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# CURRENTS

## 2022: Spring forward

Dear Friends,

I know you must be as ready as I am for warmer weather, so we can get out on the water! Spring is officially here, and with it we have some very exciting news from Sound Rivers.

We are thrilled to welcome new Neuse Riverkeeper Sam Krop to our team, who will join forces with our Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper, Jill Howell. Sam comes to Sound Rivers with a decade of experience working at



the intersection of conservation and climate activism in the Pacific Northwest, and she is looking forward to bringing her skillset to fight for clean water in your Neuse River Basin as of April 1. You can learn more about Sam inside the newsletter (page 6), and there will be plenty of opportunities later this spring and summer to meet her. Please join me in giving her our warmest welcome!

Sam's arrival brings an exciting opportunity for us to improve our advocacy on behalf of your waterways, while also improving our science-based work. Sam will serve the

Thanks to generous supporters, your giving during April will go twice as far for your waterways, supporting programs like Swim Guide, our advocacy work, campus stormwater projects to reduce flooding and pollution, Riverkeeper investigations into threats facing your rivers, and so much more.

entire Neuse River as its Riverkeeper and lead advocate, and Katy Hunt will transition to the role of staff scientist, based in New Bern. Katy will be able to focus on collecting data, investigating pollution, collaborating with researchers and supporting Sound Rivers' programs in ways not possible with our prior staffing levels. Katy is excited to leverage her science background in this new way. Read more about their new roles on page 7.

This April is also the sixth year of our Match for Clean Water! From April 1 through April 30, all donations will be matched - up to \$30,000! Thanks to generous supporters, your giving during April will go twice as far for your waterways, supporting programs like Swim Guide, our advocacy work, campus stormwater projects to reduce flooding and pollution, Riverkeeper investigations into threats facing your rivers, and so much more. I hope you'll consider a gift this April, of any amount, and help us reach our \$30,000 matching goal! You can give at soundrivers.org/ donate or use the enclosed envelope.

Thank you for all your support – together we can make a clean-water future possible!

Best,

Heather Deck, Executive Director

CHRISTINA MARSHEN

Washington



#### "If we can't take care of it, we only end up hurting ourselves."

henever there's a clean-up, Christina Marshen is on the water, piling her kayak high with garbage pulled from local waterways.

But this dedicated Sound Rivers volunteer doesn't wait around for an organized event - she's often out on the river, taking out what others have thrown in.

"I make it point of going out once a month in the warmer months; in the winter, once every couple of months. Litter doesn't stop when it's cold. It doesn't stop when it's boating season. Litter just doesn't stop," Christina said.

Christina first became aware of Sound Rivers through the

Unitarian Universalist Federation of New Bern – the environment one of the issues often talked about in meetings, she said. From there, an encounter with Lower Neuse Riverkeeper Katy Hunt at a Lawson Creek Park clean-up solidified her Sound Rivers' volunteering relationship.

In 2016, a friend moving out of town gave Christina her kayak and being on the water opened up greater participation, where a disability had hindered her on land.

"It was such a turnaround in my life to not need my legs and give back to the community, and to do something where you can physically see a change in the waterways around you," she

#### said.

Since, her family has moved to Washington, and she regularly targets six clean-up locations on local waterways on her own. She's also a familiar face at all the Washington clean-ups.

"Sound Rivers is the only organization around here that seems to place the importance of the river, the creeks, the oceans – all of the waters – where it needs to be," Christina said. "I always come back to the part about how we can't make any more water. If we don't treat what we have well, if we can't take care of it, we only end up hurting ourselves. Without having someone to be the voice of the waterways, we're screwed."

(Above) Christina Marshen shows off a stash of trash she removed during one of her solo clean-ups on the Tar-Pamlico River. (Left) The result is often an artistic display of just how much trash one person can pick up during a single outing on the water.

# Looking to volunteer?

At Sound Rivers, we are always looking to increase our army of dedicated volunteers. This spring and summer, we have a couple of opportunites for those who don't mind getting a little wet, or a little dirty, to help us keep your waterways clean! Read more about our volunteer-driven, popular Swim Guide program and ways to help out with a statewide microplastics research study below. Email volunteer@soundrivers.org to volunteer!



