shellfish harvesting classifications in 25 shellfish growing areas | Sanitary surveys were completed, necessary corrective actions were identified, and shellfish harvesting classifications were developed in 25 shellfish growing areas. |
| | c) Generate a trend report for annual shellfish harvesting classifications | Trend report was produced. |
| Develop and implement monitoring studies in watersheds where 319 projects have been or will be implemented | a) Update NPS monitoring QAPP to include new projects and other revisions and deliver plan to Department Quality Assurance Project Officer for final approval | The NPS monitoring QAPP was updated in 2025 to include new projects and revisions, and it was then delivered to the Department Quality Assurance Project Officer. |
| | b) Conduct monthly sampling at identified sites within 319 project watersheds, including all impaired locations, once projects are awarded and continuing at least 2 years after each project is completed | Monthly sampling was conducted for all 319 projects including all impaired locations within the watershed. Monitoring commenced with award and continued 2 years after project completion. |
| | c) Work closely with SCDES Aquatic Science Programs staff involved with 319 monitoring to ensure all 319 project sites are adequately monitored | Met and worked closely with SCDES Aquatic Science Programs staff to ensure all 319 project sites were adequately monitored. |
| Review 319 Monitoring Strategy and methods and revise as needed to most effectively assess 319 project water quality using available resources | a) Meet with SCDES Aquatic Science Programs staff to optimize 319 monitoring strategy and methods; incorporate results into State Monitoring Strategy | Met with SCDES Aquatic Science Programs staff to optimize 319 monitoring strategy and methods and incorporated results into State Monitoring Strategy. |
| Effectively assess and document the impacts of 319-funded implementation projects on water quality through collection and analysis of samples | a) Analyze all samples according to appropriate analytical protocol | Analyzed all samples according to appropriate analytical protocol. |
| | b) Assess all 319 project sites within 1 year after completion of post-project monitoring and document any water quality improvements for inclusion in the Annual Report and Success Stories | Assessed all 319 project sites within 1 year after completion of post-project monitoring and documented any water quality improvements for inclusion in the Annual Report and Success Stories. |
| | c) Compile, review, and document all available monitoring data for | Compiled, reviewed, and documented all available monitoring data for |

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| | historical and recently completed 319 projects | historical and recently completed 319 projects. |
| Identify and develop success stories for fully or partially restored waterbodies primarily impaired by NPS pollution | a) Monitor promising 319 Success Story sites regularly | Regularly monitored promising 319 Success Story sites. |
| | b) Identify and develop Success Stories each year for watersheds showing full restoration or showing improvement | Developed a success story for multi-phase water quality implementation in the Upper Saluda watershed that leveraged several sources of funding and spearheaded community engagement. The success story has been approved by EPA regional staff and is in review with EPA HQ. |
| **SC Integrated Report and TMDLs** | | |
| Develop, maintain, and distribute South Carolina's Integrated Report including Part 1: 303(d) List of Impaired Waters and Part 2: Section 305(b) Assessment and Reporting | a) Solicit external data for inclusion in 303(d) assessment | Solicited external data for inclusion in 303(d) assessment. |
| Work collaboratively with the 303(d), Modeling, & TMDL section to support prioritization of restoration efforts | b) Assess all SCDES data plus appropriate external data to determine impairment status for 303(d), typically 2,000 sites per 2-year cycle and assess all statistical survey sites for the 305(b) report, typically 450 sites per 2-year cycle | Assessed all SCDES data plus appropriate external data to determine impairment status for 303(d) |
| Work collaboratively with the 303(d), Modeling, & TMDL section to support prioritization of restoration efforts | a) Provide assistance to TMDL staff for prioritizing locations for future TMDL development. An important criterion for TMDL prioritization is determining where there is a higher potential for implementation | There are currently 131 approved TMDL documents covering 817 monitoring stations (mostly for pathogens). There is currently one alternative restoration plan in place to address one impaired location in the Savannah River. In addition, there are 11 TMDL documents or alternative restoration plans under development to address impairments at 129 sites statewide. |
| **319 & Watershed Plan Grants** | | |
| Aid stakeholders and selected watershed plan development projects in the development of watershed plans | a) Serve as a facilitator for watershed plan development, as needed | Facilitated watershed plan development. |
| | b) Work with Long Leaf Alliance, Savannah River Clean Water Fund, and SC Land Trust Network on watershed plans and related feasible projects that highlight watersheds for protection | Worked with partners to highlight watersheds for protection. |

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| | c) Reach out to and work with drinking water intakes for watershed plan development and subsequent 319 projects | Reached out to and worked with drinking water intakes for watershed plan development and subsequent 319 projects. |
| | d) Incorporate protection strategies into all watershed plans, such as conservation easements | Incorporated protection strategies into all watershed plans. |
| | e) Incorporate protection of unimpaired/high quality waters into watershed plans, when possible | Encouraged protection of unimpaired/high quality waters into watershed plans and provided a list of priority watersheds. |
| | f) Review and provide draft comments on watershed plans, ensuring compliance with EPA's nine required elements for 319 grant eligibility | Reviewed and provided draft comments on watershed plans, ensuring compliance with EPA's nine required elements for 319 grant eligibility. |
| Administer 319 grants including issuing and ensuring compliance with grant agreements, processing payments, and monitoring non-federal match | a) Award grant agreements following annual project selection | Selected 3 319 grant project proposals. Grant agreements are being developed and will be awarded in early 2026. |
| | b) Review quarterly requests for reimbursement and progress reports from grantees to ensure compliance and track expenditures | Reviewed quarterly requests for reimbursement and progress reports from grantees to ensure compliance and to track expenditures. |
| | c) Conduct a site visit with each active project at least once annually to ensure adherence to project goals and timeline | Conducted site visits and performed progress assessments. |
| Manage the 319 and watershed plan program, including solicitations and selection of projects | a) Update RFPs for watershed plan development and 319 implementation proposals at least annually based on changes, priorities, lessons learned, etc. | Updated RFPs for watershed plan development and 319 implementation proposals based on changes, priorities, lessons learned, etc. |
| | b) Issue statewide solicitations for watershed plan development and 319 implementation proposals at least annually | Issued statewide solicitations for watershed plan development and 319 implementation proposals. |
| | c) Convene review committee to select projects based on NPS Program priorities after each grant solicitation period | Convened review committee to select projects based on NPS Program priorities after each grant solicitation period. |
| | d) Annually award funding to committee-selected 319 implementation projects and watershed plan development projects | The committee selected three 319 implementation projects for funding. Watershed plan development proposals will be reviewed and selected in early 2026. |
| | e) Award 319 implementation projects with protection components, nature-based solutions and innovative BMPs, as able | Awarded 319 implementation projects with protection components, nature-based solutions, and, and innovative BMPs. |

