



UNRBA Nutrient Study

In 2014, the UNRBA began a project to expand the types of projects and activities that receive nutrient reduction credits. The Association worked with subject matter experts and stakeholders to develop credit documents. The UNRBA submitted these documents for review and approval by the State. The project included development of a [Nutrient Credit Tool](#) and [User Guide](#) to help local governments track compliance with nutrient reduction requirements. The Association also developed an [analysis](#) to understand how nutrients from different parts of the watershed reach Falls Lake. The UNRBA invested over \$300,000 in this project. State agencies provided \$70,000 in grant funds to support this work.

The first step in the project was to select which practices to evaluate. The Association started with a list of 48 candidates. Documentation of the screening and selection process is available [here](#). Additional files associated with the screening process are available in the [resource library](#). The UNRBA selected eight practices for credit development. A unique team of subject matter experts assisted with development of credits for each practice.

Developing nutrient credits for new practices can take years. Often the resulting credits are very small, so the practices are not used. The long and resource-intensive approval process is one reason that environmental interest groups proposed a new approach for addressing nutrient loads from older developments. This approach is called the [IAIA](#): the Stage I Existing Development Interim Alternative Implementation Approach.

Links to the nutrient crediting documents are provided below. This information is organized based on the type of development they have been approved for. In the Falls Lake watershed, older development means that built before 2012. New development occurred after 2012.

Practices applicable to new development and older development: Three practices allow credits for over- or under-sized devices. The standard sizing already had approved credits. When retrofitting older developments, full-sized devices may not fit. The UNRBA submitted practice documents for sizing options for bioretention cells, level spreader filter strips, and infiltration devices. The North Carolina Division of Energy, Mineral and Land Resources regulates use of these practices. Crediting information and minimum design criteria are available online [here](#). Only practices with minimum design criteria can be used for new development. These practices can also be used for retrofitting older developments.

Practices applicable older development (before 2012): Three additional practices were developed with the North Carolina Division of Water Resources. These support compliance with rules that require nutrient reductions from older development. The links below provide access to these nutrient crediting documents:

- [Remediating illicit discharges](#) (approved)
- [Soil improvement](#) (approved)
- [Cattle exclusion](#) (contingent on approval of a trading framework by the Falls Lake Watershed Oversight Committee)



Successful Soil Improvement Project, Photos Courtesy of the Town of Hillsborough

Practices submitted but not yet approved for nutrient reduction credit: The UNRBA submitted two additional practices to the North Carolina Division of Water Resources. The agency is still working on credits for [buffer improvements in developed areas](#). Developing nutrient reduction credits for [land conservation](#) was postponed indefinitely. The IAIA allows land conservation as an eligible activity.