**TRASH TROUTS:** passive litter traps that float on the surface of creeks, are attached to the banks and capture all the floating trash before it ends up making its way downstream. Pictured is some Jack's Creek *trash that would be captured by* a Trash Trout.



**SAMPLING:** *More than 50* trained volunteers collect hun*dreds of samples, traveling by* foot, boat and car to gather them. Volunteers follow careful collection procedures, keep samples on ice and transport samples to our lab for analysis everv week.

In April, Sound Rivers will be installing trash trouts on Jack's Creek in Washington and Lawson Creek in New Bern. This project is part of a larger statewide initiative with Waterkeepers Carolina to monitor microplastic pollution in our waterways and draw attention to the problem litter, especially plastics, pose to our waterways. Once the trash is captured in the trap, it needs to be manually removed, and "audited" -- basically sorting trash to see what is ending up in there. Is most of the trash plastic bottles or straws? Styrofoam containers? It's useful to know what kind of trash is ending up in our waterways so we know how to prevent it in the first place.

## Swim Guide

Swim Guide is back and bigger than ever! Five years ago, Sound Rivers launched the water-quality monitoring program created by Swim, Drink, Fish that lets you know where it's safe to recreate in the water. We sample for fecal bacteria levels at many locations (49 last year!) in the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico river basins.

Samples are collected weekly at strategic sites, then transported back to our labs for analysis, giving us the results 24 hours later. With bacteria level results in hand, we notify the public through a number of avenues and publish the results to Swim Guide. Swim Guide has a mobile app and website that makes it easy to find water-quality information wherever you may be swimming. From Memorial Day to Labor Day, we send out weekly water-quality updates through our text list (text SWIM to 33222 to get results delivered to your phone), website at soundrivers.org/swimguide, and through Friday afternoon updates on social media. Our amazing Swim Guide volunteers make this entire program

possible, and we'll need even more volunteers to cover our sites

## **Trash Trouts**

We are looking for volunteers in Washington and New Bern:

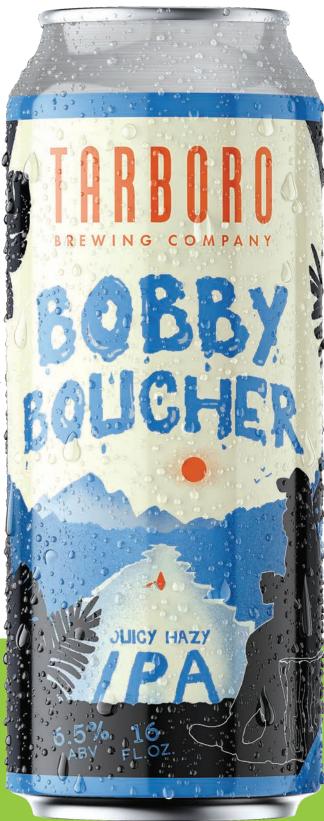
Clean-Up Crew: Willing to wade into the creek and pull trash out of the trap (we can provide waders and gloves)

Trash Auditors: For those who don't want to get in the creek, but want to be a part of this effort and help us tally up the trash

Trash Trout Scout: It'd be great to have a few folks who can be our eyes on the Trout, who can swing by once a week/after a rainstorm to check to see if it needs a clean-out.

> See SWIM GUIDE Continued on Page 10

### **ROLLING ON THE RIVER OBBY BOUCHER IPA SALES TO BENEFIT SOUND RIVERS**



Tarboro Brewing Company is showing its commitment to clean water with a new IPA and a nod to the 1998 film "The Water Boy."

Named after the classic comedy's main character, Bobby Boucher IPA "is a juicy, hazy IPA rollin' on the river at 6.5% ABV" and a partnership between TBC and Sound Rivers – a portion of all proceeds from sales will go to making waterways in the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico watersheds swimmable, fishable and drinkable.

A collaborative team effort made it possible, according to TBC Team Leader and Sound Rivers board member Caty Gray Urguhart.

"The partnership idea was one that (TBC owner) Inez had wanted to do, so I approached them as soon as I was on the board, and they were like, 'OK. let's do it," Urguhart said.

An oft-quoted line in the movie – "Now that's what I call high-quality H2O" – served as inspiration for the new IPA's name, because good beer starts with good water.

"Access to clean water is important for beer making for a lot of reasons and is guintessential to our way of life. The Tar River is a big part of Tarboro, so it seemed like a natural thing to do," Urguhart said.