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| | f) Alert regional SCDES offices to new 319 implementation projects in their areas, including OCRM | Alerted regional SCDES offices to new 319 implementation projects in their areas, including OCRM. |
| | g) Create tools and share resources to assist in stakeholder-led development of watershed plans and 319 implementation projects | Shared resources to assist in stakeholder-led development of watershed plans and 319 implementation projects. |
| Work closely with the SC SCDES Water Pollution Compliance staff for 319 project proposals | a) Consult on project proposals to ensure BMPs go "above and beyond" MS4 requirements | Consulted on project proposals to ensure BMPs go "above and beyond" MS4 requirements. |
| | b) Obtain and have MS4 staff put Letters of Assurance on file to ensure 319-funded BMP load reductions will not be counted as meeting NPDES permit requirements | Letters of Assurance are on file with our compliance section in order to ensure 319-funded BMP load reductions will not be counted as meeting NPDES permit requirements. |
| Ensure consistency with national and regional goals and requirements through participation in trainings, conferences, meetings, and webinars | a) Participate in at least one national or regional conference and one national or regional training such as the National NPS Conference, GRTS Training, or Region IV NPS Coordinators Meeting | Attended the National Nonpoint Source Conference, EPA NPS Webinar series, State Conservation Partnership Conference, Region IV NPS Monthly meeting, and GRTS training. |
| | b) Participate in ACWA 319/NPS Workgroup Webinars | Participated in ACWA 319/NPS Workgroup Webinars. |
| | c) As necessary, update the formal list of priority watersheds, according to NWQI and EPA priorities | Revised list of priority watersheds with SCDES, NWQI, and EPA priorities. |
| Estimate load reductions for active and recently completed 319 projects | a) Increase cumulative annual load reductions resulting from 319-funded BMPs | Annual load reductions resulting from active 319-funded projects in 2025 were as follows:<br>• 5,131.58 pounds of nitrogen<br>• 1,265.01 pounds of phosphorus<br>• 538.04 tons of sediment |
| | b) Upload BMP and load reduction information for all applicable projects to GRTS by February 28 in accordance with FY2019 revisions and mandated data elements | BMP load reduction information for applicable projects were uploaded to GRTS. |
| Use the Grants Reporting and Tracking System (GRTS) to report on progress of active 319 projects | a) Regularly update and comprehensively review all project information in GRTS to ensure completeness by EPA's February 28 annual deadline in accordance with FY2019 revisions and mandated data elements | Updated and comprehensively reviewed all project information in GRTS. |

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| Prepare Annual Report to Congress on progress in meeting NPS Program goals | a) Submit Annual Report to EPA by December 31st each year. Include information on all open 319 implementation projects and report on status of Plan milestones for the year | Submitted Annual Report to EPA by January 30, 2026. |
| Submit annual 319 grant application to EPA | a) Prepare annual workplan, budget, and grant application. Submit to EPA by September 30th each year | Workplan, budget, and grant application were submitted to EPA in April 2025. |
| Complete grant close-out packages | a) Assemble and submit grant closeout packages within 90 days of a grant close. Grants from fiscal years 2015 through 2019 will be closed out in this 5-year Plan period | Submitted closeout packages for FY21 by January 30, 2026. |
| Work with the SC Forestry Commission to implement a Statewide Forestry BMP Compliance Program | a) Request annual workplan in April/May to have in hand by July, obtain EPA approval, and then issue or amend grant agreement with SC Forestry Commission in August | Requested annual workplan in May, obtained EPA approval, and issued grant agreement with SC Forestry Commission in August. |
| | b) Follow up on any forestry referrals for water quality impacts | Followed up on forestry referrals for water quality impacts. |
| Regularly review NPS Management Plan for effectiveness and applicability to programmatic needs | a) Perform cursory plan review and update objectives and milestones as needed as part of annual application process and Annual Report preparation | Performed cursory plan review and updated objectives and milestones as needed as part of annual application process and Annual Report preparation. |
| **Stakeholder Outreach** | | |
| Collaborate with and provide technical assistance and water quality information to stakeholders to support the effective management of NPS pollution | a) Participate in stakeholder meetings and committees | Participated in stakeholder meetings and committees. |
| | b) Respond to requests for information including assistance with obtaining and analyzing water quality data | Watershed coordinators provided assistance and water quality data for all requests. |
| | c) Attend NRCS State Technical Committee meetings | Attended NRCS State Technical Committee meetings. |
| | d) Distribute booklets about reining in runoff, as available | Distributed booklets and educational materials as needed. |
| Increase statewide knowledge of the 319 program, projects, and grant opportunities | a) Present on the 319 Program, grant opportunities, and projects at various events and conferences | Presented on the 319 Program, grant opportunities, and projects at the National Nonpoint Source Conference, SC Conservation Partnership Conference, University of South Carolina, SC Association of Stormwater Managers, SCDES Regional Offices, Conservation District meetings, and others. |
| | b) Encourage stakeholder organizations to apply for funding | Encouraged stakeholder organizations to apply for funding for watershed plan |

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| | for watershed plan development and 319 implementation grants through various means, including emails, flyers, handouts, conferences, presentations, events, etc. | development and 319 implementation grants through various means, including emails, flyers, stakeholder meetings, and virtual presentations. |
| **Coastal NPS Program** | | |
| Decrease marine debris through voluntary partnerships and programs such as Adopt-a-Beach and the Clean Marina Program | a) My Coast – Adopt-a-Beach: Promote increased participation; produce annual summary including number of groups and number of debris items by type | Between January 1st and December 31st, 2025, 697 beach cleanups were logged in the MyCoast South Carolina application. Over 125,000 debris items (estimated at nearly 4,500 pounds) were removed from South Carolina beaches from North Myrtle Beach to Hilton Head Island. Approximately 2,149 volunteer hours were dedicated to beach cleanups. The most common types of debris found include Cigarettes (47,841), Paper Products (16,662), and Plastic and Foam Pieces (14,026). SCDES BCM staff continue to utilize the Adopt-A-Beach data summary dashboard with local beachfront communities to assist in understanding trends and patterns as the local scale. |
| | b) Participate in SC Clean Marina program as administered by the SC Marine Association | SCDES BCM continues to serve in the program and steering committees for the South Carolina Clean Marina Program, in coordination with the South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium and the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. One (1) SC Clean Marina Workshop was held in November 2025 for marinas interested in becoming certified or recertified Clean Marinas. The workshop was coordinated by South Carolina Sea Grant and hosted by the SC Clean Marina Committee. Three (3) new marinas participated in the 2025 workshop and an additional 3 marinas were recertified as Clean Marinas during 2025. |
| Collaborate with external partners to improve coastal awareness of non-point source pollution | a) Collaborate with the Ace Basin and North Inlet National Estuarine Research Reserves as well as the SC Coastal Information Network on preparation of communication | Collaborated with the ACE Basin and North Inlet National Estuarine Research Reserves as well as the SC Coastal Information Network on preparation of communication |

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| | materials that build awareness of BMPs among coastal stakeholders | materials that build awareness of BMPs among coastal stakeholders. |
| Enhance and track marine debris removal efforts through collaboration with state and regional partners | a) Convene the Abandoned Vessel Working Group to improve coordination between federal, state, and local partners on abandoned/derelict vessels | In 2025, SCDES BCM worked directly with the SC Department of Natural Resources, an ADV Working Group partner, to develop and beta test an ADV Database for coastal South Carolina. A public-facing, ADV Dashboard was also developed to highlight vessels currently under investigation, vessels cleared for removal, and vessels that have been removed since 2019. This Dashboard product is expected to launch in early 2026. |
| | b) Identify and apply for marine debris removal funding opportunities with local, state, and/or federal partners | Identified and applied for marine debris removal funding opportunities with local, state, and/or federal partners. |
| | c) Identify and assess Abandoned and Derelict Vessels (ADV) and other large marine debris items and process through compliance/enforcement procedures, if appropriate | Identified and assessed Abandoned and Derelict Vessels (ADV) and other large marine debris items and process through compliance/enforcement procedures. |
| Continue interagency coordination and planning to study and mitigate climate change and related impacts such as shoreline changes and coastal erosion | a) Coordinate with SC DNR and other Living Shorelines Working Group partners on outreach and education for living shorelines | Coordinated with SC DNR and other Living Shorelines Working Group partners on outreach and education for living shorelines. |
| | b) Continue to work with local governments on local comprehensive beach management plans and waterbody management planning efforts | Continued to work with local governments on local comprehensive beach management plans and waterbody management planning efforts. |
| Coordinate management activities between the Coastal Management Program and 319 programs | a) Coastal Program and 319 staff will meet at least annually to coordinate efforts | Met with Coastal Program staff. |
| | b) Coastal Program staff will serve on the 319 Review Committee for each 319-implementation funding round | Coastal Program staff were invited to serve on the 319 Review Committee. |
| Ensure marina compliance with operation and maintenance manuals | a) OCRM Compliance and Enforcement staff will evaluate marina operation and maintenance manuals to ensure compliance with Critical Area permitting requirements | OCRM Compliance and Enforcement staff evaluated marina operation and maintenance manuals to ensure compliance with Critical Area permitting requirements. |
| **Champions of the Environment** | | |
| Promote NPS awareness through the Champions of the | a) Promote the Champions program through teacher | Promoted the program projects through SCDES press releases and |

