



Water Spotlight The Upper Neuse River

By Matthew Starr

As the Upper Neuse Riverkeeper or as anyone who has paid attention to the news over the years, it's easy to get lost in the negativity around all the pollution threats that the Neuse River faces. As the list of those threats grows it's important to remember to enjoy the pure beauty of the River. The Neuse is a magnificent river, and yes, I am a little biased to the upper part of the river, but it is truly special. You can literally and figuratively immerse yourself in the river's rich history, importance and the water itself.

The Neuse River has a humble beginning as the Eno and Flatt Rivers combine, forming the Neuse and now Falls Lake. From the time the Neuse is formed, it plays an important role in our lives, supplying over half a million people with drinking water throughout Raleigh and surrounding communities. Just below Falls Lake dam is a favorite spot that many families and fishermen visit year-round. Drive a few minutes from one of the busiest roads in Wake County and you can be playing in a beautiful river, escaping the stresses of everyday life.

The Neuse is home to some of the most special (and very cute) species in the state. Sound Rivers is hard at work trying to protect species like the Carolina Madtom (a small catfish) and a personal favorite, the Neuse River Waterdog (a permanently aquatic salamander). Protecting these species and their habitat is no easy task,

as they are under constant threat from everyday pollution. One of the more pressing threats is sediment pollution from mismanaged construction sites. The upper Neuse and these important habitats are also under attack from mega pollution projects such as the unnecessary Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) and the completion of Highway 540. Money for the extremely expensive 540 project could easily be used to improve traffic flow while keeping our waters safe at the same time. The ACP and 540 projects would have catastrophic impacts on some of the most important sections of the Neuse River basin, which is why Sound Rivers will do everything in our power to protect these bodies of water.

New or previously unexplored sources of pollution continue to rear their ugly heads, such as pesticides and unregulated chemicals. Emerging contaminants caused by unregulated chemical dumping are being discovered throughout our state. We at Sound Rivers have begun sampling for and researching these chemicals in order to understand their impact on our waters and to stop the dumping.

While the work of fighting for swimmable, drinkable, fishable water is never done and seems like an ever growing mountain to climb, it's important to remember some of the battles we have won.

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Neuse River, Wake County

Greetings from Leadership



Happy Spring!

by Heather Deck

As I sit on my porch and listen to the growing chorus of spring peepers singing at sunset each evening, I can't help but wonder about my predecessors' thoughts as winter gave way to spring years ago.

It's been quite a ride. In the early 1980s, worries about the state of the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico river basins prompted dedicated groups of visionaries to form two environmental advocacy organizations dedicated to the health of watersheds in North Carolina. Over the years, there have been challenges, threats and victories, and every year those tiny chorus frogs have sang as the spring equinox approached, bringing warmer temperatures and longer daylight hours.

As I head into my first spring as executive director, I am looking forward to the joys and challenges that the year will bring. My daughters are getting old enough to introduce them to the joy of kayaking and canoeing, and they'll doubtlessly want to get out their fishing rods again as the days warm. At the offices of Sound Rivers, the staff will be planning events to offer people in our communities that same opportunity to get out on the water, and our Riverkeepers will be vigilantly watching over our creeks, streams and rivers to protect them for all. In April, you can help us in that work and increase your impact at the same time. Our spring matching campaign will double donations up to \$15,000, so it's a great time to support the waters we all love. Those waters are worth protecting; they are a resource that brings hefty economic benefit and improved quality of life to our communities.

Soon, anglers will head out on the water to enjoy another annual tradition, the migration of striped bass that is known simply as "stripers running." More and more people will return to swim beaches and other favorite spots for taking a dip in the river as the temperatures climb, and in a couple of months the recreational season on the water will be in full swing.

The spring season is a perfect time to welcome a new addition to our ranks, my successor as Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper, Forrest English. Look inside this newsletter to get to know him, and if you see him in the community in the coming weeks, please give him a warm welcome.

And as flowers and trees bloom this season, take a moment to get back to the water. Whether sailing, powerboating, paddling, swimming or fishing, or just sitting on the bank and enjoying the beauty of our creeks, streams and rivers, it's a wonderful time to reconnect and recharge.

