



EPA Attacking The Very Water It Is Tasked With Protecting

By Forrest English, Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper

In a bizarre move, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the US Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps), tasked with the conservation of our air and water, announced a radical move on February 14th to gut the protections provided by the Clean Water Act that protect the public right to safely use our waterways for swimming, drinking, and fishing.

The agencies' proposal is currently open for public comment until April 15th and aims to simply remove streams and wetlands currently classified as Waters of the United States so that Clean Water Act regulations would no longer apply, leaving our waterways open for unregulated pollution or outright removal. In short, this is the worst attack we've seen on clean water in decades.

Enacted in 1972, the legislation we call the Clean Water Act, one of our bedrock environmental laws, was passed with broad bipartisan support by the House in a vote of 366 to 11, and was unanimously passed by the Senate. At this time the Cuyahoga River was so polluted that it famously ignited in flames at least 13 different times, causing millions of dollars of damage, and was devoid of fish.

The EPA has administered most of the requirements of the Clean Water Act since then, which includes ensuring that each individual state is properly implementing water quality standards, issuing permits to individual polluters to limit damage to public resources, and identifying polluted water-

ways for restoration. The Army Corps of Engineers handles these permits to minimize harm to our nation's wetlands, which are known for their value in filtering out pollution and absorbing floodwaters.

Since 1972 our waterways have improved in many ways; the big headline-grabbing pollution issues aren't as frequent, and fish are coming back to previously dead areas. Restoration is slow, however, and many rivers such as the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico still face increasing pollution issues like sedimentation, chemical dumping, and excess nutrients. Additionally, as we've seen with recent storms, we cannot risk exacerbating flooding issues by removing more natural wetlands. Without the protection of the Clean Water Act, our gains stand to be lost, and declines stand to become more rapid.



"Small streams like this one in the Upper Neuse, showing illegal sediment plume, may lose protections if rule changes go forward"

The EPA and Army Corps' proposal aims to entirely remove protections from most smaller streams, from wetlands that don't have a constant connection to always-flowing surface water, and considers mechanisms to strip protection from even intermittent streams. In North Carolina alone this could result in the loss of protection for 49,000 miles of streams and for millions of acres of wetlands. States like Nevada, where waterways are rain dependent, would essentially lose any protections at all. Should this rule go into effect, many wetlands could be filled or removed without any required offset or mitigation, and

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Greetings from Leadership

Summer is Coming!



It's hard to believe, since it feels like spring has only just begun, but at Sound Rivers we are already planning our Summer. Our Swim Guide program, launched last year to keep you alerted about the quality of your waterways as you boat, swim, and fish during the summer months, will kick off again on Memorial Day weekend. In 2019, thanks to supporters like you, we'll also be launching the program in the Raleigh area. Read more on page 7 for where to get Swim Guide alerts, and for volunteer opportunities!

Winter and spring went by in a flash, and Sound Rivers spent that time fighting for the waterways you love; we fought for changes to the North Carolina industrial swine and poultry permits, continued our grassroots efforts to halt the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, challenged an unnecessary expansion to highway 540 that would irreparably damage fragile ecosystems, and began to organize against proposed roll-backs of federal protections for our waterways. Your rivers face many threats, but we are united with you in our desire to protect and preserve them.

This April, we are thrilled to announce that all donations will be matched, up to \$16,500, by generous sponsors who want to see our waterways protected for future generations. As we continue to fight for your waterways, we need all the support we can get in order to continue our important work. I hope you'll consider a donation this April to help us meet our match! You can fill out the enclosed envelope, or visit www.soundrivers.org/donate.

Thank you for all you do, and see you out on the water soon!

Heather Beck

EPA Continued from P. 1

pipes could dump into smaller streams without any pollution controls. These types of smaller streams of course flow into larger streams and rivers, and eventually to the sounds on the coast.

North Carolinians depend on these waterways for clean drinking water, to absorb rainfall and reduce flooding, for safe recreation, and for healthy fisheries for both commercial harvest and substantial tourism dollars to our communities.

It is critical that we all let the EPA and Army Corps know that clean water is important to our state, and to urge our Governor and state agencies to stand up and fight for it.

Now is the time to send a letter to the editor in your local paper about how clean water is important to you, to call the Governor and let his office know that you want North Carolina to vigorously oppose the federal government's proposal in court, and to send your own comments to the EPA asking that they dismiss the whole process of rolling back water protections.

Visit <http://soundrivers.org/clean-water-act> to find easy ways to join the fight for clean water.



Upcoming Events

Visit soundrivers.org for more info

April 27, 2019 - Annual Meeting and BBQ
Uptown Brewing Company, Greenville, NC

May 18, 2019 - Kids River Fest
River Park North, Greenville, NC

November 9, 2019- 34th Annual Oyster Roast
Washington Civic Center, Washington, NC

Sound Rivers Happenings

Jaycee Park Update



Jaycee Park project before our work started

Sound Rivers, working in partnership with NC State University, East Carolina University and the City of Greenville, recently completed construction on an innovative stormwater wetland at the Jaycee Park in Greenville. The wetland design allows for the protection of existing large hardwood trees. In addition, 35 large native trees and 150 live stakes were planted. Water quality monitoring, both before and after construction, is being conducted by Dr. Charlie Humphrey from ECU. His work will determine how much pollution is removed before the runoff enters Reedy Branch, a tributary to Green Mill Run.



Jaycee Park project completed

We 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.

Upcoming Events



Spring River Cleanups

Join your Riverkeepers to clean the Neuse & Tar-Pamlico Rivers this spring! Stay tuned at soundrivers.org for cleanup dates and locations!

Annual Meeting and BBQ

Join Sound Rivers at Uptown Brewing Company in Greenville, NC on April 27th for great local beer, local BBQ and fun and support clean water!



Kids River Fest

Sound Rivers invites your family to explore River Park North at our annual Kids' River Fest in Greenville, on **Saturday, May 18th, from 10 am to 2pm.**

This event is free and open to the public. Kids' River Fest encourages families to spend their Saturday outside in an active and educational way. The event includes hands on activities as well as shows and musical performances.

Advocacy Updates

Push for Swine Permit Improvements



Flooded poultry barns post-Hurricane Florence in 2018.

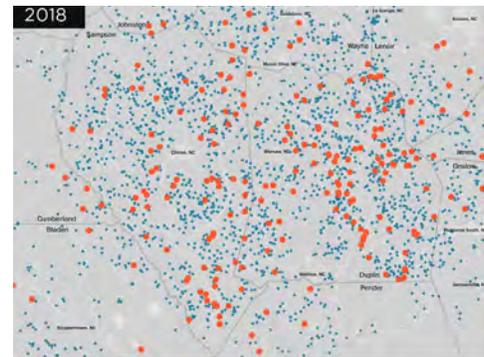
On Tuesday, February 19th, the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) held a public hearing to take comments on the permit intended to protect our communities and waterways from industrial swine waste. The permit determines how the 9.5 billion gallons of swine waste per year from these facilities is managed, and is opened up for improvements only once every 5 years.

The current method of waste management on these industrial hog facilities is to store hog feces in unlined, open air cesspools that are at risk of being flooded or damaged by heavy rainfall. The waste is sprayed onto fields, often causing waste to runoff into nearby creeks and streams. Unfortunately, this method not only contributes to surface and groundwater pollution, but to air pollution and to decreases in the health and quality of life for the neighbors of these facilities.

At the public hearing, your Upper and Lower Neuse Riverkeepers gave testimony to DEQ, asking them to update the permit to reflect better transparency and to account for all types of pollution. Sound Rivers, environmental partners and hundreds of community members submitted comments supporting the proposed changes that, if properly implemented, will better protect our waterways.

