



WELCOME:
Sound Rivers
welcomes
new board
member
page 2



**Tell Me About
It Tuesdays'**
spring season
page 3



**The year in
review**
page 4



HOUSE PARTY:
Host your own
"A Sound River"
showing
page 9

PAMLICO PADDLE: Riverkeeper,
projects coordinator take to the
Pamlico for a 5-day kayaking
adventure
page 6

CURRENTS

The quarterly newsletter of Sound Rivers

2021: An eventful year

From the premiere of Sound Rivers' documentary to striking down the Clean Water Act rollbacks

Dear Friends,

2021 sped by, and we are about to welcome 2022! I cannot believe this year is about to come to a close. Though I always say that around this time, this year feels like it has been especially short.



I want to send a heartfelt THANK YOU to you, our Clean Water Community. You supported Sound Rivers during this whirlwind of a challenging year, and we could not be more grateful. Your donations, Action Alerts

and kind messages have ensured Sound Rivers' staff were able to keep fighting for your clean water this year. YOU made victories happen – like the striking down of the damaging Clean Water Act rollbacks. We cannot thank you enough.

Sound Rivers has spent the past four decades working to serve your communities in the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico river basins. We have seen many positive changes in that time – all made possible with your generous support.

This year, we kicked off celebrations for our 40th anniversary, and while we were saddened that we were unable to gather in person, we were thrilled to debut our documentary, "A Sound River,"

on Nov. 30, during our virtual premiere event. Stay tuned for opportunities to see the documentary again in 2022 – hopefully in person!

Sound Rivers has spent the past four decades working to serve your communities in the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico river basins. We have seen many positive changes in that time – all made possible with your generous support. We are excited to head into the next 40 years, keeping your waterways clean, beautiful and accessible. With you as part of our Clean Water Community, we know the future is bright!

From all of us here at Sound Rivers, we are wishing you a wonderful Holiday Season and a sparkling New Year!

Sincerely, *Heather Decker*

WELCOME

MIRIAM ESPINOSA JOINS SOUND RIVERS' BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sound Rivers is thrilled to welcome Miriam Espinosa to the Sound Rivers' Board of Directors.

With more than 20 years of experience in the manufacturing field, Miriam works as an environmental professional at Cummins Inc., a multinational corporation that designs, manufactures and distributes engines, filtration and power generation products, in Rocky Mount. Miriam currently leads the compliance program for North America and is actively engaged in the Cummins Planet 2050 Environmental Sustainability Strategy. Miriam is passionate about management systems, continuous learning and creating connections for people to achieve their goals in harmony.

Her purpose in joining the Sound Rivers' board is not only professional, but personal, as well, she said.

"Before coming to the U.S., I lived in San Luis Potosi, Mexico, which is located in a semi-desert area. The river that used to cross the city dried many years ago, the same as other rivers in Mexico. When I knew about Sound Rivers, I thought that if we had had a similar group, the river might still exist as of today.

I want to learn more about water conservation, so if I return to my country one day, I can do better to protect our natural resources," Miriam said.

For her, access to clean water is a top priority – "because water is essential for life."

"It is difficult to prioritize so many issues, but access to clean water is at the top because water is essential for life."

— Miriam Espinosa

As a board member, she hopes to serve as a link between the organization and industry, and the Latino community.

In her personal time, Miriam, her husband, Victor, and their dog, Jack, (whenever it's possible to bring him along) enjoy exploring the outdoors, attending live concerts and visiting wineries.

Sound Rivers' Executive Director Heather Deck first met



MIRIAM ESPINOSA

Miriam more than 10 years ago when Miriam traveled to Washington to hear a presentation Heather was giving to area professionals. Miriam has attended many Sound Rivers' cleanups over the years and has communicated with staff about improving Cummins stormwater compliance, and concerns about the environment in Rocky Mount.

"I've witnessed firsthand Miriam's passion for our waterways and spirit of volunteerism, and we are happy to welcome that energy to the board," Deck said.

Miriam will serve the remainder of past-board member Veronica Butcher's term (December 2022) and will then be eligible to serve two additional terms.

