

**PERQUIMANS COUNTY**

Office of the Manager

P.O. BOX 45

HERTFORD, NORTH CAROLINA 27944

TELEPHONE: (252) 426-8484

BOBBY C. DARDEN
COUNTY MANAGER

RECEIVED FEB 06 2009

Sent Via Facsimile: 1-202-720-9689

February 6, 2009

Easements Programs Division
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Wetlands Reserve Program Comments
P.O. 2890, Room 6819-S
Washington, DC 20013

RE: Interim-Final Rule for Wetlands Reserve Program, Docket Number NRCS IFR-08013

To whom it may concern:

I encourage NRCS to include riparian wetland forests as "eligible land" in the final rule for the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). Northeast North Carolina contains thousands of acres of riparian wetland forests, which help mitigate floods, protect water quality, provide critical habitat for many important species of plants and animals, and provide unique opportunities for recreation.

A program like the WRP provides a financially attractive option to landowners for conserving their riparian wetland forests, which are directly linked to the quality of life and economy of the region. Riparian wetland forests were included as "eligible land" in the WRP under the previous Farm Bill and I strongly encourage you to again include them in the final rule for the WRP under the new Farm Bill. Because of strong landowner interest in participating in the WRP, I believe that it could be one of the most effective USDA-NRCS programs in the region. Please consider including the following language in the final rule for the WRP: "Riparian areas along streams and other waterways are eligible provided that a series of easements are being assembled to form a continuous corridor and the likelihood of multiple landowner participation over time is great."

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely yours,

Bobby C. Darden
County Manager

c: Albemarle RC&D