TBC brews upwards of 20 beers a year – three reqular, year-round beers, along with a multitude of seasonal beers - and the Bobby Boucher IPA will number among the year-round beers, available in both cans and kegs and on tap at the TBC taproom in Tarboro (open Wednesdays through Sundays). For those not in the Tarboro area, 4-packs can be purchased and shipped through the TBC website.

According to Urguhart, Bobby Boucher is a great beer, for a great cause: "For beer lovers, the beer description and the label speak for themselves, but for non-beer people, that's 2% of our proceeds from the sales and from the taproom going to Sound Rivers."

"We're so excited to be partnering with Tarboro Brewing Company for this – what a fun way to introduce our membership to TBC beer and TBC's fans to our work at Sound Rivers," said Sound Rivers Executive Director Heather Deck.

For more information, visit tarborobrewingcompany. com or in-person at 526 N. Main St., Tarboro.



### \$30,000 dedicated to April matching campaign

pril is a special month to the Environmental Action community, as it marks the beginning of spring for our state, and also includes the environmentally centered holiday Earth Day. It's a time when we emerge from winter cold back out into our beautiful natural landscapes, once again finding comfort and joy in nature.

At Sound Rivers, it is typically a month where we can begin our group trash cleanups and outdoor gatherings with our supporters, as well as ramp up planning for our summer Swim Guide season. It is also a time when, for the past six years, generous donors have come together to match all gifts made this month. That has meant so much to Sound Rivers' ability to grow and continue to protect vour clean water.

This year we again are so honored to be the recipient of challenge gifts from several donors who are pledging

\$30,000 to match all April gifts from you, our dedicated Clean Water Community. That means your gift of \$10 will provide not one but two Swim Guide samples, your gift of \$250 will

affect your clean water."

provide not one but two pollution investigations, or your gift of \$1,000 will ensure we can construct an entire rain garden to offset pollution at a public campus. All gifts in April are doubled, which means your gift will go twice as far this month! The generous match also means Sound Rivers can con-

"We have heard you when you have asked for your Riverkeepers' help in combating pollution and other harmful projects that

tinue towards our goals to expand, providing you even more support in your community. We have heard you when you have asked for your Riverkeepers' help in combating pollution and other harmful projects that affect your clean water. Communities such as Kittrell, New Bern, Clayton, Washington and more have benefitted recently from your Riverkeepers' expertise and advocacy, and there are so many more communities in our region that need our help. Your donations this April will not only be doubled, they will directly impact our ability to grow and serve more communities in need of advocacy and organizing for clean water. Will you make a gift today that will go twice as far to support your Clean Water? You can give at soundrivers.org/donate, or return the envelope enclosed in this newsletter. As always, we are incredibly grateful for your support and dedication to your waterways!

### Sound Rivers welcomes new Riverkeeper

Environmental advocate. Organizer. Coalition builder. Conservation and climate activist.

amantha Krop brings a host of skills to her new role as Sound Rivers' Neuse Riverkeeper.

Sam comes to Sound Rivers from the Pacific Northwest, where she led campaigns to stop the clearcutting of forests, worked to oppose new, destructive fossil fuel proposals and fought for healthy drinking water supplies alongside community members. Prior to her full-time role as an environmental organizer, she taught undergraduate- and graduate-level courses in environmental justice and pedagogy at the University of Oregon. She now brings her strong skills in communication, facilitation, organization and public speaking to the Neuse River watershed.

Her love of nature dates back to childhood.

"I'm originally from the Gulf Coast of Florida, where I first became keenly aware of watershed issues after the Gulf oil spill changed our home forever," Sam said. "I grew up swimming, boating and kayaking in the brackish waters and swamps and have always, always, been in love with rivers."



Neuse Riverkeeper Samantha Krop

But it was her experience in the North Carolina mountains that cemented her future in advocacy. From ages 7 to 21, Sam attended Camp Celo on the shores of the South Toe River in the Black Mountains, first as a camper, then as a

"I'm honored to be joining hands with Sound Rivers and the people of the Neuse to advocate for the river and all those who rely on it." -Sam Krop

Neuse Riverkeeper

counselor. Attendance a generation-spanning tradition in Sam's family, Camp Celo was founded on Quaker values, simplicity and appreciation of nature.

