UNRBA Board of Directors: September 16, 2026, Board Minutes

The Board of Directors of the Upper Neuse River Basin Association (UNRBA) met at 9:30 A.M. on Wednesday, September 16, 2026, via an in-person and conference call/webinar. Meeting attendees are listed below.

Name	Affiliation
Wendy Jacobs (Chair)*	Durham County
Ryan Eaves (Treasurer)	Durham County
Russ May (Secretary)	Granville County
Forrest Westall (Executive Director)	UNRBA
Georgana Kicinski	City of Creedmoor
Reggie Hicks	City of Durham
Carl Rist	City of Durham
Kieu Tran	City of Durham
Ed Buchan	City of Raleigh
David Harris	Durham County Soil & Water
Wesley Poole	Orange County
Marilyn Carter	Orange County
Sherry Wilborn	Person County
Scott Schroyer	SGWASA
Vicky Daniels	Town of Butner
Meaghun Darab	Town of Hillsborough
Katie Cromwell	Upper Jurisdictions
Jim Wrenn	Upper Jurisdictions
Alix Matos	Brown & Caldwell
John Huisman	DWR
Jay Rickabaugh	NC State University
Christopher Mattox*	City of Durham
Aarin Miles*	City of Durham
Sandi Wilbur*	City of Durham
Carolyn Bachl*	City of Raleigh
Kathy Cooper*	City of Raleigh
Tirrill Moore*	City of Raleigh
Nish Trivedi*	Person County
Tim Karan*	Town of Stem
Kevin Kirsch*	Town of Wake Forest
Nancy Daly*	Wake County
Haywood Phthisic*	Lower Neuse Basin Association
Lauren Strader*	Brown & Caldwell
Dan McLawhorn*	Smith Anderson
Carleen Evans*	Jones and Company
Kelly Chernin*	Appalachian State University
Michael Miller*	

*Attended meeting virtually

Welcome and Recognition

As Wendy Jacobs was not available to Chair the meeting in person, the Secretary, Russ May, called the meeting to order and welcomed all those participating. Russ asked if any of the Board Directors have any "conflict of interest" issues with any agenda items, and no conflicts were identified. Russ called the roll, and 12 of 14 members were present for a quorum. Forrest Westall reviewed the voting hierarchy described in the UNRBA Bylaws. Russ asked if there were any amendments to the agenda. Being none, Georgana Kicinski made the motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Marilyn Carter, and approved by the Board.

Action Items of the Board

Approval of Minutes, June 17, 2026, Board Meeting **–** Russ asked the Board if there were any edits or corrections to the draft minutes provided. Hearing none, Meaghun Darab made the motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Georgana Kicinski, and approved by the Board.

Treasurer's Report – Forrest Westall summarized the amount remaining in the legal fund. Ryan Eaves presented the Treasurer's Report for the period ending August 31, 2026. The checking account balance at the close of the statement was $189,693.39, and the savings account balance was $1,441,918.88 (a copy of the Treasurer's Report is posted on the UNRBA website). Following review of the report, Sherry Wilborn made the motion to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented, seconded by Ed Buchan, and approved by the Board.

Appoint the Personnel Committee and Consider Setting an Earlier than Normal Meeting Date – Forrest reviewed the objectives of the Committee. This Committee is responsible for assessing this year's activities, reviewing the work provided under the Executive Director Services Contract, and planning for next year. He noted that at Board meetings held earlier this year, it was requested that the Committee meet earlier than its normal December meeting schedule. Forrest reviewed the previous years' Committee members and asked for additional volunteers. Following discussion, the Board proposed the following representatives to the Committee: Wendy Jacobs, Jane Harrison, Russ May, Ryan Eaves, Aarin Miles, Reggie Hicks, Kathy Cooper, Ed Buchan, Jim Wrenn, and Nish Trivedi. Sherry Wilborn made a motion to appoint the Committee, authorize the Board Chair as Chair of the Committee, and to proceed setting a meeting date, seconded by Ryan Eaves, and approved by the Board. It was noted that, as in previous work of this Committee, other member representatives may be designated to participate. The Committee will also seek input from all member representatives during the review process and before their recommendations are finalized. After the vote, Forrest indicated that the Committee would likely meet in October and provide a preliminary report to the Board in November. A final report is normally provided at the January Board meeting.

Informational Items

Presentation by Jay Rickabaugh (NC State University) and Kelly Chernin (Appalachian State University) on the UNRBA and Jordan Lake One Water (JLOW) Communications Research Study – Jay provided a brief history of the project which began in 2024 with a series of interviews of members of UNRBA and JLOW. He expressed his gratitude for the time and effort the UNRBA members provided toward this research. He noted that funding for the project was provided through the Science and Technology for Phosphorus Sustainability (STEPS) research supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. CBET-2019435. He stated that any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in their presentation are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation (NSF). Jay explained that the research aims to identify best practices for addressing complex problems when multiple organizations, perspectives, and levels of expertise are tasked with working together on solutions. While their study focused on two watershed-based groups that are addressing complex nutrient issues, they aim to develop a communications framework that can be applied to other complex problems. Kelly explained how the leadership, organizational structure, and process used by the

organizations work together to build trust, common language, and organizational culture. She reviewed the preliminary findings of the study:

- UNRBA is an exemplar/model organization following the simplified communication model
- Establishing trust among different stakeholders is essential to collaboration (shared motivation)
- Leadership is an essential driver
- Translating scientific information to simplified key take aways helps create a shared language all stakeholders can understand and helps to create a culture where people feel they can ask questions, share concerns, and offer input (she noted that the Consensus Principles developed represent a strong example of developing key conclusions of the UNRBA's work)

Kelly also provided some recommendations for organizations like the UNRBA who deal with changes in leadership and members: leadership organization and training, onboarding process, standardized templates and feedback loops, and development of a living glossary. Kelly noted that they are refining the communications model and welcome any feedback that the UNRBA members and team are willing to provide.