Tell Me About It TUESDAYS



THE SOUND RIVERS SCIENCE SERIES 2022

Join us for another exciting year of Tell Me About It Tuesdays, our virtual science series.

On the second Tuesday of every month, we've got an

expert onscreen, sharing their knowledge about their work – from stormwater solutions to sea-level rise, regenerative agriculture to land conservancy.

Each episode ends with a Q&A, so bring your curiosity and your questions! Check in at soundrivers.org to RSVP. We hope to "see" you there!

JAN. 11



WATER QUALITY, PUBLIC HEALTH AND COASTAL RESILIENCE

Tune in with Dr. Rachel Noble for this talk about the land-water interface linking attributes of microbial contaminants to coastal resilience and public health risk, with some real-world examples from coastal towns in North Carolina. Noble is a distinguished professor of marine science at University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.

FEB. 8



NATURAL SYSTEMS: IMPROVING RESILIENCE TO COASTAL RIVERINE FLOODING

Join Dr. Barbara Doll for this episode about flood resilience and restoration. Doll is a N.C. State University associate professor and restoration specialist with North Carolina Sea Grant, whose work has focused on nonpoint source pollution prevention and treatment, restoration ecology, stormwater management, stream assessment and sustainable landscaping.

MARCH 8



THE BLUE ECONOMY CORRIDOR

Sound Rivers' partner, Dr. Emily Yeager, will talk about her work on The Blue Economy Corridor, an asset-mapping project of communities along the river, from Rocky Mount to Washington. The Blue Economy Corridor will highlight socio-cultural, environmental, and hospitality assets, assembling all data into a multi-level, interactive GIS map. Learn about this ambitious project that will bring together communities of the region, connecting people using both technology and nature.

2021

A YEAR IN REVIEW

CLAY BARBER

Environmental Projects Coordinator



AN ACCESSIBLE RIVER

Sound Rivers made great progress toward increasing access to the Pamlico River in 2021 by partnering with the city and Wildlife Resources Commission to construct and open two new ADA accessible kayak

STORMWATER CONTROL

Sound Rivers continued to work on stormwater solutions in 2021, completing construction of two large stormwater wetlands to significantly reduce the amount of nutrient and bacteria pollution entering local streams from partner campuses. Five rainwater harvesting systems were installed at two campuses, capturing more than 20,000 gallons of stormwater. These projects assist our public school and community college partners by reducing pollution, alleviating

launches in the City of Washington. “My work next year will include increasing paddling and camping opportunities along the Neuse River and Tar-Pamlico River water trail. The more people we can get out on

flooding and providing educational opportunities.

“For 2022, I look forward to constructing more stormwater control measures at multiple schools and colleges throughout both watersheds. The folks that staff, attend, and visit the campuses of our partnering schools and colleges will have more opportunity to learn about how stormwater runoff affects water quality and different ways to manage it,” Clay said.

the water to experience these amazing resources and connect with each other, the better off our research, education, restoration and advocacy efforts will be,” Clay said.



JILL HOWELL

Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper

SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

“This past year we again saw prolonged fish kills on the Pamlico River during the fall – Clay and I even got an up-close look as we paddled through an active fish kill for four days during the Pamlico Paddle. These fish kill events are a sign that our waters are overburdened by nutrient pollution and highlights the importance and urgency of our work across many different advocacy issues – sanitary sewer overflows, stormwater runoff and pollution from CAFOs – to address the nitrogen and phosphorus ending up in the river.

“My goal as your Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper is to ensure the health of your rivers, creeks, and streams and serve the communities who rely on those waterways. I was proud to be able to support those concerned about the proposed landfill in Kittrell, and I’m hoping to continue supporting communities threatened by polluters in 2022,” Jill said.