"This is where I first learned how to survive with little, work in community and care for the land – this was also where I was first inspired to become an environmental advocate," she said. "I always credit the North Carolina mountains for teaching me what I wanted to be; what I wanted to do."

Now she'll put past experience to work for the Neuse River watershed.

"I'm honored to be joining hands with Sound Rivers and the people of the Neuse to advocate for the river and all those who rely on it. After spending a decade fighting for watersheds in the Pacific Northwest, I couldn't be more excited to bring my experience and energy to the Neuse River, where I'm committed to giving my all to the challenging, yet hopeful, work ahead," Sam said.

Of particular concern to her are the CAFOs (concentrated animal feeding operations) so prevalent in the river basin, as well as the lack of transparency, and regulation, of industrial poultry facilities - which is, essentially, none.

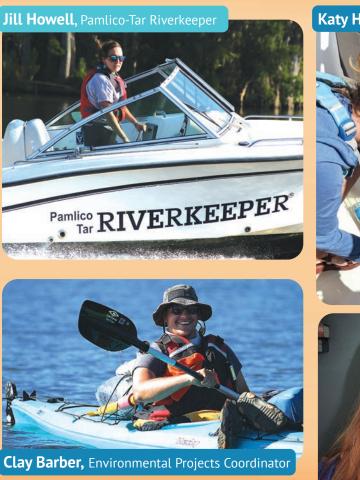
"I've been looking at maps and

See RIVERKEEPER Continued on Page 9

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"With Sam coming aboard as Neuse Riverkeeper, Sound Rivers is restructuring roles to better advocate for the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico watersheds. I'm excited by the opportunities we will have to better serve both our watersheds from the Triangle to the Pamlico Sound with a *dedicated staff scientist. Our Riverkeepers, Jill on the Pamlico-Tar* and Sam on the Neuse, will have more time to dig into local and regional water and environmental justice issues. Katy's science work will generate data and evidence that will help us highlight the grave challenges we are facing from pollution, flooding, development, and *wastes from industrial agriculture – challenges exacerbated by climate* change. Clay will oversee projects in both river basins that help alleviate environmental challenges and increase access to our waters, and Corinne, Grace, Vail and I will support all these vital efforts."

#### - Heather Deck, Sound Rivers Executive Director





#### Katy Hunt, Staff Scientist











Vail Rumley, Communications Director

Corinne Everett Belch, Director of Development

## **ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS**



## EPIPHANY SCHOOL, NEW BERN

### Football field goes 'green' with stormwater project

One Craven County school is putting its stormwater project to work, irrigating the football field with rooftop runoff. Sound Rivers and Epiphany School in New Bern partnered last year on stormwater management project, courtesy of funding from the Bosch Community Fund and a state Environmental Enhancement Grant. The project involves two, 5,000-gallon cisterns to capture rainwater from the school's 17,500-square-foot gymnasium roof.

"Every time it rains like an inch and a half or two inches — anytime there's a good rain event, those tanks should fill up," said Clay Barber, Sound Rivers' Environmental Projects Coordinator. "That roof could put off about 10,000 gallons."

As the tanks fill with water, it will be piped under the school driveway to the school's existing irrigation system to water the football field. An automatic switch will stop the flow once the cisterns are drained, allowing rain to be collected again. Making it happen is a company called Rainstorm Solutions, based out of Durham and Wilmington, as the project's scope was more complicated than Sound Rivers' previous cistern projects. The company came recommended by North Carolina Cooperative Extension Watershed and Water Quality Agent) Mitch Woodard, who has worked extensively with Sound Rivers on past projects.

Located at each corner of the gym, Epiphany School partners plan to paint the tanks with school colors, adding some school spirit in sight of the football field. Clay said he's looking forward to the challenge of figuring out exactly how well the system works: "The fun part is figuring out how many times those tanks empty and fill."



Host your own <u>A SOUND RIVER</u> watch party! email info@soundrivers.org



info@soundrivers.org to find out how!

**Pick a date & time!** The event can be hosted at your home, a local brewery, church or any place with the electricity to run a TV or projector!