New Report Demonstrates Alarming Growth of Industrial Poultry Facilities

A report released by the Environmental Working Group, in cooperation with NC Riverkeepers and Waterkeeper Alliance, revealed that the number of industrial poultry operations in North Carolina has tripled since 1997. Unlike swine operations, that are required to be permitted under state law, most poultry operations move forward with very little regulatory oversight. The explosion of poultry operations is also concentrating more animals and more waste in coastal watersheds with an existing large inventory of industrial swine operations. The report stated:



Eastern NC is dotted by industrial swine and poultry facilities

- In 2018, NC had 515 million chickens and turkeys housed in industrial facilities; up from 147 million birds in 1997
- NC industrial animal industry now has 2100 swine operations and 4700 poultry operations
- 74 industrial poultry facilities have been built in the floodplain and flooded during both Hurricane Matthew (2016) and Florence (2018)
- Poultry manure dumps nearly five times more nitrogen and four times more phosphorus than pig manure on to farm fields each year.

Havelock Sewer Spills: Update

Since 2015 there have been 20 sewer spills from one manhole in Havelock. These spills have resulted in approximately 536,000 gallons of untreated human waste entering our surface waters. The sewage spewing from this manhole flows a short distance to Capps Branch, then enters Slocum creek, a tributary of the Neuse River and a popular spot for recreation.

The City has hired an engineering firm to assess the cause of these spills and fix the problem. However, this began at the same time the spills began, and despite numerous assessments and projects, the problem persists. Heavy rain has been named the culprit; not the old, outdated, and crumbling infrastructure. Havelock claims that too much rain over a short period of time is causing these spills. Rain is neither a reason nor excuse for human waste in our water, and Sound Rivers has urged both the City and the State to fix the long-standing failures of Havelock's wastewater infrastructure in order to protect public health and water quality.

Your Lower Neuse Riverkeeper is working with partners, local community members and the Department of Environmental Quality to find a fast solution to this problem.

Advocacy Updates

Atlantic Coast Pipeline

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) keeps running into consequences for rushing to build without waiting for legal challenges to be resolved. ACP is now missing seven federal authorizations that are required to continue work on the pipeline, and while the company is operating under the idea they can eventually get back to work, the issues and delays are stacking up. Additionally, the pipeline is now estimated to be billions of dollars more expensive than originally forecast, and investors are starting to worry.

Unfortunately however, some work continues on the pipeline under the auspices of site stabilization for erosion control, which the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has approved to include digging trench and burying pipe in some areas. Also unfortunate is that FERC approved the completion of the drilling and installation of pipe under the Tar River as part of these measures.

With our partners in NC Pipeline Watch, we continue to provide trainings for volunteers on monitoring sediment and erosion control issues along the pipeline route, and to bring the issues we discover to the Department of Environmental Quality to be addressed. Visit <http://ncpipelinewatch.org> for more information or to set up a training in your community!



Photo of Blounts Bay by Bob Daw

Blounts Creek

For the last 7 years Martin Marietta Materials (MMM) has been pursuing permits for a 650 acre limestone mine that would include a 12 million gallon per day discharge in the upper part of Blounts Creek. The Blounts Creek community, Sound Rivers, and the NC Coastal Federation, represented by the Southern Environmental Law Center, have fought the discharge to Blounts Creek from the start to protect the delicate balance of a blackwater stream with brackish water mixing in from the sound.

A state superior court ruled in favor of Sound Rivers in December of 2017 and vacated MMM's permit. Both MMM and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) appealed the decision. We have been working over the last year trying to reach a settlement that would protect Blounts Creek for the long term. Unfortunately all parties were not able to come to an agreement, and the case will be decided by the North Carolina Court of Appeals later this year.

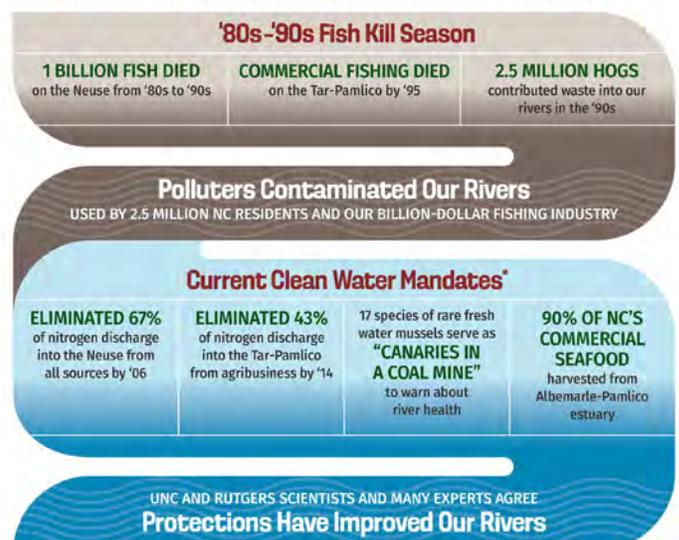
Nutrient Rules Under Review: Take Action!