GOALS 2022

- ▶ Fight for a stronger Clean Water Act – the EPA is set to strengthen the clean water act to ensure our remaining wetlands are protected, which will improve water quality and reduce flooding.
- ▶ Advocate for sensible, nature-based solutions to Tar-Pamlico and Neuse River flooding; work with North Carolina leaders to ensure that state and federal funds are spent equitably and support those most impacted by flooding.
- ▶ Push for North Carolina wetland and stream protection rules – no matter what future federal administrations do, Sound Rivers will be campaigning for strong state protections for our remaining vital wetlands.
- ▶ Expand water-quality monitoring through our successful Swim Guide program and beyond, including starting year-round testing in certain locations for bacteria and plastics pollution.
- ▶ Continue our work to change North Carolina’s outdated sewer-spill notification system to ensure the public knows when their health could be at risk.
- ▶ Alleviate pollution from stormwater runoff in your waterways through our Campus Stormwater Program, partnering with schools throughout eastern North Carolina to provide solutions for stormwater while giving students outdoor educational opportunities
- ▶ Support local communities in demanding greater transparency on local zoning and ordinances.
- ▶ Continue working for transparency for the poultry industry in North Carolina, and advocating for the state to require permits for these industrial-scale facilities, to ensure they do not harm your rivers and streams. Large, industrial-scale poultry facilities are being built across our region, some even in our floodplains, and none are currently required to get state environmental permits.
- ▶ Serve as a valuable and accessible resource for local communities concerned about pollution and waterways.

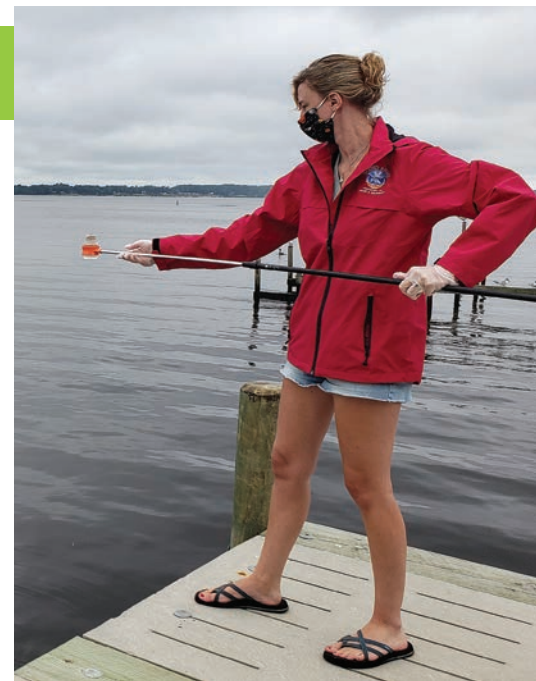
KATY HUNT

Lower Neuse Riverkeeper

AN EXPANDED SWIM GUIDE

Sound Rivers expanded the popular Swim Guide program again in the summer of 2021, monitoring a record 49 sites on the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico rivers, with support from three interns and 41 volunteers. There was so much public interest in adding new sites to the program in 2021, and there’s a waiting list for next year’s additions.

“Swim Guide has been one of my favorite programs to work on, and I’m really excited to expand our recreational water-quality monitoring to year-round and add new sites. Keeping our community informed about where it is or isn’t safe to recreate is an important part of our work, and I’m looking forward to seeing it grow,” Katy said.



WHAT LIES AHEAD

2022

PAMLICO PADDLE

Jill and Clay complete another excellent 5-day kayaking adventure on the Pamlico

Sound Rivers and the City of Washington's new kayak launch on Runyon Creek was the site of another epic paddle-adventure send-off on Oct. 17.

Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Jill Howell, Sound Rivers' Environmental Projects Coordinator Clay Barber, and Jill's adventure pup, Miller the First Mate, headed out on the five-day, 70-plus-mile Pamlico Paddle, from Washington to Swan Quarter. The purpose of the trip was two-fold, according to Clay.

"We got to experience the Pamlico River firsthand while highlighting recreational oppor-

tunities and water-quality issues along the way," he said.

The two are no strangers to long kayaking adventures: last year, they completed the Tour de Tar, a 10-day trip down the Tar River, from Oxford to Washington. On the Pamlico Paddle, they picked up where they left off on the Tour de Tar, but the river from Washington to Swan Quarter, compared to Oxford to Washington, offered a completely different set of challenges for the paddlers: wind, wave action and an ongoing fish kill, not to mention the addition of a 53-pound puppy.

"While Miller's great company and very cute, he is little bit of extra weight that can and does choose to move around at will," Jill laughed.

