

Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Jill Howell's adventure pup, Miller, snoozes beneath a hat on a particularly warm day of the Neuse River Rising paddle.



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# CURRENTS

Sound Rivers' Quarterly Newsletter | Volume 8, No. 4 | Winter 2022

# NEUSE RIVER RISING

*a paddle to remember*

On Sept. 28, three Riverkeepers set out on an epic adventure: the Neuse River Rising paddle – 11 days on the Neuse River, kayaking 150 miles from the urban Smithfield, through stretches of rural, untouched beauty, to the urban southeastern City of New Bern and the wide and wavy expanse of river before it meets the Pamlico Sound.

“Seeing the river from the water allowed us to not only appreciate the beauty, but to also see the contrast between wild places and the growing number of clearcuts and new developments that are also starting to encroach on this area. Paddling on the Neuse was a reminder of what we’re fighting for, and why we work so hard to protect clean water and the communities who rely on it,” said Neuse Riverkeeper Samantha Krop.

Sam teamed up with Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Jill Howell and Oregon’s

Rogue Riverkeeper Emily Bowes, a friend of Sam’s from her most-recent

“Paddling on the Neuse, it’s obvious why the native Neusiok tribe named it the Peace River.”

– Samantha Krop, Neuse Riverkeeper

role as a coalition-builder with the Forest Waters Coalition. Joining the trio of Riverkeepers were Jill’s dog, Miller, a veteran kayaker, and Sam’s dog, Charlie.

Along the way, they encountered the expected, and the unexpected.

On Day 2 of the paddle, they were forced off the water by the imminent arrival of the remnants of Hurricane Ian, and spent the third day holed up in an Airbnb near Goldsboro.

“The day off was unexpected, but we were grateful to have an extra day to reassess our plans and repack all of our gear after two full days of learning what works and what doesn’t on the river,” Sam said.

With the heavy rainfall from the tropical system, they returned to a much-faster moving river.

The following nine days were an in-person, on-the-water education about the issues facing the Neuse, both visible and invisible. The visible included major erosion due to development and increased stormwater runoff, destruction of the banks by

**See Neuse River Rising**  
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# RIVER TALK

*A note from Executive Director Heather Deck*



**E**nvironmental injustice, cancer-causing pollution, climate change-caused flooding and fires, understaffed regulatory and resources agencies ... shall I go on!?

The news headlines are difficult to read day in and day out – it gives us all a sense of exhaustion; a sense of gloom. But there is a choice: we can surrender to the forces of pollution, corruption and injustice, or we can rise up and stand resolute in defense of the people, places and waters that we cherish.

At Sound Rivers, we choose to fight back. We do that, together with you. We fight pollution by advocating for better policy; urging for action and enforcement of our laws; educating our youth

and engaging with local leaders; by using the power of science and fact to chart a course of action.

As we approach the end of

*From all of us at  
Sound Rivers,  
we wish you the  
happiest of  
holidays!*



another year and into a holiday season we hope is filled with love and laughter for each of you, let us choose to work to-

gether and change the headlines.

There is tremendous power in hope; power in envisioning the world we'd like to see. Join us by being active in your community; join us by volunteering in our programs, join us by contacting your elected representatives and, for those who are able, supporting us with your gifts. Your year-end gift before Dec. 31 will help us continue the fight in 2023 – together we will change the headlines!

From all of us at Sound Rivers, we wish you the happiest of holidays!

Sincerely,

*Heather Deck*

*Discover the work behind the scenes at Sound Rivers! Tell Me About It Tuesdays returns in the New Year, with an exciting lineup for our virtual science series. All episodes are held 7 - 8 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month. Email [info@soundrivers.org](mailto:info@soundrivers.org) to sign up for the Zoom presentation, or visit [soundrivers.org](http://soundrivers.org) to sign up via the form on the event's page.*



**JAN. 10**  
STORMWATER SOLUTIONS

▶ Sound Rivers Program Director Clay Barber returns to host the virtual science series. This time, Clay will be talking about his fascinating stormwater projects: a rainwater harvester at West Craven High School and a rain garden at West Craven Middle School. Get the details on this important work to recycle and reuse, trap and treat stormwater.