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| Environment grant awards program | workshops, environmental educators' conferences, social media, mail outs, targeted emails, and organizational webpages and newsletters | social media, announcements on environmental education organization webpages, teacher workshops, and local news coverage. |
| | b) Award 8 grants to environmental education projects. Develop and air TV commercials broadcasting each project. Promote winning projects through social media and local news coverage. | Awarded 13 grants to environmental education projects and promoted winnings through SCDES press releases and social media, announcements on environmental education organization webpages, teacher workshops, and local news coverage. |
| **Adopt-A-Stream** | | |
| Increase awareness of local water quality and the Adopt-A-Stream (AAS) program | a) Encourage MS4s and other municipalities to use SC AAS as an education and outreach method for water quality awareness | Several MS4s/municipalities are using SC AAS as an education and outreach method for water quality awareness. |
| | b) Present SC AAS annually at the SC Association of Stormwater Managers (SCASM) meeting | Presented SC AAS to expositions, conference, and local water groups statewide. |
| | c) Include SC AAS equipment purchases as part of 319 grants planning to incorporate the SC AAS program | Included equipment purchases as 319 grants planning. |
| | d) Make 319 grantees aware of the program and the possibility of adding local screening data | 319 grantees were made aware of the program and the possibility of adding local screening data. Several referenced SC AAS data in their proposals. |
| | e) Add SC AAS as an example of an education/outreach component in the revised MS4 permit. | Including SC AAS as an example of an education/outreach component in the revised MS4 permit. |
| **SC Watershed Atlas** | | |
| Maintain SC Watershed Atlas Increase awareness of local water quality and the SC Adopt-a-Stream (SC AAS) program | a) Respond to queries generated from Atlas users | Responded to queries generated from Atlas users. |
| | b) Communicate feedback and queries to Agency GIS program | Communicated feedback and queries to Agency GIS program. |
| | c) Communicate with Bureau of Water programs to ensure assessed data are converted into Atlas specific tables and information, as the data becomes available | Communicated with Bureau of Water programs to ensure assessed data are converted into Atlas specific tables and information. |
| | d) Coordinate with GIS program to ensure timely updates to the Atlas | Coordinated with GIS program to ensure timely updates to the Atlas. |
| Document 319 implementation practices using GIS | a) Track all 319 implementation projects and locations of completed watershed plans to the Atlas | Tracked all 319 implementation projects and locations of completed watershed plans to the Atlas. |

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| | b) Update Atlas as new projects are awarded | Updated Atlas as new projects were awarded. |
| | c) Provide links to more information on 319 projects, completed watershed plans, and project Success Stories | Provided links to more information on 319 projects, completed watershed plans, and project Success Stories. |
| **Advisories** | | |
| Increase awareness of health risks associated with swimming in impaired waters and educate citizens about how to reduce those risks and their NPS contributions to local waters | a) Annually review and provide NPS educational information as needed on Agency swimming advisory website | Reviewed and provided NPS educational information as needed on Agency swimming advisory website. |
| | b) Maintain a swim advisory line for the public | Maintained a swim advisory line for the public. |
| Increase awareness of atmospheric deposition of mercury and the associated health risks through annual Fish Consumption Advisory information | a) Produce and distribute the SC Fish Consumption Advisory booklet as funds allow, and revise website | Produced and distributed the SC Fish Consumption Advisory booklet and revised website. |
| **State Revolving Fund (SRF)** | | |
| Prioritize SRF projects according to their potential to improve water quality and complement existing NPS reduction efforts | a) Assist SRF staff with goal setting in the CWSRF Intended Use Plan and, when it occurs, participate in revision of SRF Priority Ranking System to thoroughly include criteria that target NPS projects and watershed plan implementation | Assisted SRF staff with goal setting in the CWSRF Intended Use Plan and participated in revision of SRF Priority Ranking System. |
| | b) Using the SRF Priority Ranking System, review and score each project requesting SRF funding. Review includes assessment of priority watersheds, impairments, TMDLs, and 319 projects in the project area | Reviewed and scored each project requesting SRF funding. |
| **Alternative Funding** | | |
| Identify and advertise alternate funding opportunities for watershed plan and 319 projects | a) Identify alternate avenues for watershed plan development beyond DWSRF funds and 319 implementation projects (both federal and non-federal match) beyond 319 grant funding | Searched for alternative avenues to fund watershed plan development and implementation projects. |
| | b) Where available, work with outside entities to combine funding opportunities to support watershed plan and 319 grants | Worked with NRCS on various projects. |
| | c) Advertise alternate avenues for grant funding in annual RFPs, the SCDES website, partner websites, and other avenues | Advertised alternate avenues for grant funding in annual RFPs, the SCDES website, and partner websites. |

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| Coordinate with SRF staff to encourage implementation of NPS Plan goals and leverage State Revolving Fund money to address waterbodies affected by NPS pollution | a) Work in conjunction with CWSRF to advertise the use of SRF funds for NPS reduction projects and the potential for combining CWSRF and 319 funds for NPS reduction projects | Worked in conjunction with CWSRF to advertise the use of SRF funds for NPS reduction projects and the potential for combining CWSRF and 319 funds for NPS reduction projects. |
| | b) Utilize the joint funding opportunities fact sheet with RFPs to encourage the combined use of 319 and CWSRF funds for projects addressing NPS pollution | Shared joint funding fact sheet with potential grantees. |
| | c) When identified, point out joint funding opportunities to public entities with potential projects | Shared funding opportunities with grantees. |
| Encourage the use of USDA resources to complement existing 319 efforts | a) Encourage grantees to utilize EQIP and other USDA funding options in watersheds with ongoing implementation projects, in annual solicitations and by word of mouth | Encouraged grantees to utilize EQIP and other USDA funding options in watersheds with ongoing implementation projects, in annual solicitations and by word of mouth. |
| | b) Refer septic calls outside of active septic repair/replacement 319 implementation projects to USDA's Rural Development Single-Family Housing Repair/Section 504 Home Repair program | Referred septic calls outside of active septic repair/replacement 319 implementation projects to USDA's Rural Development Single-Family Housing Repair/Section 504 Home Repair program. |
| **Permitting** | | |
| Issue permits, perform inspections, respond to complaints, make recommendations for improvement of stormwater-related programs, and coordinate compliance and enforcement action as needed | a) Issue construction, industrial, and MS4 stormwater permits statewide including permits that require additional monitoring and/or installation of BMPs in impaired and TMDL watersheds | Issued construction, industrial, and MS4 stormwater permits statewide including permits that require additional monitoring and/or installation of BMPs in impaired and TMDL watersheds. |
| | b) Conduct stormwater site inspections and perform MS4 program audits | Conducted stormwater site inspections and performed MS4 program audits. |
| | c) Investigate acute NPS complaints from the public and MS4s statewide | Investigated acute NPS complaints from the public and MS4s statewide. |
| | d) Refer incidents to enforcement when voluntary remediation related to acute NPS incidents are unsuccessful | Referred incidents to enforcement when voluntary remediation related to acute NPS incidents were unsuccessful. |
| Ensure proper installation of onsite wastewater systems and provide technical assistance as needed | a) Issue permits for new septic systems | Issued permits for new septic systems. |
| | b) Issue licenses for septic installers and servicers | Issued licenses for septic installers and servicers. |
| | c) Provide compliance assistance by investigating referrals and failing onsite wastewater systems | Provided compliance assistance by investigating referrals and failing onsite wastewater systems. |

