

# USING GIS MAPPING TO PROTECT NORTH CAROLINA DRINKING WATER

*Local source water protection program and NRCS use mapping tools for drinking water protection*

## The Problem:

Several years ago, North Carolina's Source Water Protection Program made a strategic effort to recruit source water protection partners from the agricultural community. Specifically, the group initiated a partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and requested that drinking water protection be recognized within its Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Our recommendation was to award priority points to any project within a drinking water assessment area (as per our SWAP data). Although the idea was well-received conceptually, the main challenge involved logistics. NRCS required a quick and accurate mechanism to evaluate EQIP applications without adding extra burden to its district conservationists.

## The Approach:

To address this challenge, North Carolina's Source Water Protection Program created a web-based, GIS mapping application. With a few clicks of the mouse, a conservationist can readily assess a project's priority ranking and print a map to support his or her conclusion. As per requests from NRCS staff, the GIS application was updated to include detailed orthophotography. Conservationist can now prioritize funding decisions at the field scale when considering projects conducive to drinking water protection. The North Carolina mapping application can be found at <http://149.168.87.13/pws/>.

## The Outcome:

North Carolina's partnership with NRCS continues to expand with an understanding that impact can be leveraged by including district conservationists on local stakeholder teams. As active participants, district conservationists can influence and elevate local projects that are consistent with their program's goals and objectives. Additionally, North Carolina recently granted placement on NRCS' Land Conservation Subcommittee. This opportunity gives North Carolina access to the Conservation Reserve Program during policy making discussions. Finally, North Carolina has created a state-wide source water collaborative to identify and promote drinking water protection opportunities across the state. NRCS has agreed to participate with this collaborative.

## For More Information:

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## Key Collaborators

- North Carolina Center for Geographic Information and Analysis
- North Carolina Division of Soil and Water Conservation
- North Carolina Source Water Protection Program
- USDA NRCS State and District Conservationist Offices