Water Spotlight

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Through years of hard work, Duke Energy is now required to remove all of the coal ash off the banks of the Neuse River just outside of Goldsboro. This past year Sound Rivers worked to secure funding to begin the voluntary removal of the 62 industrial swine facilities that are still located in the floodplain of the Neuse.

The history of the Neuse is extensive; famous explorers like Arthur Barlowe and John Lawson crossed its path, remarking on its beauty and vastness. The native peoples, the Neusiok, for whom the river was named, relied on the river daily. The first Neuse Riverkeepers fought to stop fish kills in the 1980's and 90's. Remembering this history is important in the fight for clean water. We cannot be deterred in the fight for our river; we must persist, so our waterway can continue to be a resource for future generations.

Upcoming Events

Visit soundrivers.org for more info

Saturday, April 7th, 2018 - Kinston Kids River Fest
10am - 2pm Neuse Way Nature Center, Kinston, NC

Saturday, April 21, 2018-River Cleanups
Washington, Greenville, Rocky Mt, Tarboro, New Bern, NC

Saturday, April 22, 2018-Tap the Neuse
Cornhole Tourney- Neuse River Brewing, Raleigh, NC

Saturday, April 28, 2018- 'Cue 4 The Neuse
The New Village Brewery, Oriental, NC

Saturday, May 5th, 2018-Greenville Kids River Fest
River Park North, Greenville, NC

Saturday, May 19th, 2018-Raleigh River Fest
Milburnie Falls, Raleigh

Your Rivers!

Event Spotlight

Milburnie Falls - A River Runs Through It

By Matthew Starr

As the Shad return to their spawning grounds any day now, they will be greeted by a substantial, positive change in the Neuse River just outside of Raleigh. For over 100 years, the shad have run into a literal wall - Milburnie Dam. Milburnie Dam was removed just a few months ago after years of hard work by the Upper Neuse Riverkeeper.



Neuse River at Milburnie Falls, January, 2018

The removal of Milburnie is no small feat and the shad will now be able to run up to Falls Lake Dam, opening up miles of habitat and fishing spots. Please join us on May 19, 2017 for Raleigh River Fest at Milburnie Falls, a celebration of restoring the Neuse River. For all of Sound River's events please visit soundrivers.org.

The Upper Neuse- Things to Know!

Population: 1,687,462 for Neuse River basin (2010 census)

Places to see: Eno River State Park, Falls Lake Recreational Area, Cliffs of the Neuse State Park, Historic Yates Mill County Park, Milburnie Falls, Howell Woods Environmental Learning Center and many more!

Rare Fauna: 19 rare & threatened mussels, 7 rare fish. The Neuse River Waterdog (pictured right).



2018 Taste of Coastal Carolina



Sound Rivers' 15th annual Taste of Coastal Carolina has come and gone. Over 300 supporters attended the event. A special thank you to all the local restaurants and breweries who participated in this year's event and our sponsors. Please visit soundrivers.org for a full list - these local businesses are great supporters of your rivers, and we hope you'll tell them "thank you" in person when you next visit their establishment!

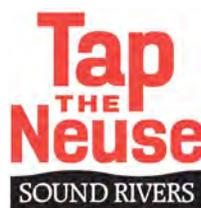
2018 Winners

- 1st Place - Live @ The City Laundry
- 2nd Place - Shogun Sushi
- 3rd Place - Kreative Cakez
- Best Presentation - Tie! The Tiny Tornado and Posh Palate Caterers and Events



April 7 -Kinston & May 5th- Greenville
10am - 2pm

Come out and enjoy the Spring at our popular Kids River Fests, hosted at the Neuseway Nature Center in Kinston and River Park North in Greenville. Kids River Fest is a wonderful opportunity for our community's youth to explore and play in their watershed. Learn more at soundrivers.org.



Join Sound Rivers at Neuse River Brewing Company on **April 22 at noon** for food, games, great beer and a chance to win prizes. Get competitive! Two person corn hole teams compete for prizes. Team registration available on soundrivers.org. Same day registration also available.

Advocacy Updates

Sound Rivers Welcomes New Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper

Sound Rivers has recently hired Forrest English to take on the role of your Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper from outgoing Riverkeeper Heather Deck. Heather, now serving as Executive Director, is excited to welcome Forrest to the organization.



“After an extensive nationwide search, I’m extremely pleased to have Forrest join the Sound Rivers team,” said Heather Deck. “With more than ten years of experience in advocating for the protection of our water resources, Forrest brings a wealth of knowledge that will support our local communities’ efforts to protect the Tar-Pamlico River.”

Forrest brings a range of experience to the position, including previous work as a water quality technician, wildlife surveyor, deckhand on commercial fishing boats, and heavy equipment operator on watershed restoration projects. Most recently Forrest has worked with the Klamath Riverkeeper and was the director of Rogue Riverkeeper, where he advocated for the health of river watersheds in the west. Forrest has had valuable experience with the design and implementation of water quality studies using community volunteers and building relationships with local government and other non-profits. He has played key roles in successful coalition efforts that have, for over a decade, staved off a massive gas pipeline and fossil fuel export terminal that would cross hundreds of waterways in Oregon; as well as helped secure protections for native fish from gold mining.

Having previously lived in North Carolina while working on renewable energy and on small farms, Forrest notes, “I’m excited to be coming back to North Carolina, and I look forward to doing my part to restore fisheries and protect our clean water.”

Forrest will be working out of Sound Rivers Washington office and can be reached by email at pamtarrk@soundrivers.org or by phone at (252) 946-7211. Be sure to give him a warm welcome when you have the opportunity.

Fishing for Facts: *Your source of information on NC legislation impacting our rivers*



It is no secret that clean water protections have been under assault in North Carolina for a number of years. Now at the federal level, we have an administration that

will champion similar rollbacks to federal laws that protect our rivers, creeks, and streams. That’s why in 2017, we launched Fishing for Facts, a bi-weekly roundup of current attacks on America and North Carolina’s clean water protections. Starting again in May, when the NC General assembly is back in session, we’ll post a straightforward, up-to-date list of bills and policies that threaten your right to clean water, and include simple instructions on how to take action. For those who like to dive in deeper, look for links for more information on the bills.

Highway to the Danger Zone

The North Carolina Department of Transportation continues to advocate for the completion of highway 540 in Eastern Wake County. The road project, deemed unnecessary for meeting regional transportation goals by numerous organizations, would cost 2.2 billion dollars; partially funded by taxing drivers via toll fees. In addition, the construction of the highway would destroy miles of high quality streams and fill in almost 70 acres of wetlands. Sound Rivers and numerous other organizations have offered a better solution. The Southern Environmental Law Center released a detailed report, **ACCESS2040**, which outlines this plan. Sound Rivers and your Upper Neuse Riverkeeper will continue to fight against the Complete 540 project using every tool in our toolbox.

Sound Rivers would like to thank the
Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and the
Eddie and Jo Allison Smith Family
Foundation for their continued support of
Sound Rivers and our mission to protect
the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico Rivers

Advocacy Updates

Trent River Polluter Fined by State

On August 31st, 2017, Lanier Farms TCB, an industrial hog growing facility for Smithfield foods in Jones County, intentionally dumped nearly 1 million gallons of raw hog waste. This untreated mix of feces and urine traveled nearly two miles to the Trent River, polluting the river to the point that the public was urged to “avoid contact with the water” on one of the biggest recreational holidays of the year; Labor Day weekend. After a thorough investigation, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) issued a notice of violation, outlining 11 separate state law violations. After a 6 month review, DEQ levied a fine of \$64,072 against the facility in February. This is the largest fine an industrial animal operation has received since 2012.

While we applaud DEQ’s enforcement on this case, the facility could have gotten away with it were they not caught by a concerned neighbor who saw the waste traveling toward the Trent River. The state does not have a surface water monitoring program in place, and instead relies on the individual facilities to self-report any issues or violations. That’s like letting the wolf guard the hen house, and there is no telling how many facilities have also intentionally violated the rules of their permits and polluted our environment. The Lanier discharge was indeed an egregious violation and we are thankful to our environmental agency for doing their duty and enforcing the law. Unfortunately, the future of this facility is still unknown as is the effectiveness of the permit rules for other facilities.

Sound Rivers Joins ACP Legal Challenge

Sound Rivers has joined with eleven other conservation groups from Virginia and North Carolina to challenge the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission’s decision to permit the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. The groups are represented by the Southern Environmental Law Center.