The Chair requested a copy of the slide presentation, and Kelly indicated that Forrest had a copy and was welcome to distribute to the Board. Jay offered that he and Kelly could help the UNRBA with succession planning and organizational transitions.

Status of the Falls Lake Rules Readoption Process – Forrest reviewed the work of the UNRBA to support the Falls Rules Readoption Process and the benefits of those efforts relative to the latest draft rules distributed by the NC Division of Water Resources (DWR). He summarized the status of discussions on the New Development, Existing Managed Lands, Agriculture, Wastewater, and Purpose and Scope rules. Forrest indicated that the UNRBA support team, key leaders of the UNRBA, and staff from DWR will continue to meet to try to make progress on the rules. The last meeting of this group was July 20, 2026. Forrest reviewed components of the rules where significant resolution had been achieved and those that items that remain unresolved. While the agency and the UNRBA are in significant agreement on much of the provisions in the New Development, Existing Managed Lands, and Purpose and Scope Rules, the Wastewater Rule is still overly restrictive and will, as currently drafted, place a moratorium on growth in the watershed. He noted that Falls Lake is meeting all of its uses and has the best water quality it has had since construction. Based on modeling and a careful evaluation of impact to the lake chlorophyll-a levels, it is not necessary to establish what is essentially a moratorium on growth in the watershed to protect the long-term quality of the reservoir. He noted that it should remain an objective to continue to manage nutrients and maintain and improve water quality in the reservoir. The membership of the UNRBA has continued to support these objectives and provided ongoing efforts to help develop appropriate rules for readoption.

Several Board members expressed concern over the schedule for Falls Rules readoption and worried that the process would continue for years. Forrest reminded the Board that the current Existing Development Rule and New Development Rule are manageable and have been improved in implementation through the efforts of the UNRBA (particularly the Stage I Existing Development Interim Alternative Implementation Approach (IAIA). He noted that in the near term, as a collective, the wastewater treatment plants likely have sufficient capacity but that if the rules and permits remain as they are, a variance may be needed to sustain the ability to provide service into the future. However, the UNRBA will continue to work toward a workable wastewater rule that would allow the rule readoption to move forward. Forrest noted that long-term relief for the wastewater treatment plants may not be possible without either a site-specific chlorophyll-a standard or a change in how DWR assesses chlorophyll-a. He mentioned that the UNRBA has been raising these issues with DWR since the reexamination process began and has consistently tried to put into the revised rules a Falls specific assessment methodology in the draft Purpose and Scope Rule (this concept has to date been rejected by the agency which has stated that UNRBA could petition for a change to the standard, but it should not be in the Falls Rules). DWR continues to reference the Nutrient Criteria Development Plan (NCDP) process for development of a site-specific standard in the Purpose and Scope Rule. Forrest reviewed

the lack of progress and delay that has occurred under the NCDP relative to the Memorandum of Agreement between DWR and Region IV of the Environmental Protection Agency and mentioned that the Scientific Advisory Council for the NCDP has not met in at least two years, despite ongoing commitments in the current plan.

Forrest recommended that work continue to resolve these issues and address the wastewater treatment rule. He further emphasized his ongoing recommendation that the UNRBA should not agree to any draft Rules that do not provide an acceptable resolution to the Association's objections. He described the actions that may be necessary to continue opposition through any attempt to move unacceptable rules forward.

John Huisman (DWR) indicated that Michael Pjetraj has been appointed as the new Director of DWR. Board members asked if this change would impact progress on the rules, and John and Forrest both indicated that it should not. DWR plans to share revised drafts of the rules that would incorporate the revisions that have been agreed to and plans to provide a status update to the NC Environmental Management Commission Water Quality Committee, likely in November 2026.

Reminder for Year-End Stage I Existing Development Interim Alternative Implementation Approach (IAIA) Reports – Forrest reminded the Board that the fifth year of the IAIA ended June 30, 2026, and year-end reports are due to John Huisman with a copy to Forrest and Alix by September 30, 2026. Forrest and Alix will generate a summary report for review by the UNRBA Compliance Group Committee during the November 18, 2026, Board meeting. A link to the template is provided here: https://unrba.org/resource-library.

Continued Rule Development for Jordan Lake and High Rock Lake Watersheds – Forrest reminded the Board of DWR's ongoing work to develop a nutrient management strategy for High Rock Lake and to update and readopt the Jordan Lake Rules. He noted that the UNRBA team is continuing to monitor these processes.

Communication Support – Forrest provided online links of previously developed handouts that explain the challenges associated with the current Falls Rules and the work performed by the UNRBA and others to find more reasonable solutions.

Other Items – Forrest noted that DWR recently closed the comment period on the Lower Neuse Basin modeling report that evaluates the nutrient crediting process. He noted that the NC State study on streambank erosion has been completed and once the website is finalized it will include a function to download the data. When it is available, he will share with the PFC and Board. He also mentioned other items the UNRBA is tracking including the impacts of PFAS/PFOS on treatment costs and local governments.

The next scheduled Board meeting will be held November 18, 2026, at 9:30 A.M. at the Butner Town Hall with an option for remote access.

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned.