



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UPPER NEUSE RIVER BASIN ASSOCIATION (UNRBA) RECEIVES FINAL APPROVAL FOR ITS INNOVATIVE, COST-EFFECTIVE WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT APPROACH

Local governments in the Falls Lake watershed are regulated by the [Falls Lake Rules](#) which require reduction in nutrient loading from human sources. The rules are estimated to cost approximately [\\$1.5 billion](#), and [technologies are not yet available](#) to meet the requirements. On September 8, 2022, the [NC Environmental Management Commission \(EMC\)](#) unanimously issued its final approval for an innovative compliance approach developed by the UNRBA and its partners.

Thirteen local governments and a water utility are members of the [UNRBA](#) whose mission is to provide a forum for cooperation on water quality protection and water resource planning. In 2018, environmental and conservation advocacy groups approached the UNRBA and the NC Division of Water Resources (DWR) with an idea for an alternative approach to comply with the required nutrient load reductions for existing development. The details of this Stage I Existing Development Interim Alternative Implementation Approach ([IAIA](#)) took three years to develop and finalize. On March 17, 2021, the Board of the UNRBA voted unanimously to invest a combined \$1.5 million each year in water quality improvements.

Every local government in the UNRBA has voluntarily joined the IAIA. Year one of the program has just been completed, and a series of projects and programs have been undertaken across the watershed. Multiple UNRBA Board members expressed their gratitude for the program and for EMC approval. Members noted that this represents a significant effort to improve water quality and praised the collaboration across organizations:

- Sig Hutchinson, Wake County, UNRBA Chair, called the IAIA “not only a model for other watersheds in our State, but a national model as well.”
- Wendy Jacobs, Durham County, UNRBA Secretary, said of the efforts, “this is cause to celebrate the hard work and accomplishments that will save money for our citizens.”
- Forrest Westall, UNRBA Executive Director, said, “we’ve had consistent, strong support from all of our members regardless of their size; this cooperation has been essential to get this joint effort adopted.”

Other organizations also recognize the importance of this accomplishment. John Huisman (DWR) says the IAIA demonstrates “positive momentum in the implementation of the Falls Lake Rules and the commitment of the local governments to improve water quality” and that “this is a great success that we can point to as an example for other watersheds.” Peter Raabe of [American Rivers](#) says, “The adoption of this approach to improving our water supplies for people and nature is a groundbreaking modernization of our clean water regulation. It will deliver benefits that communities will see and appreciate every day and is only possible due to the great work of the UNRBA members and NC DEQ.”

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The UNRBA continues to develop their recommendations for a new set of Falls Lake Nutrient Management Rules. For more information on the UNRBA, the IAIA, or the development of a revised Stage II strategy for managing nutrient loading in Falls Lake, please contact **Forrest Westall** at (919) 339-3679 or forrest.westall@unrba.org.