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| Permit, inspect, and provide technical assistance for agricultural facilities | a) Prepare and/or review agricultural waste permits statewide for animal facilities | Prepared and/or reviewed agricultural waste permits statewide for animal facilities. |
| | b) Perform inspections including follow-up, complaints, site assessment, etc. | Performed inspections including follow-up, complaints, site assessment, etc. |
| | c) Document noncompliant facilities and refer them to enforcement | Documented noncompliant facilities and referred them to enforcement. |
| Through 401 water quality certifications, require at least standard construction site BMP conditions to be implemented | a) Issue 401 water quality certifications requiring implementation of BMPs that will minimize erosion and migration of sediments on and off project sites during and after construction | Issued 401 water quality certifications requiring implementation of BMPs that will minimize erosion and migration of sediments on and off project sites during and after construction. |
| Follow up on referrals for non-compliance and violations of the SC Pollution Control Act related to nonpoint source activities | a) Assign and follow up on all referrals | Assigned and followed up on all referrals. |
| | b) As needed, follow enforcement procedures for NPS stormwater and onsite wastewater violations | Followed enforcement procedures for NPS stormwater and onsite wastewater violations. |
| Maintain a database to track permits, inspections, and compliance and enforcement actions | a) Enter all facility- and permit-related information into the Environmental Facility Information System (EFIS) or its replacement database (E-permitting) | Entered all facility- and permit-related information into the Environmental Facility Information System (EFIS) or its replacement database (E-permitting). |

## VI. IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS COMPLETED IN 2025

### Timrod Park Stream Enhancement Project

The goal of this project was to reduce E. coli concentrations through a reduction in suspended sediment within Gully Branch to work toward the target waste load allocation reduction requirement of 90% at water quality station PD-065 (Total Maximum Daily Load Document Jeffries Creek and Tributaries, 2016). The project accomplished this by utilizing stream enhancement activities to reduce the erosion and sediment loading to Gully Branch and enhancing the riparian corridor within Timrod Park. Additionally, riparian corridor enhancement will further reduce the sediment and bacteria loading to the stream by providing a stable root mass for long-term bank stability, capturing suspended sediment in overland flow, and increasing nutrient uptake.

### Upper Saluda Watershed Implementation for Sediment

Save Our Saluda was awarded a second NPS grant to implement BMPs to reduce sediment and improve water quality within the Upper Saluda River Watershed (Watershed), the drinking water source for the greater Easley area. Water quality impairments for turbidity and macroinvertebrates exist within the Watershed. The project targeted agricultural properties with intensively managed floodplain croplands designated as highest priority areas, and pastureland with impacted streams as second priority. A variety of agricultural BMPs were installed, including cover crops, riparian buffers, rock-lined waterways, floodplain restoration, stabilized access roads, streambank stabilization, heavy use areas, livestock stream

crossing, and livestock exclusion fencing with alternative water supply. Several education and volunteer opportunities were held to plant native trees and shrubs in riparian buffers along restored streambanks. These BMPs were installed along multiple stream sections and floodplains of the North Saluda River, Middle Saluda River, Terry Creek, and Railroad Creek.

Outreach efforts included two workshops held in 2022 and 2023. The first workshop educated farmers and landowners about the benefits of riparian buffers, methods of streambank repair and stabilization, and control of invasive species. The second workshop was geared towards Hispanic farmers and other cropland landowners and focused on the benefits of and methods for reducing soil loss by installation of cover crops and other soil conservation practices.

**Before and after streambank stabilization and riparian buffer planting along Terry Creek**

The ultimate outcome of the project was a sediment load reduction of 3,255 tons per year into surface waters in the Watershed, more than six times the original goal of 524 tons/year for this grant project, and approximately 15% load reduction from the estimated annual load of 21,938 tons per year in the Upper Saluda Watershed. In addition, the project reduced annual loading of phosphorus by 1,790 pounds, nitrogen by 5,179 pounds, and bacteria by 3.20E+12 CFU. The project began in January 2022 and was completed in August 2025. The total project cost was $869,681.60 and included $492,687.83 of federal funding and $376,993.72 of landowner and partner match. Partners in the project included: Clemson Cooperative Extension, Duke Energy, Easley Combined Utilities, Furman University, Greenville County, Greenville and Pickens Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), MetroConnects, Trout Unlimited, Naturaland Trust, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Pickens County, Renewable Water Resources (ReWa), South Carolina Office of Resilience, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR), South Carolina Rural Water Association, Save Our Saluda, Trees Upstate, Upstate Forever, and WSP USA, Inc. The project successfully reduced downstream sedimentation load and improved in-stream habitat conditions. A third 319 grant was awarded to Save Our Saluda for continued implementation of soil conservation projects to reduce sediment loading and protect and improve water quality in the Upper Saluda Watershed.

### Phase II: South, Middle, North Tyger River Watersheds BMP Implementation Project

This project was structured and implemented to continue to address the long-term bacterial and biological impairments in three sub-watersheds of the Tyger River Basin, the South Tyger, Middle Tyger, and North Tyger Subwatersheds. Like Phase 1 (2018-2022), goals were met by tackling NPS pollution through a combination of septic, agricultural, and land protection BMPs over a period of 46 months. The S/M/N Tyger River BMP Implementation Phase 2 began November 22, 2021, and ran through July 31, 2025. In total, the project costs equaled $372,222.50 in grant funding and $260,742.38 (41%) in grant/partner matching funds. Project partners all played a significant role in meeting the project objectives of facilitating septic, agriculture, and land protection BMPs. Partners providing monetary support, which amounted to $65,000, included: City of Greer, Greer Commission of Public Works, Startex-Jackson-Welford-Duncan Water District (SJWD), and Woodruff Roebuck Watershed District (WRWD). Partners providing in-kind support estimated to be just over $8,286.39 included: Clemson Extension, City of Greer, Friends of Lake Robinson, Greenville County Soil &Water Conservation District, Greenville County Public Works, Greer CPW, Greenville County USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Spartanburg County Stormwater Department, Spartanburg County- Natural Resources Conservation Service, SJWD, The Tyger River Foundation, USC-Upstate Center for Watershed Ecology, and WRWD.

### North Saluda Headwaters Restoration Project Phase II

The goal of the North Saluda River Headwaters Restoration Project is to utilize BMPs to maintain clear water downstream of the North Saluda River release and restoring water quality standards suitable to support aquatic life. Phase II of the restoration focused on restoring streambank stability, improving streambed diversity & in-stream habitat, and the implementation of critical BMPs at multiple locations. These locations included a section of the Callahan Branch before its confluence with the North Saluda River and a section of the North Saluda River downstream of the Reservoir release that is directly below the confluence of Callahan Branch.

**Before and after brank stabilization on Callahan Branch**

Phase II work began in January 2023 and was completed in June 2025. Phase II was funded by $300,000 in federal funds and $171,584 in matching funds. Greenville Water matching funds came from a combination of purchased supplies and materials, in-kind materials, and GW personnel and equipment hours. Greenville Water partnered with Jennings Environmental and North State Environmental to complete this restoration work.