“Sound Rivers chose to challenge the pipeline in the courts due to the fact that this unnecessary pipeline will have a negative impact on our water resources and aquatic environment,” stated Upper Neuse Riverkeeper Matthew Starr. He continued, “even though our state has decided to approve this project, your Riverkeepers will do everything they can to protect our important water resources.”

One Giant Step Closer: Saving Blounts Creek

by Heather Deck



Boaters rally on Blounts Creek

I was sitting at my parents’ kitchen table on the evening of Dec. 28th, enjoying some post holiday treats when I received a text message from a friend. The message simply stated, “Congrats on Blounts Creek,” stopping me in my tracks. I immediately

texted a response, “What?” Shortly thereafter, I received a call from our amazing attorneys at the Southern Environmental Law Center, telling me that we had prevailed in our four-year legal battle to protect Blounts Creek.

The ruling, issued by Superior Court Judge Josh Willey in December, overturned a lower court decision and vacated the 12 million gallons-per-day mine wastewater discharge permit given to Martin Marietta Materials by the NC Division of Water Resources in 2013. In addition, the ruling stated that Sound Rivers and Blounts Creek community members not only had a right to bring this permit challenge to court, but are, in fact, substantially prejudiced by the decision. This win is critical to protect special places, like Blounts Creek, and also to maintain the public’s right to access the courts when our regulatory agencies get it wrong. That is something Sound Rivers fought hard to protect.

As with any legal case, appeals are the name of the game. On January 19th, Martin Marietta Materials appealed this decision to the NC Court of Appeals. In response, Sound Rivers and the NC Coastal Federation cross-appealed in order to protect Judge Willey’s decision denying the permit to discharge to upper Blounts Creek. In addition, the company recently asked Judge Willey to stay his decision pending the appeal. Judge Willey denied that request in a court hearing in Pender County on February 16th. The same appeal has now been filed with the Court of Appeals. And so, we continue our legal battle. Blounts Creek is a special place and we’ll continue working to protect it.

Stay up to date on this issue and more by visiting our website: www.soundrivers.org and by signing up for our e-news.

Member Minute

Why I Give, with Dr. Daniel Graham

By Corinne Everett Belch



Dr. Daniel Graham

Dr. Daniel Graham was introduced to Sound Rivers (then Neuse Riverkeeper Foundation) by a former Upper Neuse Riverkeeper, Dean Naujoks. Dr. Graham, a professor of Environmental Law and

Policy at NC State for over 30 years, had taught Dean previously, and Dr. Graham was inspired by him to get involved with the Sound Rivers/NRF.

While Dr. Graham is a professor at NC State, he holds a PhD from UNC Chapel Hill and tells me he pulls for both school's sports teams when possible. He started in political activism early, at age 14, working to end the Vietnam War, promote Civil Rights, and protect the environment. For the past 50 years he has continued his activism in various ways; he is currently a community volunteer in Chatham County, and volunteers for the Haw River Assembly and CORA Food Pantry in Pittsboro. He and his wife of 40-plus years, Zim, enjoy hiking, biking, kayaking and organic gardening around the Jordan Lake area where they live.

When I asked Dr. Graham about his support of Sound Rivers/NRF over the years, he said, "Today I support several waterkeeper organizations because these are Public Trust Waters that local communities depend on. I also like how the Riverkeeper programs reach out to school kids to include them in adopting and protecting these vital gifts of nature."

The most important aspect of Sound Rivers' work, to him, he said, is "involving a diversity of local folks of all ages and backgrounds (and local businesses) with programs and events that combine citizen science-based monitoring with outdoor activities. It is also vital that these programs file lawsuits against polluters, and lobby elected officials to protect clean water—the elixir of all Life."

"The four laws of ecology (Interconnectedness; Finite Pollution Sinks; No Free Lunch; Nature Knows Best) are not subject to human repeal and must be respected." Thank you so much for your longtime commitment to Sound Rivers, Dr. Graham - and as always, thank you so much to all our supporters!

Volunteer Spotlight: Dick & Becky Leach

By Heather Deck



Becky Leach 2nd from Rt.

