

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2009**

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SENATE BILL 1294*

Agriculture/Environment/Natural Resources Committee Substitute Adopted 6/1/10

Short Title: Conserve & Protect Ag Water Resources.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

May 20, 2010

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1
2 AN ACT TO DIRECT THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER
3 SERVICES AND THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL
4 RESOURCES TO: (1) CONTINUE TO WORK WITH THE NORTH CAROLINA FARM
5 BUREAU FEDERATION, OTHER AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND
6 FARMERS IN THE STATE TO DEVELOP A PLAN TO IDENTIFY AND REPORT
7 AGRICULTURAL WATER INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS; (2) ENCOURAGE
8 VOLUNTARY PRACTICES THAT CONSERVE AND PROTECT WATER
9 RESOURCES; AND (3) DESIGN A COST-SHARE PROGRAM TO ASSIST FARMERS
10 AND AGRICULTURAL LANDOWNERS WHO IMPLEMENT BEST MANAGEMENT
11 PRACTICES TO CONSERVE AND PROTECT WATER RESOURCES RELATED TO
12 AGRICULTURAL USE, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE LEGISLATIVE STUDY
13 COMMISSION ON WATER AND WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE.

14 Whereas, North Carolina recognizes that water is our most basic and precious
15 natural resource; and

16 Whereas, North Carolina has experienced several years of extreme drought over the
17 past decade and will likely continue to experience extreme drought in the future; and

18 Whereas, North Carolina should identify and promote best management practices
19 and leadership efforts in water efficiency and water conservation; and

20 Whereas, agriculture is one of the largest industries in the State, with an annual
21 economic impact of over \$70 billion each year and employing over 640,000 people; and

22 Whereas, agriculture suffers acutely from the effects of water scarcity and drought,
23 while at the same time playing an important role in the sustainable management of available
24 water resources; and

25 Whereas, farmers and agricultural landowners can play an important role in helping
26 to protect current and future water resources; and

27 Whereas, the United States Environmental Protection Agency conducts an
28 assessment of the national public water system capital improvement needs every four years as
29 part of its Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs Survey and Assessment, but this survey does
30 not consider agricultural water infrastructure needs; and

31 Whereas, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, in conjunction
32 with the Division of Soil and Water Conservation of the Department of Environment and
33 Natural Resources, the North Carolina Farm Bureau Federation, other agricultural
34 organizations, and farmers are currently in the process of developing a strategic plan for
35 protecting agricultural water resources; Now, therefore,

36 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:



1 **SECTION 1.** The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the
2 Division of Soil and Water Conservation of the Department of Environment and Natural
3 Resources shall continue to work with the North Carolina Farm Bureau Federation, other
4 agricultural organizations, and farmers to develop a plan that will identify agricultural water
5 infrastructure needs that are not accounted for in the surveys of water infrastructure needs
6 conducted by the United States Environmental Protection Agency. The plan shall include the
7 following:

- 8 (1) A mechanism for reporting the results of the data gathered to the General
9 Assembly in a manner that is helpful in assessing legislative and budgetary
10 issues that the General Assembly may need to address.
- 11 (2) Methods to identify current and future agricultural water-use needs and
12 methods to ensure that those needs are met.
- 13 (3) Methods to identify best management practices for water conservation and
14 water efficiency by agricultural water users in the State.
- 15 (4) A schedule to update the plan on a regular basis.

16 **SECTION 2.** The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the
17 Department of Environment and Natural Resources shall work with farmers and agricultural
18 landowners to encourage voluntary practices that conserve water, increase the efficiency of
19 private water use, and increase the water storage capacity of agricultural lands. The
20 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the Department of Environment and
21 Natural Resources shall jointly design a cost-share program to provide technical and financial
22 support to farmers and agricultural landowners who want to implement best management
23 practices to protect water resources related to agricultural use.

24 **SECTION 3.** The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the
25 Department of Environment and Natural Resources shall report to the Legislative Study
26 Commission on Water and Wastewater Infrastructure by November 1, 2010, on the
27 development of the agricultural water infrastructure needs survey, the identification of best
28 management practices for water conservation and water efficiency by agricultural water users
29 in the State, and the design of the cost-share program. The report shall include the estimated
30 costs of the survey and cost-share program, the proposed methodology and time frame for
31 implementing the survey and cost-share program, possible sources of funding for the survey
32 and cost-share program, and any legislative changes needed to implement the survey and
33 cost-share program.

34 **SECTION 4.** This act is effective when it becomes law.