Topography

Each of us has an effect on the environment. It can be measured by our ecological footprint, or the amount of land and water needed to support our given lifestyle using current technology. We all need natural resources to survive, and while using any natural resource will cause some environmental changes, we can choose how we use them, how much we use and what we do to preserve them. These choices help determine the size of our ecological footprint.

You often hear about sustainability when dealing with environmental resources. A sustainable community can maintain its lifestyle and ensure an equal or better quality of life for future generations. The size of your ecological footprint is a good way to determine whether your lifestyle is sustainable.

Climate

How much rain or snow fall do you see in 1 year? What are the seasonal average temperatures where you live? The term climate refers to the average weather conditions of a specific region. It affects everyone and can influence many of the decisions we make.

Pleasant water and a long, growing season make agriculture productive, but long-term storms can have devastating impacts. The amount and distribution of rainfall help determine what plants can grow where you live and can also influence soil erosion, drinking water availability, farming and risk of fire. The varied topography of our state, as well as the Gulf Stream off the coast, give North Carolina the largest amount of climate variability of any state east of the Mississippi River.

Soil

Soil is the loose top layer of the Earth’s surface. It is made up of weathered rock materials and decayed organic matter. What kind of soil do you see where you live? Is it red clay, sandy loam or something else? The type of soil at your ecological address can determine what happens to bare soil when it is exposed to wind and rain, what happens to waste materials when they are dumped in the ground and which kinds of plants can grow. It even influences the type of buildings and roads that can be built.

Discover your ecological address under the Resources tab at www.enorthcarolina.org
River Basin

Everyone in North Carolina lives in one of the state’s 17 river basins. Even if your home is not near a river, the water that falls on the land drains to a lake, creek or stream that connects to a larger body of water. Topography determines each of the river basins. Just as a bathtub drains all of the water that falls within its sides, a river basin drains all of the water landing in it to a particular river and then eventually to an estuary or the ocean.

When rain falls on your yard, where does it go from there? What does it pick up along the way? When you turn on your faucet to get a glass of water, where does that water come from? When you drain your bathtub or sink, where does that water go?

Discover Your

To learn more about your ecological address, check out the Office of Environmental Education and Public Affairs’ website at www.eenorthcarolina.org

The North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Pat McCrory, Governor
John E. Skvarla, III, Secretary

Ecological Address

What Is an Ecological Address?

You know what street you live on and what town you live in, but where do you live ecologically? Whether you live in a busy city, on a farm in the country or somewhere in between, you have an ecological address.

Rainwater falling on your roof drains to a certain body of water. The fuel used to heat your home had to come from somewhere. The vegetation you plant around your home must be tolerant of the local soil and weather conditions.

There are nine major components of your ecological address: river basin, topography, wetlands, groundwater, climate, soil, air, biodiversity and energy. They are all connected to each other and connected to you. The things you do every day at home, at work or at school can have far-reaching impacts on your ecological address.

These impacts are not only environmental; they can be economic or health-related as well. Keep reading to learn more about the parts of your ecological address.

10,000 copies of the public document were printed at a cost of $2.48 each or $0.25 per copy. 80% recycled content, 6% post-consumer waste. TSC Carlisle.