Dick and Becky Leach have been an integral part of the Sound Rivers (Pamlico Tar River Foundation) since its beginnings in 1981. Dick was raised to believe that serving one's community is an important part of

being a good citizen. Helping to found, nurture and guide PTRF for many years has been a very fulfilling experience for him. Becky moved to Washington, NC in 1965 and since that time has enjoyed spending time on the Pamlico-Tar River. When PTRF was founded in 1981 she took the opportunity to do something for the resource she felt was threatened on numerous levels.

If Dick and Becky have been an integral part of PTRF/Sound Rivers, they have been an absolutely essential part of the PTRF Oyster Roast since the very first one. Dick remembers that the first oyster roast was done as a "FUN RAISER."

It's obvious that today's oyster roast has become a much-larger affair that requires the help of many dedicated volunteers. Becky has volunteered every year except one. She loves that the occasion brings together a great group of people who care about the river and want to protect it. It has been Becky's job to make the hot sauce and to help serve it and melted butter to the attendees. Becky's sauce is famous among the oyster-eating crowd, but don't ask her what's in it! The recipe is a well-protected family secret.

Both Dick and Becky have deep ties to the waters of the Pamlico. Becky states, "It is important to me that the waterways are healthy for fish, wildlife and the people of Eastern North Carolina." Dick grew up in Washington and has been very fortunate to have lived on, or very near, the river all his life. They both agree that the spirit of volunteerism has been essential to the success of Sound Rivers and its predecessor organizations and are proud to be counted as a part of that spirit.



Dick Leach, right, with Keith Hackney

Riffles & Runs

Volunteers Needed for Summer Program

Have you ever noticed an odd smell, green color, or fish kills along the Tar-Pamlico River and wondered what was causing it, or if contact with the



water was safe? And have you wanted to try your hand as a scientist? If so, you can volunteer with our citizen science water quality monitoring program this summer and help answer those questions! Sound Rivers is looking for local volunteers to collect water quality samples to test for levels of bacteria on the Tar-Pamlico River. These bacteria are commonly found in the gastrointestinal tracts and feces of warm-blooded animals and humans, and are the best indicators of the presence of pathogens in surface waters. The results will be shared through our website and a smartphone app called The Swim Guide so you can check conditions on the water.

Your participation will engage and educate the community, giving people the means to participate in stream monitoring, be active in restoration, and most importantly, to help us notify the public of health concerns associated with using the rivers and streams to boat, fish, or swim. The program will also help Sound Rivers advocate for the proper enforcement of environmental laws.

Volunteers will receive training in sampling techniques and use of testing equipment before sampling begins. The monitoring program, based in Washington, NC, promises to be fun and fulfilling for volunteers who are willing to commit to the necessary training and weekly sampling at their site for 14 weeks over the summer. If this sounds like something in which you'd like to be involved, please contact Sound Rivers at 252-946-7211.

Interested in volunteering?

We need Water Trail Stewards, Oyster Roast Committee Members, Kids River Fest Volunteers, River Cleanup volunteers, Envelope-stuffing volunteers and more! Find out more - email volunteer@soundrivers.org!

Sound Rivers Stormwater Program Grows



Sound Rivers partnered with Edgecombe Community College to build this created wetland on campus.

Polluted stormwater runoff is the number one cause of water pollution in North Carolina. In most cases, stormwater either does not receive any treatment before it enters our waterways or is inadequately treated. Polluted water creates myriad of costs to the public and to our wildlife. As the saying goes, "we all live downstream."

In January, Sound Rivers was notified that we received an Environmental Enhancement Grant (EEG) through the NC Department of Justice. This grant will continue stormwater work throughout the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico River Basins. With the addition of this grant, by the year 2020, we will have assessed stormwater management on 24 public school, community college, or private college campuses throughout our basins. Furthermore, Sound Rivers will have a significant amount of funding through the EEG grant to begin implementing much needed stormwater remediation projects.

Spring is a Wonderful Time to Paddle

One of the best luxuries of a kayak or canoe is its use as a means of escape to nature. Enjoy your spring on the Tar-Pamlico Water Trail, a network of 11 camping platforms from Bunn to Blounts Bay.



View from one of the Tar-Pamlico Water Trail Camping Platforms

For more information and to reserve a camping site visit: tarpamlicowatertrail.org

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