**FEB. 14** TRASH TROUTING

▶ Sound Rivers' staff will share a behind-the-scenes look at our Trash Trout program. Learn about where the Trash Trouts are, what they're doing and how the data (in the form of trash) is informing a much larger study about how plastic is impacting our waterways!



# 2022 OYSTER ROAST



(Clockwise from above) Oyster-lovers bellied up to the tables and made the most of all-you-can eat oysters; Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Jill Howell delivers steaming oysters to eagerly awaiting guests; Avery Knox (right), daughter of Sound Rivers' board member Walker Knox, and Neuse Riverkeeper Samantha Krop (second from right) serve up sauce and butter.



**P**ostponed for two years because of the coronavirus pandemic, Sound Rivers finally held its 35th-annual Oyster Roast on Nov. 12. On a particularly warm November night, approximately 400 oyster-lovers gathered under the stars to shuck oysters and sip beer provided by local breweries.

More than 60 volunteers, including Sound Rivers' members, board members and Beaufort County Community College students in the Honor Society and Environmental Alliance clubs, took part in making the Oyster Roast one of the best ones yet. It was a weekend affair.

The annual auction continued to thrive in its online environment.

This year, it raised nearly \$14,000 to support your Riverkeepers' work, both on and off the water. It was the most successful auction to date, and we look forward to making it even better next year.

Thank you to our many volunteers and sponsors! It was a great event, and we definitely could not have done it without you!

## Tell Me About It Tuesdays

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RECAP:  
NEUSE  
RIVER  
OF THE  
YEAR

On Oct. 17, state and federal legislators, environmental organization leaders and advocates joined EPA Administrator Michael Regan on the banks of the Neuse River at Old Waynesboro Park in Goldsboro for the official announcement of American Rivers' River of the Year: the Neuse.

Held the day before the nation celebrated the Clean Water Act's 50th anniversary, the designation represented a departure for American Rivers, by highlighting the Neuse as an example of how the Clean Water Act has worked to improve water-quality and quality of life in the decades since its enactment, yet, at the same time, highlighting the work yet to be done.

Sound Rivers' Executive Director

Heather Deck joined the "who's who" of environmentalism for the announcement. Along with Heather, speakers included American Rivers President Tom Kiernan, N.C. Rep. John Bell, New Bern activist and director of Peletah Ministries Dr. Dawn Baldwin Gibson, Congressman G.K. Butterfield, Congresswoman Deborah Ross, North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality Secretary Elizabeth Biser and Regan, who returned to his hometown of the Goldsboro for the event. During her remarks, Heather took the opportunity to point out the need for greater investment in the communities on the river — starting with the most vulnerable.

"River of the Year is a wonderful recognition, and this year the designation is recognizing the work that has been done by communities along

the river to reduce pollution, combat flooding and restore the health of our watershed. At Sound Rivers, we strongly believe all of that work has to happen from the local level, up — everyone has a part to play in creating policy that protects the health of the river and its people," she said.

Heather concluded her remarks by urging legislators to work together to prioritize investment in programs to safeguard the river and the people who rely on it.

"The story of the Neuse River, and, in fact, all of our North Carolina waterways, is still being written. But right now, it's all of us — our local, state and federal leaders; our conservationists and community activists — who are its authors. It's our role to write 50 more years of progress into the next chapter of the Neuse River."



(Top) Sound Rivers Executive Director Heather Deck addresses the crowd as EPA Administrator Michael Regan looks on; (far left) Regan arrives for the event held in his hometown of Goldsboro; (left) Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Jill Howell is interviewed on the banks of the Neuse.

# Goodbye, Grace

Sound Rivers staff is saying farewell to one of our greatest assets: Grace Lekson.

Grace is retiring at the end of the year, ending a long tenure that started with the Pamlico-Tar River Foundation in 1987.

A biology graduate of University of North Carolina, Grace was hired by one of PTRF's early executive directors, David McNaught.

"We started a pilot program for the Citizens Water Quality Monitoring program. We had volunteers going out testing water for dissolved oxygen, nitrogen and phosphorous, temperature and turbidity. That program was established, and, at some point down the line, it was taken over by the state and expanded. It continued for several years and was housed at ECU," Grace said.