Phase II objectives were to reduce stormwater runoff, improve native vegetation to support wildlife and stream stability, stabilize impaired streambanks and improve water quality by reducing streambank erosion, remove river channel sediment, and improve habitat for native aquatic animals by enhancing stream bed diversity features. These objectives were met by the reconstruction of the stream channel and installation of stream restoration structures within the project area. Additionally, installation of BMPs including streambank stabilization, permanent seeding, heavy use stabilization, river channel sediment removal, vegetated filter strips and riparian buffers were installed across these sites with the goal of minimizing the amount of sediment reaching the Callahan Branch and North Saluda River. The success of the project was demonstrated by the successful and efficient implementation of these BMPs as well as maintaining the integrity of the restoration work during and after the Hurricane Helene storm event.

**Lake Keowee Watersheds Project**

This project consisted of a septic repair or replacement program while protecting over 200 acres of land through conservation easements in the Little River-Lake Keowee and Keowee River-Lake Keowee watersheds, as outlined in the Little River-Lake Keowee and Keowee River-Lake Keowee Watershed Plan (WBP). This mix of BMPs addresses the area's needs for reducing bacteria, nutrients, and sediment.

This phase of implementation concentrated on a Septic Find and Fix Program and land preservation efforts for the largest urbanized watershed feeding Lake Keowee, a critical drinking water reservoir. The SCDES 303(d) List of Impaired Waters has highlighted bacterial pollution issues in this watershed since 1998. Sixty (60) repairs were carried out using 319 grant funds, along with 24 additional septic repairs funded by the Lake Keowee Source Water Protection Team (LKSWPT). Since November 2022, 84 septic repairs and/or replacements have been completed through a mix of grant and private funding. Building on the previous implementation phase's success, the LKSWPT pursued funding to expand implementation across the entire Lake Keowee Watershed. The Lake Keowee Watershed projects began on November 16, 2022, with a planned completion date of November 16, 2025. However, the final easement was recorded on March 25, 2025, marking the project's conclusion as 319 federal funds were fully utilized. The project totaled $387,985.00 (58.5%) in federal funding and $274,551.50 (41.4%) in non-federal/partner matching funds. Project partners played a key role in achieving the objective of septic repairs and replacements. Those contributing in-kind support, valued at just over $333,920 (exceeding the projected budget by $59,368.57), included LKSWPT, Advocates for Quality Development (AQD), Anderson and Pickens County Stormwater Partners (APCSP), Clemson University Cooperative Extension, Clemson Extension, Duke Energy, Friends of Lake Keowee Society (FOLKS), Greenville Water, Oconee County, Pickens County, Seneca Light & Water, and Upstate Forever (UF).

**Edisto Island Septic System Improvement and Assistance Program**

The Edisto Island Septic System Improvement and Assistance Program officially began on January 22, 2024 and ended June 30, 2025. The project’s original outcome statement was to “reduce bacteria pollutant loading to tidal creeks through the repair and replacement of poorly functioning or failing septic systems for low-income residents, and education on proper maintenance of functional systems to prevent future bacterial loading.” Grantees set a target of 45 Septic Systems repaired (BMP implementations) over 3 years. They achieved this goal on February 25, 2025 with the 45th system repaired, taking only 13 months and completing the project 23 months ahead of schedule. In tandem, the grantees began a public education campaign across the Edisto Island Watershed. They were able to develop all of the watershed-specific outreach materials needed in-house, installed interpretive signage (updated from a prior 319 project) in public spaces, and held all the public outreach events planned

within the scope of the project. The project, in total, cost $249,743.83 to implement over the course of 17 months. Those funding sources are as follows: $124,056.75 award from EPA 319 via SCDES; $54,500.00 reported matching funds and $22,500.00 in additional funds from the Healthy Harbors Fund (administered by Coastal Community Foundation); a $17,464.00 award from the Charleston County Community Investment Fund; $1042.13 internal funds and $30,180.95 of staffing expenses from EIOLT. Throughout the project, EIOLT partnered with numerous organizations, agencies, and local businesses. Our partners included Clemson University Cooperative Extension, SC Sea Grant Consortium, Coastal Community Foundation, SC DNR, ACE Basin NERR, Town of Edisto Beach, Charleston County, Charleston Soil & Water Conservation District, University of South Carolina, USC-Beaufort, College of Charleston, Kiawah Conservancy, Island Septic Systems, Grass Choppers Landscaping LLC, Edisto Island Preservation Alliance, Edisto Island Community Association, the Edisto Island Ministerial Alliance, and, of course, the US EPA and SCDES. The project was a major success for the watershed.

**Public educational signage on Edisto Island**

## VII. IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS ONGOING IN 2025

### May River Phase VI – Pritchard Street Drainage Project

During 2025 calendar year the Town of Bluffton completed design, permitting, easement acquisition, advertisement of IFB and contract award for construction of the Pritchard Street Streetscape and Drainage Project. The Construction Contract has been awarded to Gulf Stream Construction, Inc. with a Notice to Proceed issued on November 11, 2025. Final design of the project includes the following water quality and 319 Grant related BMPs: inlet/catch basins with Enviropod Litta Trap and sediment bag pre-treatment device (or approved equal), two BMP control box structures, stormwater conveyance/infiltration BMPs, permeable paver sidewalk BMP and an infiltration basin.

Construction activity to-date has included administrative activity including project submittal and review, construction stakeout, and initial mobilization activities to the site. Construction is expected to be completed in July 2026.


**Runoff education event**

**Phase II Three and Twenty Creek Watershed BMP Implementation**

**Livestock alternative water source and heavy use area protection**

Upstate Forever is continuing to implement the BMP recommendations from the Watershed Based Plan for the Three and Twenty Creek Watershed, to reduce bacteria, nutrient, and sediment pollution in the Three and Twenty Creek Watershed. This three-year 319 grant was awarded in 2024 and is a continuation of progress made in Phase I (2020-2023). Phase II of this project has progressed quickly and efficiently with the repair/replacement of 22 septic systems with 10 more on a waitlist and eight agricultural projects with practices ranging from livestock exclusion fencing and alternative watering sources to heavy use protection areas. Lastly, one conservation easement of 72.61 acres closed in the last quarter of this year. To date, the grantees have five agricultural projects and two additional SCDES pre-approved conservation easements in progress. The grantee team has continued social media posts and other publications including their quarterly blog, the Water Log, to encourage participation in the project. In addition, Upstate Forever sent out a total of 333 mailings to high priority landowners in the project area. With the completion of 22 septic installations, it is estimated that a bacteria reduction of 5.33E11 bacteria/year has been removed from this watershed.

Some of the highlights from this past year include the completion of five additional agricultural projects across the watershed. Three of the five completed projects were for landowners who were EQIP recipients through NRCS. In those cases, SCDES 319 funds were used to cover additional cost-share on the remaining landowner contribution. These projects included livestock exclusion fencing, alternative waterers, and heavy use protection areas. The other two projects were completed on Simpson Station Beef Cattle Farm. They utilized this grant project as their sole funding source and have now completed all BMPs proposed for their site. BMPs included similar practices such as alternative watering sources, heavy use protection areas, and livestock exclusion fencing.

**Phase II South Pacolet River Watershed BMP Implementation**

Spartanburg Water System (SWS) operates Lake William C. Bowen and Municipal Reservoir #1 as a drinking water source for the City of Spartanburg and other regional areas. Stormwater runoff transports excess nutrients, sediment and bacteria to the lakes, causing algal blooms, and impacting water treatment, aquatic life, and recreational use of the lake. BMPs were identified for specific locations to reduce the amount of pollutants entering the lakes.

