

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2003**

**SESSION LAW 2004-188
SENATE BILL 933**

AN ACT TO REQUIRE STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES THAT ACQUIRE LAND FOR WETLANDS MITIGATION TO REIMBURSE THE COUNTY IN WHICH THE LAND IS LOCATED FOR ITS LOST TAXES DUE TO THE ACQUISITION.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. Article 2 of Chapter 153A of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 153A-15.1. Agreement to make payment in lieu of future ad valorem taxes required before wetlands acquisition by a unit of local government.

(a) Condemnation. – Notwithstanding the provisions of G.S. 153A-15, Chapter 40A of the General Statutes, or any other general law or local act conferring the power of eminent domain, before a final judgment may be entered or a final condemnation resolution adopted in an action of condemnation initiated by a unit of local government whose property is exempt from tax under Section 2(3) of Article V of the North Carolina Constitution, whereby the condemnor seeks to acquire land for the purpose of wetlands mitigation, the condemnor shall agree in writing to pay to the county where the land is located a sum equal to the estimated amount of ad valorem taxes that would have accrued to the county for the next 20 years had the land not been acquired by the condemnor.

(b) Purchase. – Notwithstanding the provisions of G.S. 130A-55, 153A-15, 153A-158, 160A-240.1, or any other general law or local act conferring the power to acquire real property, before any unit of local government whose property is exempt from tax under Section 2(3) of Article V of the North Carolina Constitution purchases any land for the purpose of wetlands mitigation, the unit shall agree in writing to pay to the county where the land is located a sum equal to the estimated amount of ad valorem taxes that would have accrued to the county for the next 20 years had the land not been acquired by the acquiring unit.

(c) Definition. – For purposes of this section, the "estimated amount of ad valorem taxes that would have accrued for the next 20 years" means the total assessed value of the acquired land excluded from the county's tax base multiplied by the tax rate set by the county board of commissioners in its most recent budget ordinance adopted under Chapter 159 of the General Statutes, and then multiplied by 20.

(d) Exception. – This section does not apply to any condemnation or acquisition of land by a city or special district if the land to be condemned or acquired is within the corporate limits of that city or special district or within the county where the city or special district is located.

(e) Application. – This section applies only to land acquired in counties designated as an enterprise tier one or enterprise tier two area under G.S. 105-129.3."

SECTION 2. G.S. 143-214.11 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(g) Payment for Taxes. – A State agency acquiring land to restore, enhance, preserve, or create wetlands must also pay a sum in lieu of ad valorem taxes lost by the county in accordance with G.S. 146-22.3."

SECTION 3. G.S. 143-214.12(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) Wetlands Restoration Fund. – The Wetlands Restoration Fund is established as a nonreverting fund within the Department. The Fund shall be treated as a special trust fund and shall be credited with interest by the State Treasurer pursuant to G.S. 147-69.2 and G.S. 147-69.3. The Wetlands Restoration Fund shall provide a repository for monetary contributions and donations or dedications of interests in real property to promote projects for the restoration, enhancement, preservation, or creation of wetlands and riparian areas and for payments made in lieu of compensatory mitigation as described in subsection (b) of this section. No funds shall be expended from this Fund for any purpose other than those directly contributing to the acquisition, perpetual maintenance, enhancement, restoration, or creation of wetlands and riparian areas in accordance with the basinwide plan as described in G.S. 143-214.10. The cost of acquisition includes a payment in lieu of ad valorem taxes required under G.S. 146-22.3 when the Department is the State agency making the acquisition."

SECTION 4. Article 6 of Chapter 146 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 146-22.3. Acquisition of land to be used to restore, enhance, preserve, or create wetlands.

(a) Payment. – A State agency that acquires land by purchase for the purpose of restoring, enhancing, preserving, or creating wetlands as required by a permit or an authorization issued by the United States Army Corps of Engineers under 33 U.S.C. § 1344 must pay to the county in which the land is located, as reimbursement, a sum equal to the estimated amount of ad valorem taxes that would have accrued to the county for the next 20 years had the land not been acquired by the State agency.

(b) Exception. – This section does not apply when the land purchased by the State agency and the wetlands permitted to be lost are located in the same county. In other circumstances, the governing body of the county and the State agency may enter into a written agreement to waive payment.

(c) Amount. – The estimated amount of ad valorem taxes that would have accrued for the next 20 years is the total assessed value of the acquired land excluded from the county's tax base multiplied by the tax rate set by the county board of commissioners in its most recent budget ordinance adopted under Chapter 159 of the General Statutes, and then multiplied by 20.

(d) Application. – This section applies only to land acquired in counties designated as an enterprise tier one or enterprise tier two area under G.S. 105-129.3."

SECTION 5. Article 6 of Chapter 146 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 146-22.4. Acquisition of wetlands from private mitigation banking companies.

(a) Payment for Taxes. – A State agency that acquires wetlands from a private mitigation banking company must pay a sum in lieu of ad valorem taxes to the county where the wetlands are located. The sum is equal to the estimated amount of ad valorem taxes that would have accrued for the next 20 years as computed in G.S. 146-22.3(c).

(b) Requirement for Acquisition. – A State agency may require, as a condition of accepting a donation of wetlands by a private mitigation banking company, that the company make adequate provisions for the long-term maintenance and management of the wetlands. These provisions may include reimbursement to the agency for payment of a sum in lieu of ad valorem taxes.

(c) Application. – This section applies only to land acquired in counties designated as an enterprise tier one or enterprise tier two area under G.S. 105-129.3."

SECTION 6. Article 6 of Chapter 146 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 146-22.5. Reimbursement of payment in lieu of future ad valorem taxes.

(a) If a State agency acquires land under G.S. 146-22.3 or G.S. 146-22.4 and later uses this land to mitigate wetlands permitted to be lost in the same county, then the county shall reimburse the State agency for a percentage of the estimated amount of ad valorem taxes paid for the land in accordance with G.S. 146-22.3 minus ten percent

(10%) of this amount times the number of years the State agency held the land before the wetlands were lost.

(b) Application. – This section applies only to land acquired in counties designated as an enterprise tier one or enterprise tier two area under G.S. 105-129.3."

SECTION 7. This act is effective when it becomes law and applies to transfers made on or after that date.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 9th day of July, 2004.

s/ Beverly E. Perdue
President of the Senate

s/ James B. Black
Speaker of the House of Representatives

s/ Michael F. Easley
Governor

Approved 11:29 a.m. this 17th day of August, 2004