A move to Raleigh and a growing family put on hold her employment at PTRF, but in 1996, she and husband David moved back to Wash-

ington, and she came back to work, this time as a volunteer coordinator. Another out-of-state move in 2013



landed her right back at Sound Rivers in 2017. Over the years, she's served in many capacities: volunteer coordinator, event organizer, office coordinator, accountant, administra-

tive assistant — you name it, Grace has probably done it.

She was initially drawn to PTRF because she loved how water-quality research meant she spent her time outside and on the water, but what kept her coming back was the cause itself.

"The work this organization has always done was important to me, especially the watchdogging — keeping the environmental impacts of things visible; keeping it in front people" Grace said.

Grace isn't moving anywhere this time, she'll likely continue to volunteer with Sound Rivers, and says she definitely plans to attend next year's Oyster Roast — this time as a guest and not an organizer.

"This place feels like home to me, this office. And I've really enjoyed almost everyone I've worked with here," she laughed. "I will miss all of y'all. I'll miss all the Sound Rivers people. But I will not miss the stairs."



## Honoring their gifts, remembering their legacy

*"A great soul serves everyone all the time. A great soul never dies. It brings us together again and again."*

— Maya Angelou

The Sound Rivers family was saddened by the loss of two of our members this year: Susan Ryan, of New Bern, and Leigh Pate, of Seattle, Washington. They both chose to leave lasting legacy gifts to Sound Rivers that will benefit our mission for clean water for years to come.

I never knew Susan personally, but I learned she devoted her life to counseling our youth in area schools. She and her husband felt called to the mission of Sound Rivers and the work we all do together to build a cleaner, more sustainable future. For those of you in New Bern and beyond who knew

Susan, please accept our deepest sympathies.

Leigh Pate grew up in Kinston, and in our phone conversations, she told me about her youth and days on the Pamlico River. Her family had a cabin on the river and spent many a summer night there. She recalled the joy the river gave to her father, Gene Pate, when she established Sound Rivers' Water Quality Fund in his memory in 2020. While I never had the opportunity to meet Leigh in person before her passing, I enjoyed our conversations and learned a lot about her struggle with cancer and

how she used her own experience to help others when she founded the Lobular Breast Cancer Alliance. Leigh has left a lasting legacy with her gift; a gift that will support the work of your Riverkeepers — funds for water monitoring, patrols in the air and on the water and for investigating pollution sources.

Rest in peace, Susan and Leigh.

*Written by Sound Rivers Executive Director Heather Deck. If you are interested in learning more about a legacy gift for Sound Rivers, please contact Heather at [info@soundrivers.org](mailto:info@soundrivers.org).*



Continued from page 1

ATVs at an ATV park and CAFOs (concentrated animal feeding operations) polluting the air with noxious odors, the same CAFOs known to flood during hurricanes, spilling hog waste into the Neuse. The less obvious have been just as, if not more, impactful. Just beyond the banks of the Neuse in Goldsboro, Duke Energy's H.F. Lee plant coal ash ponds spilled into the river during Hurricane Florence, dumping toxic metals into the water. At Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, the Riverkeepers took water samples to assess the amount of PFAS, or "forever chemicals," contained in firefight-



*"The Cliffs of the Neuse feels like something holy as you paddle by it, and it immediately makes sense why it was such an important place for the native communities who first lived here."*

— Samantha Krop,  
Neuse Riverkeeper



ing foam used in base trainings, in the river. In 2017, the EPA found more than 300,000 parts per trillion of PFAS in the drinking water of Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, well above the permissible limit of 70 parts per trillion.

In between the obvious and the hidden threats are the lasting impacts from flooding — an climate change — on communities such as Seven Springs and Kinston.

"We heard about how the already small population of Seven Springs was cut in half by the flooding that happened with Hurricane Matthew in 2016, and how the town is still struggling to recover from that disaster," Sam said.

Despite the many issues the river faces, the Riverkeepers were amazed every day with the beauty they



encountered, from the desolate miles of the Let'lones, an undeveloped expanse of the Neuse that earned its name in the days of bootleggers, Prohibition and stills hidden in the swampy woods, to brilliant sunrises and sunsets over a glassy river and the rare geological formation in the 90-foot cliffs at Cliffs of the Neuse State Park.

