§ 139-2. Legislative determinations, and declaration of policy.

(a) Legislative Determinations. – It is hereby declared, as a matter of legislative determination:

(1) The Condition. – The farm, forest and grazing lands of the State of North Carolina are among the basic assets of the State and the preservation of these lands is necessary to protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of its people; improper land-use practices have caused and have contributed to, and are now causing and contributing to, a progressively more serious erosion of the farm and grazing lands of this State by wind and water; the breaking of natural grass, plant, and forest cover has interfered with the natural factors of soil stabilization, causing loosening of soil and exhaustion of humus, and developing a soil condition that favors erosion; the topsoil is being blown and washed out of fields and pastures; there has been an accelerated washing of sloping fields; these processes of erosion by wind and water speed up with removal of absorptive topsoil, causing exposure of less absorptive and less protective but more erosive subsoil; failure by any land occupier to conserve the soil and control erosion upon his lands causes a washing and blowing of soil and water from his lands onto other lands and makes the conservation of soil and control of erosion on such other lands difficult or impossible.

(2) The Consequences. – The consequences of such soil erosion in the form of soil-blowing and soil-washing are the silting and sedimentation of stream channels, reservoirs, dams, ditches, and harbors; the loss of fertile soil material in dust storms; the piling up of soil on lower slopes, and its deposit over alluvial plains; the reduction in productivity or outright ruin of rich bottomlands by overwash of poor subsoil material, sand, and gravel swept out of the hills; deterioration of soil and its fertility, deterioration of crops grown thereon, and declining acre yields despite development of scientific processes for increasing such yields; loss of soil and water which causes destruction of food and cover for wildlife; a blowing and washing of soil into streams which silts over spawning beds, and destroys water plants, diminishing the food supply of fish; a diminishing of the underground water reserve, which causes water shortages, intensifies periods of drought, and causes crop failures; an increase in the speed and volume of rainfall runoff, causing severe and increasing floods, which bring suffering, disease, and death; impoverishment of families attempting to farm eroding and eroded lands; damage to roads, highways, railways, farm buildings, and other property from floods and from dust storms; and losses in navigation, hydroelectric power, municipal water supply, drainage developments, farming, and grazing.

(3) The Appropriate Corrective Methods. – To conserve soil resources and control and prevent soil erosion and prevent floodwater and sediment damages, and further the conservation, utilization, and disposal of water, and the development of water resources it is necessary that land-use practices contributing to soil wastage and soil erosion be discouraged and discontinued, and appropriate soil-conserving land-use practices and works of improvement for flood prevention or the conservation, utilization, and disposal of water and the development of water resources be adopted and carried out. Among the procedures necessary for widespread adoption, are

the carrying on of engineering operations such as the construction of terraces, terrace outlets, check-dams, desilting basins, floodwater retarding structures, channel improvements, floodways, dikes, ponds, ditches, and the like; the utilization of strip cropping, lister furrowing, contour cultivating, contour furrowing, farm drainage, land irrigation; seeding and planting of waste, sloping, abandoned, or eroded lands with water-conserving and erosion-preventing plants, trees, and grasses; forestation and reforestation; rotation of crops; soil stabilization with trees, grasses, legumes, and other thick-growing, soil-holding crops; the addition of soil amendments, manurial materials, and fertilizers for the correction of soil deficiencies and to promote increased growth of soil-protecting crops; retardation of runoff by increasing absorption of rainfall; and retirement from cultivation of steep, highly erosive areas and areas now badly gullied or otherwise eroded.

(b) Declaration of Policy. – It is hereby declared to be the policy of the legislature to provide for the conservation of the soil and soil resources of this State, and for the control and prevention of soil erosion, and for the prevention of floodwater and sediment damages, and for furthering the conservation, utilization, and disposal of water, and the development of water resources and thereby to preserve natural resources, control floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, assist in maintaining the navigability of rivers and harbors, preserve wildlife, protect the tax base, protect public lands, and protect and promote the health, safety and general welfare of the people of this State. (1937, c. 393, s. 2; 1947, c. 131, s. 1; 1959, c. 781, ss. 2, 3.)