Shoreline stabilization and protection BMPs at the Lake Bowen Landing will leverage SWS property to provide additional benefit to the community and Lake Bowen. Bioretention was installed in Phase I and serves as a public demonstration project to reduce nutrients while providing wildlife habitat. As part of Phase II, shoreline protection will use native plantings and vegetative buffer to reduce erosion. The shoreline stabilization project was awarded to Construction Resource Group, Inc. and construction began in February 2025. Construction was completed in May 2025.

The Phase II stormwater outfall improvements project includes 3 locations. At 2 locations the designed BMPs included stone rip-rap for ditch stabilization and stilling basins. The third location includes an engineered water quality structure and stabilized stone rip-rap outfall. These measures will reduce sediment flowing into Lake Bowen from lakefront properties. The stormwater outfalls project was awarded to Performance Construction Group, LLC and construction began in September 2025. Construction is completed at 2 locations and will begin at the third location in January 2026.

**Stormwater outfall improvement**

**May River Phase VII – Historic District Phases 4-6 Sanitary Sewer Connections**

The sewer main line and lateral line construction connection contract was awarded to Jordan Construction, LLC in April 2025. Town of Bluffton and BJWSA pre-construction meetings have been completed, and main line construction was completed as of December 2025. The project team is awaiting final testing and acceptance from BJWSA with permit to operate from DES to move into lateral line construction. Permits have been completed, and public project notice was posted to affected owners and public prior to construction initiation. Project updates are included in the Town's CIP Project "Story Map" as part of overall sewer extension/connection projects and can be viewed here. accessible from this link.

**Phase III Congaree Creek Watershed Water Quality Improvement Project**

Lexington County conducted significant marketing/recruitment efforts in the latter half of 2025, including social media posts, physical flyers, local news station press releases, and mailing postcards to prioritized septic homes. This resulted in three septic repairs completed in 2025, for a total of 4 repairs in 2025. An additional 11 septic repairs and three sewer connections are in various stages of approval. One barrier to approving applications in a timely manner has been slow response from septic contractors. To address this, the County has reached out to contractors to emphasize the need for quotes and inquire as to what the County can do or provide to make the process easier for the contractor.

From the County's experience with two previous 319 septic grants (2015-2019, 2019-2922), there was a need for additional grant funding for lower income families unable to meet the 40% match. The current grant program through Lexington County incorporated these past experiences to increase the number of individuals able to receive additional funding to 31. In 2025, one recipient was awarded funding for 80% of the total cost of the septic repair based on income level. Based on an estimate of 2.42E+10 CFU/year per failing septic system, this grant has reduced the annual load of E. coli by 9.68E+10 CFU/year in Congaree Creek Watershed to date. The County anticipates the 11 septic repairs and three sewer connection currently in the process of being approved to be completed in the during the first quarter of 2026, resulting in a further reduction of E. coli by 3.15E+11 CFU/year.

### Horry County Septic and Agricultural Project Phase II

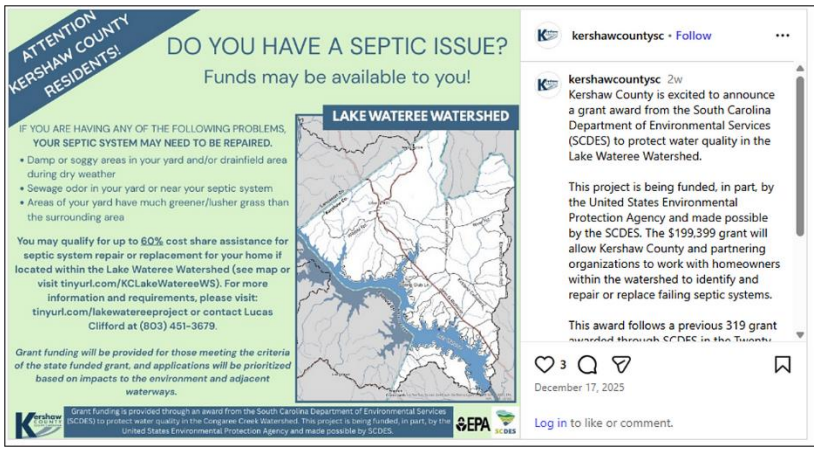
The Horry County Water Quality Improvement 319 grant is still going strong. Repairs have been steady for this quarter. This fourth quarter 21 septic tanks/field lines have been installed. As of January 1, 2026, the grantees have completed 78 installations. Out of the 78 systems, they have tied 10 applicants onto public sewer and have assisted with 68 septic/field lines installation.

**Before and after the repair of a failing septic system**

Applications continue to be submitted for repairs. Horry Soil & Water Conservation District was recently awarded a grant from the US EPA. This project was funded, in part, by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and made possible by the South Carolins Department of Environmental Services. Homeowners' inadequate septic systems are eligible for financial assistance (60%/40% cost share) to repair the systems.

### Lake Wateree Kershaw County Septic Repair Project

The goal of Kershaw County's implementation project is to reduce the introduction of *E. coli* from failing septic systems into waterbodies in the Lake Wateree Watershed. In May of this first year of the grant, Kershaw County began advertising the grant funding opportunity through various channels, including local news stations, social media, and the County website. The website and informational flyers provided a link to an interactive map that helped citizens determine grant eligibility. By the end of 2025, 24 individuals had contacted Kershaw County, and a total of ten had submitted complete applications. Inspections of the septic systems by the County resulted in five homeowners being awarded funding for 60% of the repair/replacement cost. By the end of 2025, two septic systems had been repaired or replaced, resulting in an *E. coli* reduction of 4.84E+10 CFU/yr into the Lake Wateree Watershed. Nitrogen and Phosphorus reductions to date are estimated at 62 lbs./yr and 24 lbs./yr, respectively.




**Social media posts for septic program outreach**

### Lake Keowee Watershed BMP Implementation Phase 3

Septic tank replacement

The Lake Keowee Watershed project is continuing efforts to reduce bacteria loading and prevent water quality degradation. This phase of implementation has already exceeded the projected number of septic repairs, with six additional systems completed for a total of 34 repairs. Funding allocated for septic repairs has been exhausted, but funding still remains for land protection. This project is surpassing its original goals and is currently ahead of schedule. The team continues to work with Upstate Forever Land Protection Team to identify potential opportunities for land protection.

### Upper Saluda Watershed Implementation for Sediment Project #3

The goal of Save Our Saluda's implementation project is to reduce sediment loading in the Upper Saluda Watershed through implementation of agricultural and rural BMPs. During 2025, BMPs were implemented with joint funding from 319, NRCS EQIP and landowner and partner match at the Naturaland Trust Ag Demo Site in Marietta, SC along the North Saluda River.

Rock-lined waterway constructed with donated blast rock

The North Saluda River project involved a total of 1,404 LF of streambank stabilization (including 175 LF installed using EQIP funding) and the installation of a floodplain bench and vegetated riparian buffer. The streambank stabilization project included 55 LF of shaping for a point bar, installation of 1,072 LF of toe rock and three rock vanes. The instream structures were installed with 1,600 tons of rock donated by Greenville County, with transportation donated by Naturaland Trust.

The site was stabilized with 4,000 native plugs and 5,000 live stakes in December 2025. Live stake species included silky dogwood (*Cornus amomum*), elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*), and buttonbush

(*Cephalanthus occidentalis*). Species selected to install as plugs include river oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*), soft rush (*Juncus effusus*), tussock sedge (*Carex stricta*), and switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*). Save Our Saluda hosted two volunteer days on October 17 and 18 to install turf reinforced matting along the 1,404 LF of streambank and floodplain bench. Volunteers also helped to remove plastic agricultural waste from the North Saluda River.

