

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2017

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HOUSE BILL 175

Short Title: DEQ/Emphasize Urban Env't'l Issues. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Alexander and Harrison (Primary Sponsors).
For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.

Referred to: Environment

February 23, 2017

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO DIRECT THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY TO EMPHASIZE THE PROTECTION OF AT-RISK URBAN COMMUNITIES FROM ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. Article 21 of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 143-214.16. Environmental revitalization of urban empowerment zones.

(a) Definition. – For purposes of this section, "urban empowerment zone" shall be defined as set forth in G.S. 160A-459.2.

(b) Stream Restoration Within Zone. – The Department shall prioritize the restoration of creeks, streams, and wetlands within urban empowerment zones by working with (i) State and local environmental organizations and (ii) local government environmental agencies to mitigate water and waste issues contributing to the degradation of urban streams within the zone.

(c) Air Quality Within Zone. – The Department shall study air pollution issues associated with quarries and manufacturing activities located within an urban empowerment zone and recommend any local ordinances or legislation necessary to address any issues identified.

(d) Annual Conference. – The Department shall, no later than December 31, 2017, and annually thereafter, convene a conference of local and State environmental organizations, elected officials, neighborhood groups, city and county governmental agencies, Chambers of Commerce and other business organizations, and the federal Environmental Protection Agency to develop a comprehensive blueprint to improve air and water quality within identified urban empowerment zones. The conference shall focus on at least the following issues:

- (1) Water quality improvement and flood control in the degraded urban streams.
- (2) Replacement of water and sewer infrastructure at or near the end of its design life.
- (3) Air and water pollution associated with quarries located within urban empowerment zones and the potential for adaptive reuse of land within urban empowerment zones with current or historic quarry operations.
- (4) The environmental impact of recreational uses and activities within flood plains.
- (5) Review of progress toward goals set in previous conferences.

(e) Sunset. – Subsection (d) of this section expires December 31, 2023."

SECTION 2. Part 8 of Article 19 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:



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1 "§ 160A-459.2. Urban empowerment zones.

2 Any city with a population greater than 275,000 may enact an ordinance designating as an
3 urban empowerment zone an area designated by the city council within the city's corporate limits
4 that is impacted by unemployment higher than the citywide average, average household income
5 below the citywide average, or rates of personal and property crime above the citywide average."

6 **SECTION 3.** This act is effective when it becomes law.