**Pick a version!** We have two different versions of "A Sound River," our 40th anniversary documentary that premiered on Nov. 30, 2021. One is the recording of the entire premiere event, including a moderated panel discussion with filmmaker Rain Bennett, Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Jill Howell, UNC Institute of Marine Sciences Professor Hans Paerl and Down East Coal Ash Environmental and Social Justice Coalition President Bobby Jones. It's 1 hour, 6 minutes long, with an introduction by Sound Rivers Executive Director Heather Deck and then-board president JoSeth Bocook. A second version consists solely of the documentary. This version is 16 minutes, 20 seconds long.

#### **RIVERKEEPER** Continued from Page 6

checking out how that's playing out on the watershed. It's pretty shocking," she said of the lack of regulation for poultry facilities. "I'm looking forward to digging into the CAFO issue."

Sam will be getting to know the watershed, its issues and people, over the first few months of her tenure as Neuse Riverkeeper. But she'll bring with her to the job the tenets that have driven her throughout her life: justice, equity and inclusivity.

"The environmental justice issues are different, but it's essentially the same story: you have these big operations, unregulated industry, taking advantage of our most vulnerable communities, and I'm in for that fight," she said. "I'm looking forward to applying all the skills I've learned to do good work, in a place I want to be."

Sam comes aboard during an organizational shift at Sound Rivers: Lower Neuse Riverkeeper Katy Hunt is transitioning to the role of staff scientist, working alongside Riverkeepers in both the Neuse and

### Did you miss the premiere of "A Sound River"? Would you like to share it with friends?

**Invite Your Guests:** Invite enough people to have a good discussion – about 5-10 people. People typically like 3-4 weeks' notice to save the date for your event. Email invitations work very well for most people!

**Plan for Fun:** The documentary is about serious issues, but your gathering can be fun. Here are some ideas:

Host a local beer ta	sting – <i>good l</i>	beer needs clean
water!		

- Share farm-to-table appetizers farmers all benefit from clean water!
- Show the documentary before an outdoor outing share the "A Sound River" on a laptop before a hike or paddle.
- Hold a gear swap people are always looking to trade up on "new-to-me" outdoor gear.

v the waterer the first leuse Riverer to the job r throughout lusivity. issues are e same stoons, unregage of our and I'm in oking for-I've learned vant to be." n organizaower Neuse itioning to ing along-Neuse and Tam-Pamlico watersheds, while Krop will take on the Neuse riverkeeping job, from the Triangle area to the Pamlico Sound.

According to Hunt and Sound Rivers' Executive Director Heather Deck, the shift means more coverage for the Neuse and support for Sound Rivers' Riverkeepers.

"Taking on the job of staff scientist allows me to focus more on the science-based part of our advocacy. My passion is science, and I feel, through this avenue, I'll be able to better understand and communicate our rivers' issues," Katy said. "I'm looking forward to the transition, continuing to work in the Lower Neuse, and diving more into my scientific background."

"We're excited for the move," Heather said. "Sound Rivers will continue our presence on the Lower Neuse and, with the addition of Sam, be adding a strong voice for the entire watershed."

"Meet & Greets" to introduce Neuse Riverkeeper Sam Krop are in works. Visit soundrivers.org and sign up for our weekly eNews so you don't miss one near you!

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# RIVERKEEPER REPORTS

# In the TAR-PAMLICO watershed



*IDEXX trays lit up dramatically,* indicating maximum levels of E. coli present in water samples recently taken from a suspected sewer spill in Aurora.

### Aurora

Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Jill Howell continues to keep up with ongoing sewage spills in the town of Aurora.

"The (Aurora) Department of Public Works is on board and willing to fix the issues out there, but Aurora is a low-resource area, and there seem to be issues with its infrastructure," Jill said.

A concerned Aurora resident first notified Jill of potential sewage spills in early December, who has since made several visits to areas of concern.

"(North Carolina Department of

Environmental Ouality) had been contacted and went out before I was contacted, but found nothing," she said.

But a site visit during the week of Christmas turned up absolute proof.

"I found really high E. coli levels. There was clearly an active spill happening – it was clear that sewage was ending up in a ditch, which was ending up in a creek, then a channel that led directly into South Creek," Jill said.

NCDEO was again notified and performed an inspection in late December, resulting in a Notice of Deficiency. A Notice of Deficiency is issued for "Tier 1" violations, mean-

volunteering with Swim Guide this

ing "minor violations resulting in little or no harm to the environment or public health" that are not committed willfully or intentionally.