In addition, 2,190 LF of access road (1,000 LF was funded with EQIP) were installed upgradient of the riparian buffer to provide a stabilized access road and a barrier between the crop fields and the riparian buffer. During the project, 20 LF of a 36" culvert was extended to reduce bank erosion, and 2,450 ft2 (0.06 acres) of rock-lined waterways were also installed using the donated rock.

### Edisto Beach State Park Bank Stabilization

The Edisto Beach State Park project is in planning phase with design Phase 2 approved by both the Review Committee and Accountability Authority. An engineering budget has been allocated for Engineering Services from JMT. The project team is awaiting the completion of these services before moving to the permitting step. Permitting application will be done concurrently as they can. The project team has also had staffing changes. Construction of the bank stabilization will occur in 2026.

**Bank erosion at the proposed project site**

## VIII. IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS BEGINNING IN 2026

### Edisto Island Septic System Improvement Wave 3

The Edisto Island Watershed-Based Plan highlights bacteria as the primary impairment for the Watershed and identifies failing or poorly maintained septic systems as the major source of bacteria pollution. Increased levels of fecal bacteria (e.g. fecal coliform) can result in negative health impacts and reduced recreational opportunities to both consumptive and non-consumptive users of tidal waterways, particularly from the closures of accessible public shellfish beds. This can lead to hardships for members of endemic cultures and lower income residents. To reduce the bacteria load in the watershed, the Edisto Island Open Land Trust (EIOLT) created a program to educate septic system owners on Edisto Island about the importance of septic system maintenance and to fund the replacement or repair of septic systems at zero-cost to qualified applicants. The septic system improvement portion of the project not only prioritizes applicants whose septic systems are likeliest to be contributing the greatest quantity of bacteria pollution but also places great emphasis on only providing financial assistance, with 100% of

costs covered, to applicants who need help and may not be able to repair their system otherwise. This program will be funded, in part, by the Section 319 Grant, the Healthy Harbors Grant Program, and by EIOLT. Additional funding is being requested through additional local private grant sources and a fundraising campaign, to expand the scale of the project. EIOLT will measure the success of this project through the number of failing septic systems improved, public participation in outreach programs, reductions in fecal bacteria loading indicated by ongoing monitoring by SCDES (and incidentally in active research currently being conducted by Clemson University), and the re-opening of currently closed public shellfish beds in the Watershed.

The ultimate outcome or goal of this project is to: reduce bacteria pollutant loading to tidal creeks through the repair and replacement of poorly functioning or failing septic systems for low-income residents and watershed-wide education on proper maintenance of functional systems to prevent future bacteria loading. The total load reduction goal for the 2.5-year lifespan of this project is a reduction of 1.209E+12 fecal coliform bacteria per year.

**Lake Keowee Watershed BMP Implementation Phase 4**

The Lake Keowee Source Water Protection Team (LKSWPT) will mitigate bacterial and nutrient pollution in the Little River-Lake Keowee and Keowee River-Lake Keowee Watersheds. These watersheds encompass drinking water intakes for three utilities serving over 800,000 residents across Oconee, Pickens, Anderson, Greenville, and Laurens counties.

Building on prior successes funded through EPA Section 319 and supported by SCDES—including 2020 septic system repairs in Cane Creek and Little Cane Creek, as well as 2022 and 2025 efforts addressing septic system failures and land conservation in the Little River–Lake Keowee and Keowee River–Lake Keowee Watersheds—the Lake Keowee Source Water Protection Team (LKSWPT) proposes to expand its nonpoint source pollution mitigation efforts. This phase will focus on completing 50 septic system repairs or replacements to reduce nutrient and pathogen loading to surface waters and to protect the water quality of the Lake Keowee Watersheds in alignment with EPA 319 program goals. In 2022, LKSWPT repaired or replaced 60 septic systems and conserved over 200 acres through easements. By February 2025, funding was secured to repair or replace 28 septic systems, with 22 completed by July 31, 2025. These BMPs aim to reduce bacteria and nutrients in the watershed. LKSWPT remains committed to protecting and restoring the Lake Keowee Watersheds through strong partnerships with local governments and interest groups, ensuring ongoing success in BMP implementation.
The main goal of this project is to protect the surface water resources of Lake Keowee. With the Lake Keowee Watersheds covering 184,000 acres and the reductions in bacterial and nutrient loads required by the Watershed-Based Plan (WBP), the NPS pollution reduction plan had to be broken into manageable phases. This approach ensures meaningful load reductions while avoiding excessive financial strain on local governments, utilities, and residents. This phase of septic repair in the Lake Keowee Watersheds will build on previous achievements by further reducing and preventing nonpoint source pollution in these vital waters. Repairing septic systems helps reduce the number of pollutants entering waterways. The anticipated bacterial pollutant load reduction/prevention from septic repairs is 1.21E+12 bacteria counts/year, while nutrient prevention/reduction is estimated at 2165 pounds (lbs.)/year.

### Three and Twenty Creek Implementation Phase 3

Upstate Forever (UF) will continue to implement Phase 3 of the Three and Twenty Creek Watershed-Based Plan (WBP) to reduce bacteria, nutrient, and sediment pollution. This watershed contains the source water intake for Anderson Regional Joint Water System (ARJWS), South Carolina's fifth-largest drinking water utility, serving over 200,000 residents in Anderson and Pickens counties. The watershed faces persistent water quality challenges, including an EPA-approved TMDL for bacteria, continued bacterial impairments, multiple stations impaired for Biological Criteria, and recurring taste and odor issues linked to algal bloom byproducts (geosmin, MIB). In April 2025, Lake Hartwell was placed under a Recreational Water Watch for harmful algal blooms (HABs), underscoring the need to address nutrient, sediment, and bacterial impairments. Building on Phase 2 successes, UF will partner with local stakeholders to install BMPs including: 30 septic system repairs/replacements to prevent untreated wastewater discharge, seven agricultural BMP projects (in partnership with NRCS EQIP) to restrict livestock access to streams, provide alternative watering sources, enhance cropland management, and restore critical planting areas; and the protection of two high-priority properties (totaling 300 acres) via conservation easements to prevent development-related runoff. Phase 3 will advance watershed plan goals by targeting NPS pollution reductions as follows: 2.97E13 CFU/year of bacteria, 522.88 tons/year of sediment, 4,283.97 lbs./year of nitrogen, and 1,1641.11 lbs./year of phosphorous. These reductions will help meet TMDL targets, improve water quality monitoring results, and protect the drinking water supply. Phased implementation ensures BMPs are strategically located for maximum impact in priority areas, safeguarding watershed health for the long term.

## IX. WATERSHED PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS COMPLETED IN 2025

### Givhans Ferry/Edisto River Basin Watershed-Based Plan

McCormick Taylor Inc. (MT) was contracted by the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments (BCDCOG) to develop a watershed plan (WP) to identify and quantify sources of NPS pollution (nutrients, sediment, and bacteria), analyze impairments related to low dissolved oxygen, and provide project recommendations within the Givhans Ferry Watershed, which is composed of four HUC-12 watersheds (Lower Indian Field Swamp, Halfway Gut Creek-Four Hole Swamp, Poorly Branch-Edisto River, and Skull Branch, Edisto River), and a portion of one additional HUC-12 (Deep Creek-Edisto River). This watershed study area covers 99,559 acres and is part of the larger Edisto River basin draining to the Charleston Water System's intake near Givhans Ferry State Park. These watersheds provide a critical source of drinking water for the City of Charleston, Charleston County, Berkeley County, and Dorchester County.