Sound Rivers staff and volunteers kicked off the Pamlico Paddle launch with a land-based clean-up along the shores of the Pamlico and nearby creeks.

With a little help from friends along the river, the two completed their trip on Oct. 21 in Swan Quarter. To watch the recap of the Pamlico Paddle, their daily Facebook lives and see photos take along the way, visit www.soundrivers.org/pamlico-paddle.

Our intrepid adventurers left Runyon Creek in the early afternoon, and eight miles of paddling took Jill, Clay and Miller down the Pamlico to Broad Creek, passing homes along the banks first, then marshy banks and moss-laden cypress trees in Broad Creek. A sunny, windy day, the paddlers experienced some choppy waters and the fish kill that had been plaguing the river for a couple of weeks.

They arrived ahead of schedule at the Hindsley Platform, the last of Sound Rivers' camping platform on the river; the reservable campsite is located about 2 miles up Broad Creek from the Pamlico and is accessible only by water.



DAY 2 BROAD CREEK TO BLOUNTS CREEK
DISTANCE: 8.1 miles
TIME: 4 hrs, 18 m.



(Left) Kayaks packed and ready to go, First Mate Miller takes a pre-paddle nap on the morning of Day 2. (Above) Day 2 ended with a visit to longtime Sound Rivers supporter Bob Daw's Man Cave on Blounts Creek, a fish fry with the creek's bounty and some live music.

After a chilly night on Broad Creek, Day 2 stayed sunny, windy and choppy during the 9 miles from Broad Creek, across the Pamlico to Blounts Bay, then up Blounts Creek.

The two made the cross-river detour to highlight an ongoing Sound Rivers' battle: the fight to prevent a limestone-mining compa-

ny from potentially discharging up to 12 million gallons of fresh water per day into the brackish waters of the creek.

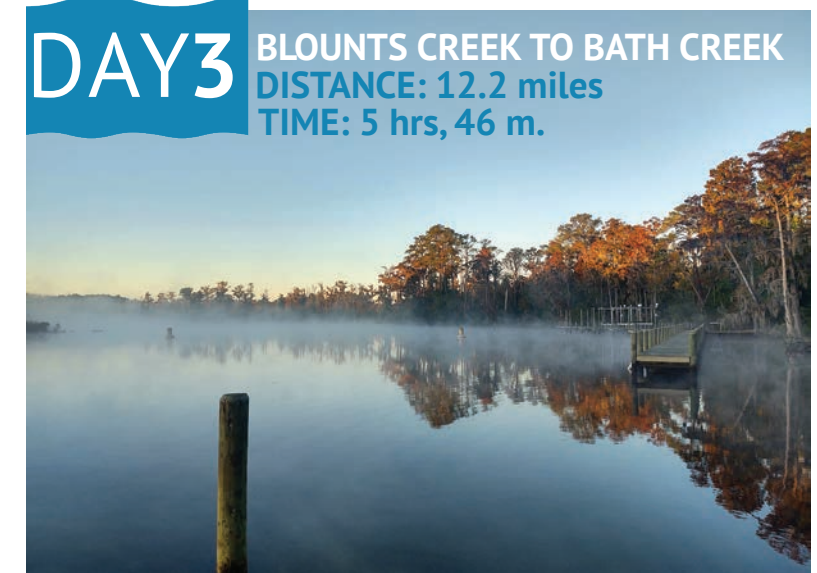
After pitching a tent at Cotton Patch Landing, they took a short boat ride to the home of Save Blounts Creek campaign co-founder Bob Daw, and his wife, Phyllis, who

treated them to one of Bob's famous fish fries and live music. "We know that we couldn't do our work generally without people, but we especially couldn't do something like this paddle trip if we were on our own and didn't have people offering all sorts of support along the way," Jill said.



DAY 1 RUNYON CREEK TO BROAD CREEK
DISTANCE: 8.45 miles TIME: 4 hrs, 25 m.

(Above) Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Jill Howell and Miller (foreground) prepare for launching the Pamlico Paddle at Runyon Creek. (Right) Clay Barber, Sound Rivers' environmental projects coordinator, watches the sun set over Broad Creek from the dock of the Hindsley camping platform.