Since the late 1990's, the state has tried to curb the amount of nutrient pollution flowing in the the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico river systems including the Pamlico Sound. This month, those rules are under review, and there are some important changes proposed by the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

Nutrient runoff and its subsequent pollution is an issue that Riverkeepers on the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico Rivers have been fighting for decades, and it's one of the most critical threats our rivers face. Whether from industrial swine and poultry operations or from sanitary sewer overflows, the amount of nutrients running into our water is alarming.

Some progress has been made over the years but, as we have learned, the rules put into place to greatly reduce the nutrient load of our waters must be strengthened. When the rules were written, they did not address non-point pollution (i.e. pollution not coming out of a pipe) and solely pointed the finger at city and town wastewater systems. Most of those systems have combined to spend millions of dollars in upgrades, but water quality has not met the standard set forth over 15 years ago. For the first time, DEQ has conceded that the rules have fallen short; "Given ongoing impairment of the Neuse estuary more than a decade after full implementation of the above rules, the Division is pursuing fuller evaluation of the basin's nutrient dynamics to inform and guide adaptive management." Now the work begins to make sure that all sources of nutrient pollution are accounted for, and we need your help to do that. Please visit soundrivers.org to take action; make sure DEQ knows you want clean water. The comment period for these very important rules ends April 16, 2019.

COOPERATION RESTORED OUR RIVERS FROM THE DEAD.



Riffles & Runs

Volunteer Spotlight: Christina Marshen



Last year, Christina Marshen contacted us on Facebook about a serious trash problem in Washington, NC – and before we blinked she was already working on a fix! Her dedication to clean water is incredible, and we chatted with Christina for this issue's Volunteer Spotlight. She

also wrote a beautiful blog post, which you can read in its entirety at soundrivers.org.

Christina told us that in 2005 she was struck by a drunk driver while coming home from work. During her long recovery, she became passionate about wildlife photography, starting by photographing birds outside her window and then moving on to explore new areas of our coast as she began to walk again. As a result of the accident, Christina was left with permanent nerve damage in one leg, but in 2016 a friend gave her a new way to move - a kayak. Christina said, "Little did she know just what would become of her kindness. Never before had I been given such a wonderful gift and I wanted to give back any way I could. I decided to paddle weekly and clean as much of Eastern North Carolina's river beds and creeks as I could, not only because it needed to be done, but because I was driven to take photos that didn't include trash. I have kept that promise and hope to inspire more to realize what a single human is capable of."

While Christina does not live in Washington, she drives her children to school through the area, and she passes our region's waterways many times a day. For the first few weeks of the 2017 school year, Christina kept noticing all the trash accumulating in the waterways she saw every day. Despite Clean Sweeps and River Cleanups, the problem kept growing. She wanted to do something about it – and so she did!

Christina said she regularly chooses a 1-2 mile stretch to clean, either on land or in her kayak. "Some days I am angry at how bad some areas have become," she said. "Other days I smile when I'm able to take photos of the tundra swans, which have migrated to Eastern NC from so far away, without our garbage in the photos. It makes me feel good inside to know those who walk along the local waterways have a clean, safe area to do so without litter being part of the scenery, and to know the wildlife that lives in and around that creek is now free to just be, without swimming in or getting tangled or digesting our human trash." (Cont.)

Thanks for a Great Taste of Coastal Carolina!



The 16th Annual Taste of Coastal Carolina was a great success on March 12th! The community came together to enjoy local food, beer, wine, and coffee - all while supporting Sound Rivers and clean water.

At the end of the evening, attendees voted and the Best of Taste of Coastal Carolina were chosen!