Jill said a positive aspect of the issue is the good communication between her, the town and DEO: "Now we have a good chain of information-sharing."

She said she'll continue to check in with the resident who initially reported sewage issues and with DEQ, to ensure they follow up with the city.

"The city needs to be accountable in properly managing wastewater, and DEO needs to be enforcing regulations to ensure this," she said.

regular and timely information about bacteria levels in our local waterways.

If you'd like to help monitor the waterways for safe recreation, email volunteer@soundrivers.org to join our 2022 Swim Guide team!

### *In the* **NEUSE** watershed Clayton

The Town of Clayton set an environmental example in January, when a new city council voted to bring back a steep-slope ordinance removed by a previous, developer-friendly council.

Sediment pollution of waterways is the No. 1 issue we see across our region, and protection of steep slopes greatly reduces erosion and sedimentation and provides protection of adjacent properties during development. The Neuse River and its tributaries have been greatly impacted by sediment pollution from expansive growth and development over the past 50 years. Not only does sediment pollution impact the quality of streams and rivers, smothering aquatic habitat and reducing fish populations, but it also negatively impacts the quality of drinking water sources, increasing costs for treatment, as well as increases the cost and burden of maintaining stormwater infrastructure.

Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Jill Howell provided this information to members of the council; she said it was encouraging to see a town council take action to preserve water quality.

"Council took the initiative to recognize the value of the environment, and that's awesome. They did not choose the most restrictive, environmentally friendly option, but they passed the ordinance, I believe, unanimously," she said.

21, 2023.

Lower Neuse Riverkeeper Katy Hunt is making the case that an industrial hog facility, located on Contentnea Creek, is a perfect candidate for the state's swine buyout program.

The Moye facility has not operated at full capacity for several years, has recntly failed to properly maintain its waste-management system and flooded during hurricanes Floyd (1999) and Matthew (2016).

In December, Katy sent a letter "We outlined our concerns

to North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality outlining her concerns, including the facility's flooding history and current excessive sprayfield ponding and a backup hog waste lagoon failing to meet state requirements. about several of the lagoons having no vegetation on them, or shrubs or other vegetation grow-

SWIM GUIDE *Continued from Page 6* 

continue to expand our Swim Guide program, thanks to the Water Ouality Fund in memory of Gene Pate.

Would you be interested in

year? Without the help of dedicated volunteers and their concern for clean water – as well as funding from our Swim Guide sponsors Grady-White Boats and APNEP we would not be able to bring you

### Havelock

"I haven't seen or heard of any more spills at all. especially from the problem manhole cover," said Lower Neuse Riverkeeper Katy Hunt.

Previously, Havelock was the site of ongoing sanitary sewer overflows during heavy rains. The state entered into a Special Order of Consent with the City of Havelock to get the issue resolved. That SOC was set to expire in June, but the city has applied for an amendment to extend the deadline, requesting a completion date of Dec.

The issue is several 16-inch sewer pipes emptying into a single 12-inch pipe that runs under U.S. Highway 70 near Oak Drive. The plan is to replace the 12-inch pipe with 2,200 linear feet of 18-inch pipe.

"They've identified the actual problem this time," Katy said. "Finally, they just need to do one more thing to fix the problem to make sure the spills don't continue."

### Moye Facility, Greene County

ing inside the lagoon," Katy said. "I'm worried about the structural intearity.

Recently, she spoke to Division of Water Resources staff who said it was unlikely any new violations would be issued.

"This has opened our eyes to a larger problem: the use of backup lagoons for storage of waste. We don't know how widespread this issue actually is," Katy said. "It would be much better to close that lagoon. This is an excellent case for the swine buyout program – the buyout funds are there."

The swine buyout funds are used to close waste lagoons, decommission facilities, purchase swine production and development rights, and establish conservation easements in areas prone to flooding.

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

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### \$30K match, April 1-30! Donate today!

### Tell Me About It TUESDAYS SCIENCE SERIES

Tell Me About It Tuesdays is back at 7 p.m. on April 12 with "Partners for Environmental Justice's Community Watershed Engagement." Join Amin Davis for this interactive presentation about PEJ and their work advocating for environmental justice in southeast Raleigh since the mid-1990s, including the Walnut Creek Watershed Learning Network. Sign up for this virtual event at soundrivers.org/events or email info@soundrivers.org!

