

# Fast Facts



## What is the Upper Neuse River Basin Association (UNRBA)?

The UNRBA is a group of local governments and utilities in the basin that drains to Falls Lake. Its mission is to protect and improve water quality in the lake and its basin. UNRBA members are finding better ways to protect and improve water quality. Its members invested \$11 million over 12 years to study the lake and its watershed. UNRBA used scientific findings to propose an updated nutrient management strategy. People from affected groups, called stakeholders, worked together to guide this effort.

## Why is Falls Lake important?

Falls Lake is a regional asset built to protect downstream areas from flooding. The lake also supplies drinking water, serves as a home for fish and wildlife, and is a fun place to swim and fish.



## Why does Falls Lake need an updated nutrient management strategy?

The General Assembly passed the current nutrient management strategy for Falls Lake in 2011. Since then, groups required to follow the strategy have reduced nutrients going into Falls Lake. Conditions have changed over the past two decades. New scientific information is available. To protect Falls Lake in the future, an updated strategy is needed.

## Who is regulated?



**State and federal agencies** that contribute to stormwater runoff



**Local governments** are required to reduce nutrient loading from developed areas



**Agriculture** that may grow crops, produce animals, or hold lands in an unmanaged state



**Wastewater treatment facilities** that discharge treated wastewater into rivers and streams

## What does the UNRBA recommend to maintain and improve water quality in Falls Lake?

**Based on the latest science and stakeholder input, an updated strategy is needed.**

- ◆ Work together
- ◆ Implement projects
- ◆ Spend wisely
- ◆ Protect forests and natural lands
- ◆ Develop science-based policies
- ◆ Provide flexibility
- ◆ Adapt to new information

## Watershed and lake successes

- ◆ Scientists have studied Falls Lake more than any other water supply lake in North Carolina.
- ◆ Fewer nutrients are entering the lake now than when the State began tracking in 2006.
- ◆ Wastewater treatment plants have reduced phosphorus loads by 80 percent and nitrogen loads by 40 percent.
- ◆ Algal growth is below originally predicted levels.
- ◆ People can use the lake for its main purposes: prevent downstream flooding, provide habitat for wildlife, offer space for recreation, and supply drinking water to Raleigh.
- ◆ The UNRBA uses a watershed-health approach to improve water quality. This framework allows for the most flexibility. Local governments can select projects that reduce nutrients and address other local concerns.

## Constraints of the existing strategy

- ◆ Communities have already reduced nutrients going to the lake. As a result, lake water quality has improved and stabilized.
- ◆ Most of the land in the watershed (75%) is forests or other unmanaged areas. Reducing nutrient loading from these areas is very difficult.
- ◆ A lot of nutrients enter the lake when we have large storms. These intense storms are happening more often.
- ◆ Eliminating the nutrient management strategy is not an option. Without appropriate management, water quality in the lake may decline with more frequent storms and population growth.
- ◆ The UNRBA estimates that the 2011 strategy will cost more than \$1.5 billion. Its requirements are not feasible.

## Can the Falls Lake rules be revised?

Yes! The Falls Lake Rules specifically allow for a change of the requirements. Following the required steps, the UNRBA is working with the State of North Carolina and partners across the basin on updated rules.

## What steps has the UNRBA taken to update the 2011 rules?

### Gathered New Scientific Information

A few groups study Falls Lake and its watershed. One group, the NC Collaboratory, began in 2016 to study both Falls and Jordan Lakes. Another group, the NC Division of Water Resources, has gathered data in the area since the 1980s. The UNRBA collected its own data on water quality for four years. They put together and studied all the available information. They also created computer programs to understand how adding nutrients affects the water quality in Falls Lake.

### Collaborated with Diverse Stakeholders

Science alone can't help us figure out how to balance different wants and needs. We're committed to talking with everyone involved in the basin. We'll keep reaching out to all the regulated groups and environmental conservation organizations. The UNRBA will work closely with the NC Division of Water Resources on the new rules. By working together, we can create a plan that improves water quality and gets broad support.

## Where can I learn more?

Visit our website [UNRBA.org](https://www.unrba.org)

Members of the public are welcome to attend all UNRBA meetings. To join us at an upcoming meeting or review minutes from previous meetings, visit our website at [UNRBA.org](https://www.unrba.org)