This WP for Givhans Ferry addresses key issues impacting source water protection and water quality issues within the watershed, which includes Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) requirements related to fecal coliform (FC) bacteria in the Lower Indian Field Swamp subwatershed. The watershed faces problems typically associated with stormwater runoff, impacts associated with septic systems, agriculture, and increasing development, such as stream erosion, water quality degradation, and loss of natural resources. The purpose of this WP is to utilize the framework of the EPA's nine required elements to identify, quantify, and provide recommendations to reduce pollutants in the watershed. This WP also provides recommendations to measure and monitor progress and discuss funding needs and opportunities. Additionally, this plan will incorporate components that address climate change

consideration, and the protection of public drinking water sources in the watershed. The total population in this watershed is approximately 7,125 people.

### Big Dutchman and Burgis Creek WBP

The City of Rock Hill, and partners, developed these WPs as part of a larger, regional watershed planning effort in the Rock Hill area. Watersheds play a pivotal role in collecting, filtering, and supplying water to ecosystems and human communities. WPs serve as a roadmap to maintain and improve watershed health by providing voluntary recommendations to address known water quality impairments within the watershed. By promoting sustainable land and water management practices, these WPs seeks to ensure that both natural ecosystems and human communities can thrive and coexist harmoniously, safeguarding our vital water resources for future generations.

In the Big Dutchman and Burgis Creek Watersheds, many organizations have been active and engaged in local water quality issues and these key partners have played a critical role in these planning efforts. These WPs prioritize projects within the watersheds to focus on rectifying existing pollution and prevent additional pollutant loads. Local organizations can utilize the final plans to coordinate respective partners and pursue implementation.

### Fishing Creek WBP

SC Rural Water Association developed this WP for the project area that includes the Fishing Creek Reservoir-Catawba River (030501030606), Sixmile Creek-Catawba River (030501030604), and Waxhaw Creek (030501030603) watersheds. These watersheds are a total of 118 square miles and located in the Lower Catawba River Basin in portions of Chester, Fairfield, Lancaster, and York counties.

This WP addresses the bacteria, sediment, and nutrient pollutants through mitigation strategies that will efficiently reduce and/or prevent nonpoint source pollutants from contaminating the waterbodies in the project area. The recommended actions are intended to improve water quality and reduce the potential burden of increased water treatment costs to the local water utilities. The proposed mitigation strategies include installing a suite of BMPs over a 15-year timeline that consists of three five-year phases. Over the 15-year project timeline, the proposed BMPs could reduce bacteria, sediment, and nutrient loads by approximately 1.83E+16 CFUs, 5,100 tons, and 60,015 lbs. respectively.

## X. WATERSHED PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS ONGOING IN 2025

### Creating a Watershed-Based Plan for the Rocky River Watershed

The ultimate goal of this planning effort is to develop a roadmap to reduce bacteria, nutrient, and sediment pollution through BMP projects, and other protective measures for the Rocky River watershed. This work will include recommendations and a comprehensive land prioritization for the entirety of the watershed to help identify where BMP implementation would be most effective. Upstate Forever's Land Conservation Program is active in Anderson and Abbeville Counties and is working with landowners to secure conservation easements in the area. Upstate Forever currently manages four conservation easements in Abbeville County and 13 Anderson County, with 27 potential future easements identified. The Land Conservation team will work towards identifying and securing priority parcels for protection in the watershed to guide on-the-ground decisions about utilizing land protection as a strategy to protect source water in the region.

Significant progress on this plan has been completed this year including researching the watershed, collective background data and information, visiting the watershed, and collaborating with our project partners. Additional progress includes two in-person windshield surveys, meeting with project partners during nine Lake Hartwell Partners for Clean Water board meetings, beginning the watershed-based planning document, GIS analysis for prioritizing land for both protection and restoration practices, and identifying BMPs to address the bacterial, sediment, and nutrient concerns in the watershed.

### Chauga River Watershed Plan

The ultimate goal following the development of this WP is to implement measures to improve and maintain the aquatic integrity of the Chauga River Watershed. This Chauga River WP will act as the roadmap for the Chattooga Conservancy and its community partners to restore and protect this special waterway for the county and state. The Chattooga Conservancy will seek to apply for other funds (especially in connection with its partners) such as Trout Unlimited's Embrace-a-Stream (EAS), USDA-Forest Service's Every Kid Outdoors grants, and USDA NRCS's Conservation Reserve Program. A future goal of the Chauga WP includes applying for 319-funds to help further implement and enhance the measures set forth in the WP to restore and maintain the Chauga as a quality aquatic resource for both use as a community drinking source water intake and for recreational opportunities.

This plan has seen significant progress including confirming and engaging the Watershed Advisory Committee (WAC) and Forest Service as partners. Reviews include GIS and LIDAR information, load reduction calculations, visual data, and surveys. One of our staff has now passed part 107 and has become an FAA certified remote UAS pilot. The drone is currently being used to collect observational/visual data.

## XI. WATERSHED PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS BEGINNING IN 2026

### Tugaloo River and Choestoea Creek Watershed Plan

Upstate Forever will develop a comprehensive WP for three HUC-12 watersheds, Upper Tugaloo River, Lower Tugaloo River, and Choestoea Creek, within the larger Savannah River Basin. While the watersheds extend into the State of Georgia, this WP will only focus on those portions of the watersheds that fall within the state of South Carolina. The project area contains approximately 275.5 miles of streams and 72,959 acres of land. Forested lands dominate the land cover at 62.4%, followed by agricultural lands (15.15%) and urban lands (11.05%). This portion of the greater Tugaloo River HUC-8 basin (03060102) includes a source water intake and protection area for Pioneer Rural Water, supplying 7,000 customers in the Southern Oconee County and Northwestern Anderson County area. Additionally, there are 16 public water supply wells in the project area that supply drinking water to small communities/businesses, an estimated 1,000 people collectively.

### Crane Creek Watershed Plan Update

Since its creation in 1998, the Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC) has worked to protect watersheds in the county through property acquisitions, conservation easements, and by funding grant projects, all prioritized based on a countywide Green Infrastructure GIS Analysis. Crane Creek Watershed has seen an increase in development and catastrophic flooding in the 15 years since the last watershed plan was created. There is a recent surge in residential, commercial, and industrial development in the Blythewood portions of the Beasley Creek watershed with much more expected. This watershed needs funding to update the existing watershed plan, locate NPS pollution, and implement recommended

BMPs. Clearly defined BMPs will limit future NPS pollutants. Identifying NPS pollutants will assist in developing strategic BMPs and implementation strategies to control these pollutants. The goals that will be the RCCC's baseline guide are improving water quality, decreasing stream erosion and sedimentation, reducing localized flooding, and protecting in-stream and inland habitat. Through development of an updated Watershed Plan, the RCCC hopes to address current issues and mitigate further water quality issues and stream degradation by planning ahead for future growth.

The City of Columbia's Canal Water Plant intake is used to treat and serve nearly 71,000 meters/customers for a total of approximately 213,000 residents of the Midlands (assuming 3 people per account). This includes approximately 42,000 people within the Crane Creek Watershed. Approximately 190 Richland County citizens are served by the community wells in the Upper Crane Creek watershed. The well, identified as WELL 2(G40144) HAMILTON & HARDSCRABLE/BGWC WASHINGTON HEIGHTS, is operated by Blue Granite Water Company. The City of West Columbia's Riverside Water Treatment Plant receives some water from the Broad River as the intake is near the confluence with the Saluda River. That facility serves approximately 7,500 customers and a population of approximately 21,000 people.

## XII. NONPOINT SOURCE PROGRAM CONTACTS

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For more information, visit the Nonpoint Source Program website.

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