



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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Pat Harris Named First Female Director of N.C. Division of Soil and Water Conservation

RALEIGH – Patricia “Pat” Kelder Harris, a veteran environmental engineer with the N.C. Division of Soil and Water Conservation, has been named the division’s first female director. She starts Dec. 1.

In her new role, Harris will direct the state’s comprehensive program aimed at protecting and conserving North Carolina’s soil and water resources. She will oversee a 64-person division that provides financial, technical and educational help to the state’s 96 soil and water conservation districts as well as landowners, agricultural producers and others.

“For almost 20 years, Pat has been a leader on some of our state’s most far-reaching conservation efforts,” said William G. Ross Jr., secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. “She has overseen our work to find more environmentally-sound ways to treat hog waste and worked with landowners and politicians to bring about those changes. She has also directed programs that brought conservation to numerous North Carolina counties and trained dozens of upcoming specialists that use their conservation skills in our agency today.

“Pat brings not only a wealth of experience and knowledge, but the vision and savvy to raise the profile of soil and water conservation’s importance in North Carolina and meet some significant resource challenges facing our state.”

Harris succeeds Manly Wilder, who directed the state Division of Soil and Water Conservation until his appointment in October as assistant secretary for Natural Resources in the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Harris has worked with the Division of Soil and Water Conservation since December 1987, starting as a liaison with local conservation districts. For the last 10 years, she’s provided technical assistance to livestock producers and landowners to implement certified animal waste management plans and permitting requirements for compliance with federal and state rules and regulations.

Before joining the division, Harris worked as an extension agent in Pamlico County and animal science instructor at Beaufort Community College. She has earned several accolades, including the (N.C. Division of Soil and Water Conservation) Director’s Award of Achievement and the HHB (Hugh Hammond Bennett) Soil & Water Conservation Society’s Professional Achievement Award in Soil Conservation. Harris earned bachelor’s degrees in biological and agricultural engineering and animal science technology from N.C. State University in 1981.

Harris, a native of Washington, N.C., now lives in Williamston with her husband, Jeff.

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