

RESOLUTION
REQUESTING GREATER EFFORTS TO AVOID
FLOODING IMPACTS WITHIN THE LOWER NEUSE BASIN

WHEREAS, the Neuse River Basin encompasses 74 municipalities and 19 reservoirs and drains land from 18 of North Carolina's counties covering approximately 6,234 square miles, totaling nearly 4 million acres; and

WHEREAS, roughly one-sixth of the state's population lives within the Neuse River Basin; and

WHEREAS, the cities of Kinston and Goldsboro, both adjoining the Neuse River, experienced severe flooding in 1996 due to Hurricane Fran which brought floodwaters exceeding flood stage by 9 feet and 12 feet respectively; and

WHEREAS, in July 1997, the United States Army Corps of Engineers received authorization to conduct a study on flood risk management, environmental protection and restoration, and related purposes for the Neuse River Basin; and

WHEREAS, in September 1999, Hurricane Floyd caused a second round of flooding which devastated portions of eastern North Carolina located along the rivers, particularly the Neuse River which crested at 13.7 feet above flood stage in Kinston, and caused an estimated \$3 billion dollars' worth of damage, damaged more than 56,000 homes, and resulted in 1,500 floodwater rescues in eastern North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, the state and federal response to this catastrophe was the permanent displacement of homes, families, and businesses through a buy-out program which caused significant harm to the cities, counties, and communities affected, such as the predominantly minority community of Lincoln City in Kinston, where long-time neighbors, often generational, were forced to part ways to start new lives in new neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, in 2012, the USACE presented findings from the study authorized in 1999 to the Civil Works Review Board and concluded that USACE lacked interest in Flood Risk Reduction at the time, citing steps being taken by the North Carolina Department of Emergency Management (NCDDEM) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to reduce flooding losses through floodplain mapping, emergency preparedness and response, risk communication and a flood-prone structure buy-out program; and

WHEREAS, the USACE report suggested the expenditure of more than \$38 million dollars for environmental restoration measures but failed to request any funds to reduce the risk of flooding for those living and working along the Neuse River; and

WHEREAS, in October of 2016, areas along the Neuse River were once again devastated as a result of flooding precipitated by Hurricane Matthew; and

WHEREAS, the estimated flood damage from Hurricane Matthew exceeded \$1.5 billion dollars resulting in damage to more than 100,000 homes, destroying entire towns and taking at least 28 lives; and

WHEREAS, the record setting flooding caused by Hurricane Matthew, which crested at 14.3 feet above flood stage, did not occur until several days after the hurricane had passed as accumulated rainfall in the higher elevations of the state made its way toward the coast; and

WHEREAS, the relatively flat terrain of eastern North Carolina slowed the fast moving waters coming from higher elevations causing a significant increase in both the depth and breadth of the Neuse River from Smithfield through Kinston as the river reached record heights and overflowed its banks, inundating a record number of properties with floodwater; and

WHEREAS, the recent impact of Hurricane Matthew to counties, municipalities, businesses, and residents located along the Neuse River indicate that the efforts taken by the NCDWM and FEMA were insufficient to prevent or significantly reduce the amount of damage sustained as a result of Hurricane Matthew; and

WHEREAS, it is now apparent that mapping, emergency preparedness and risk communication did little to prevent the damage incurred by Hurricane Matthew; and

WHEREAS, the use of flood control measures have proven successful as demonstrated by estimates calculated by the USGS such as the study that concluded that the installation of Falls dam reduced the frequency of flooding experienced as a result of Hurricane Fran from once every 10-25 years to once every 50-100 years; and

WHEREAS, the use of flood control measures could have prevented, or significantly reduced the extent of damage caused by Hurricane Matthew.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Kinston does hereby request that the State of NC and the appropriate federal agencies engage, develop and financially support greater efforts to avoid devastating damages to persons and property in the Lower Neuse Basin through the implementation of flood control measures and that specific consideration be given, but not limited, to (1) construction of flood control reservoirs along the Neuse River, (2) identification of alternative water supplies for the City of Raleigh that would allow lowering of Falls Lake during times of anticipated flooding, (3) additional mitigation by NCDOT to address significant stormwater impacts from highway construction and (4) active “snag, drag and dredge” operations within the Neuse River and its tributaries to reduce obstructions to flow and removal of materials that would impact the flood level of the River.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution shall be provided to all members of the General Assembly and to the Congressional delegation for the State of NC and that the City’s staff and legal counsel are directed to work with such persons as needed to accomplish the flood reduction measures set forth herein.

DULY ADOPTED by the Kinston City Council this the 20th day of March, 2017.