DAY 3 BLOUNTS CREEK TO BATH CREEK
DISTANCE: 12.2 miles
TIME: 5 hrs, 46 m.

Day 3 was the dream-paddle day, as Clay, Jill and Miller headed 13 miles downriver from Blounts Creek to Bath Creek. The river was slick as glass as they paddled past Goose Creek State Park, accompanied by

sightings of bald eagles, egrets and kingfishers. They also ran into more dead fish. "It was the worst that we've seen it," Jill said.

Day 3, continued on p. 10

'A SOUND RIVER' PREMIERES

On Nov. 30, Sound Rivers' 40th-anniversary documentary premiered to a large virtual crowd. It was a spectacular success, from the opening slide show to a wonderful panel discussion with the stars of the show. Donations exceeded our wildest expectations: a total of \$12,500 was raised – nearly \$8,000 of that during the hour-long event.

"What an amazing night! I am so grateful to all those who helped make this possible. Thank you to the board for all the support – we estimate we had about 500 people watching. It was a grand recognition of all the hard work of the past 40-plus years. This will be a great film for us to continue to use and continue to share this powerful story," said Sound Rivers Executive Director Heather Deck.



**What a night! What a video!!!
What an amazing project!!! What
a story!!! What an amazing team!
I am so proud to be a small part
of this effort.**

– Besty Hester
Sound Rivers Board Member



Hosted by Sound Rivers' board members Adrian Atkinson and Caty Gray Urquhart (left, top and bottom), the "A Sound River" panel, including Down East Coal Ash President Bobby Jones (top middle), filmmaker Rain Bennett (bottom middle), University of North Carolina Institute of Marine Sciences Professor Hans Paerl (top right) and Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Jill Howell (bottom right), shared a moment of levity after the premiere of "A Sound River."



It was perfect. I take my Waterkeeper cap off to you and everyone else at Sound Rivers for producing this terrific film. It will serve our rivers well ... If the Neuse and Pamlico-Tar rivers could do it, they would give all of you at Sound Rivers a huge hug. They are mighty fortunate to have you and your Riverkeepers as their voice.

– Rick Dove
Senior Advisor, Waterkeeper Alliance



Last night was great ... I really enjoyed it. My prayer is that it will continue to remind, awaken and encourage people to work together and protect our planet.

– Bobby Jones
President, Down East Coal Ash Environmental and Social Justice Coalition

did you miss it?

'A Sound River' now available for house-party screenings

November saw the premiere of "A Sound River," a documentary about Sound Rivers' 40-year battle for a basic right – clean water.

Now the short film is available to those who'd like to host their own screening.

"We had a great response to the film and panel discussion the night of the premiere, and we're looking forward to providing more opportunities for viewing, including at your own watch party," said Sound Rivers' Executive Director Heather Deck.

The film is introduced by Deck and Sound Rivers' Board President

JoSeth Bocook, and for the next 16 minutes, viewers are given a fast-paced, crash course on the organization and its work, from our humble beginnings as the Neuse River and Pamlico-Tar River foundations to achieving legislation to protect North Carolina waterways; from rallying with communities to fight for their clean water to taking on industrial polluters, as told by the voices of Sound Rivers – Riverkeepers, supporters, partners and experts – and set against a beautiful backdrop of the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico rivers. The hour-long

event wraps up with a panel discussion including "A Sound River" filmmaker Rain Bennett and other stars of the documentary.

"We've put together a 'screening in a box' to make it super easy for people to share. The doc-

keeping it brief and just showing the documentary itself or watching the entire hour-long event," Deck said.

Originally slated for in-person premieres at venues in Washington, New Bern and Raleigh,

Sound Rivers opted to pivot to a free, online premiere in response to the fall resurgence of COVID-19. Viewers came through in a big way, blowing through the fundraising goal tentatively set for the night.

"Our new goal is exposure – to get the film out there and get more people engaged with their rivers and the



umentary may be about a serious subject, but that doesn't mean your watch party can't be fun," Deck said.