- 1st - The Tiny Tornado (New Bern)
- 2nd - Kitchen On Trent (New Bern)
- 3rd - Shogun Japanese Restaurant (Greenville)
- Best Presentation - Chef Katherine with Carolina Colours, The Flame, and Mari's Hella Fat Food

Many thanks to all our participating restaurants, who donated their time and brought delicious tastes of their unique cuisine to be enjoyed by all:

A Taste of Philadelphia, Bateeni Mediterranean Grill, Caribsea, Christy's Euro Pub, Dickinson Avenue Public House, Starlight Cafe & Farm, Kreative Cakez, La Perla, Carolina Bagel, La Casetta, and Mama's Sweet Baby Cakes

Thanks to our 2019 Sponsors!



Volunteer Spotlight, Continued

Thank you for your hard work Christina, and to all our volunteers – your support of clean water makes our world a better place!

Riffles & Runs

Why I Give, with Sally Pichette of Croakertown Coffee



When Croakertown Coffee reached out to us and offered their support, we were honored and enthusiastically accepted! Croakertown Coffee Company is a small batch coffee roastery located in Oriental, NC; their delicious coffee is available at their roastery and coffee bar, several retail outlets, their website, and at local restaurants. Croakertown Coffee is currently the only private label coffee roaster in North Carolina, they specialize in private labeling for corporate gifts and events, weddings, and helping coffee companies build their brand one coffee bag at a time. They are also committed to service - their coffee fundraisers help non-profits, schools and civic organizations raise funds for special projects and trips.

Sally Pichette, owner of Croakertown, met Lower Neuse Riverkeeper Katy Hunt last year in Oriental. "She told us about her job as a Riverkeeper and about Sound Rivers. She is very passionate about what she does and is a great spokesperson for Sound Rivers. We wanted to learn more and do something to promote her work." Sally said that Katy's passion for Sound Rivers and our local waterways inspired her to take action.

When asked about her decision to support Sound Rivers, Sally mentioned how lucky she feels to enjoy the natural waterways in our region, and how important they are to her. "We know we are very fortunate to live in this beautiful community surrounded by water. It is critical that we have an organization that is advocating on our behalf to maintain this beautiful resource and monitor the health of our water basins. It impacts our daily lives and recreational activities, and it is also critical to our business. **You also need great water to brew great coffee!**"

Sally was trained as a Biologist and Epidemiologist and spent many days seining rivers in Georgia; she said the "get your boots wet" activities of Sound Rivers appeal to her. However, she was especially taken with Katy's description of Sound Rivers' educational mission. "It is critical to create awareness and support in our community, but also so important to cultivate future conservationists and advocates," Sally said.

Croakertown Coffee created "Coffees with a Cause" as a way to support causes that are important to the business and their surrounding community. Sally explains, "We developed River Keepers, a 'Coffee with a Cause' blend, to help publicize Sound Rivers and provide direct financial support through donations from our sales of this coffee." Sally also offered coffee samples at the 2019 Taste of Coastal Carolina, where the River Keepers blend was a huge hit!

Thank you so much to Sally, Croakertown Coffee, and all our supporters! We could not continue our important work without you.

Popular Swim Guide Program Returns in 2019



We are pleased to announce the return of our Swim Guide program for the summer of 2019. Beginning Memorial Day weekend our volunteers will be collecting weekly water samples from popular recreation spots within the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico River basins. This summer we are adding 11 sites to the Upper Neuse Basin around Raleigh; we will now provide water quality information for a total of 31 sites between the two rivers.

Each week, our citizen scientists collect water samples that we analyze for bacteria. These results are then posted on our website, the Swim Guide website, social media, and sent out in text alerts. Results are posted every Friday to let you know where it's safe to recreate and any areas you should avoid due to high bacteria levels. Want to get text alerts this summer? **Text "SWIM" to 33222!**

Last summer was a great success thanks in large part to our wonderful volunteers! We are in need of another great group of volunteers this year to make this program happen. If you are interested in being one of our citizen scientists please send an email to volunteer@soundrivers.org.

Special thanks to our program funders: Grady White Boats, Restoration Systems, and Great Outdoor Provision Company.

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