Fun could be hosting a watch party combined with a local beer tasting (good beer needs clean water!) or serving farm-to-table appetizers (farmers all benefit from clean water). It could also include showing the film before a group outdoor adventure, such as a kayak outing or riverside hike.

"The great thing is that you can tailor the event to your group's needs – for example,

issues facing them," Deck said.

Host your own
A SOUND RIVER
watch party!
email info@soundrivers.org
to find out how!



Wow ... What a flawless presentation and event!!

– Catherine Kastleman
Sound Rivers Board Member

SOUND RIVERS

would like to recognize a special donation made in honor of Bob and Margaret Whitley. We are so grateful!



We'd also like to bid a very fond farewell to board members Mary Davidson and Emilie Kane, who rotated off the Sound Rivers Board of Directors this month, after many years of service.

"We are grateful for each and every one of those years that Mary and Emilie helped guide Sound Rivers' way. Their dedication to clean water and a healthy environment, and their spirit of volunteerism, knows no bounds. We are better for Mary and Emilie having served on this board, and, by default, having served their entire community," said Sound Rivers Executive Director Heather Deck.

Thank you!

Day 3, continued ...

Jill estimated the number of dead or dying menhaden they'd seen over three days to be around 10,000. Luckily, by the time they made landfall at their next campsite – the sandy beach at Plum Point on Bath Creek – they seemed to have paddled out of the worst of it.

(Right) First Mate Miller claims his spot in the tent, while Jill takes on dinner duty on the beach at Plum Point, Bath Creek (middle right). (Far right) Kayaks are ready to go at sunrise the next day.



DAY 4 BATH CREEK TO PUNGO RIVER DISTANCE: 20.5 miles TIME: 9 hrs, 44 m.



(Left) First Mate Miller keeps an eye on the following seas as Jill paddles on Day 4. (Above) The longest day of paddling so far, Clay's touring kayak made the 20 miles from Bath Creek to the Pungo River a little easier.

First Mate Miller took a dive into the drink on Day 4, and it was the only time the 7-month-old pup fell in during the entire trip. Day 4 started with dead fish washing up on the beach – and the fish kill would stick with them for the first half of the day.

On the 20 miles downriver to their Day 4 hosts' – Mary and Uli Alsentzer – home on the Pungo River, they passed the Aurora phosphate mine, Nutrien, but it was lack of accessibility to the river along this stretch that Clay was most concerned with.

"It's lacking the guaranteed public access that I would love to see on this section of the river," Clay said, adding that they were the only kayakers they'd seen on the river that day. "I think it would just be different if there was more public access."

DAY 5 PUNGO RIVER TO SWAN QUARTER DISTANCE: 19 miles TIME: 9 hrs, 44 m.



Day 5 of the Pamlico Paddle was, by far, the most challenging. The wide, open waters of the river from the Pungo to Swan Quarter meant little protection from the wind, which picked up in the latter part of the day, with wave action battering the kayakers from the side.

In this 19-mile stretch, there is little sign of man amidst the marsh and grasses, which serve as a natural buffer, effectively reducing erosion.

(Far left) Though Day 5 was a no-man's land of grasses and marsh there was still room for a "No Trespassing" sign. (Left) Miller the Adventure Pup hunkered down in response to the choppy water.

"Immediately, you can see how much better these marsh grasses do dissipating the wave action that comes in," Clay said. It was a bumpy ride, and by the time they made it to the boat ramp at Swan Quarter everyone was ready to be on dry land, including Miller.

"I feel like I just went through the dishwasher," Clay laughed.

Tour de Tar in 2020, Pamlico Paddle in 2021 – perhaps the New Year will bring with it another plan, and another paddle, highlighting the beauty of our rivers.

Sound Rivers, Inc.
P.O. Box 1854
Washington, NC 27889

NON PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
WASHINGTON, NC
PERMIT NO. 66



It may be glossy, but this paper IS recyclable. Please recycle!

MAKE YOUR
SPECIAL
YEAR-END GIFT!

Support Sound Rivers today!

Send your 2021 gift in the enclosed envelope by New Year's Eve to help keep your Riverkeepers on the water in 2022 – or visit us online and give today at soundrivers.org/donate.

*Protect your clean water future
– donate now!*