"The Cliffs of the Neuse feels like something holy as you paddle by it, and it immediately makes sense why it was such an important place for the native communities who first lived here," Sam said. "The native Tuscarora and Saponi tribes used the land above the cliffs as traditional hunting grounds and ceremonial grounds."

The adventure came to end on Oct. 8, at the Glenburnie boat ramp near New Bern—a trip cut slightly short due to wind and waves. While the Neuse River Rising paddle

came to end, the Riverkeepers came away from the water with a renewed passion for the river.

"Wrapping up the journey felt like a dream. Exhaustion hit us almost immediately upon pulling up to the dock, and the boat- and gear-wrangling into our trucks took the rest of our energy out of us," Sam said. "Walking away from this adventure of a lifetime, each of us are in awe of the impeccable beauty of the Neuse River and inspired by the many, many opportunities for exploration that it offers. We are also inspired to take action to protect it, and have a not-so-short list of the many next steps we plan to take to address pollution and advocate for the river and all who rely on it."

Read about the three Riverkeepers' entire adventure at [www.soundrivers.org/neuse-river-rising](http://www.soundrivers.org/neuse-river-rising).

(Clockwise from left) Neuse Riverkeeper Samantha Krop, with Charlie asleep on the bow, follows Rogue Riverkeeper Emily Bowes down the Neuse; Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Jill Howell and veteran kayaker Miller take a break from the paddling; a sandbar in the Let'lones was stopping point for one night of the 11-day trip; Emily studies the major erosion along the Neuse at just downstream of Goldsboro; Sam stops to take a PFAS sample at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base.



### A Tar-Pamlico Reflection

Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Jill Howell is no stranger to epic kayaking adventures: the Neuse River Rising paddle was her third in three years. In 2020, she and Sound Rivers' Program Director Clay Barber tackled the Tar from Oxford to Washington in 10 days; in 2021, they returned to the Tar-Pamlico to continue the trip from Washington to Swan Quarter.

But before the Neuse River Rising paddle, she'd never really kayaked the Neuse. What she found was great similarity, from the geography to the issues that plague both rivers.

"I feel like they look and transition the same way. The middle Tar and the middle Neuse are pretty undeveloped and have forested banks with lots of wildlife — deer, osprey, beaver, eagles. The water of both has that same brownish look, it's tannin-y. And in the lower Neuse, as with the Tar-Pamlico at Washington, the rivers open up. I feel like, ecologically, they transition much in the same ways," Jill said.

The issues are largely the same: erosion and sedimentation in the more urban areas; industry impacting the rivers, such as wastewater treatment plants and CAFOs (concentrated animal feeding operations) in the more rural parts; and accessibility, though better on the Tar, leaves a lot to be desired.

However, it was the people they encountered along the way that solidified the two rivers' similarities: "Much like I found on the paddles on the Tar and the Pamlico, there are people on this river that really care about the river and the water and are incredibly helpful and generous. I think that's the same wherever you go on both rivers," Jill said.

# 2022 HIGHLIGHTS

2022 was studded with major accomplishments for Sound Rivers' staff. Here a few highlights from this monumental year.

## SWIM GUIDE

Sound Rivers had a record-breaking Swim Guide season, as the program expanded yet again to 52 sites. In the fall of 2022, Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Jill Howell grew the program in a different capacity: from October to May, we'll be testing water at 13 popular recreational sites on a monthly basis, before the full program resumes Memorial Day weekend 2023.

## PORT TERMINAL KAYAK LAUNCH



Many years in the making, Sound Rivers Program Director Clay Barber wrapped up the final kayak launch project in March. Funded by a state Recreational Trails Program grant, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission and North Carolina Division of Water Resources, Sound Rivers partnered with the City of Greenville for launch on the Tar River at Port Terminal in Greenville. Two other launches, in partnership with the City of Washington, were completed in 2021 at Havens Gardens and Mason's Landing.

## TRASH TROUTS



A crucial component of a state-wide, microplastics monitoring study, Sound Rivers installed passive litter traps – Trash Trouts – on three waterways: on Jack's Creek in Washington, Duffyfield Canal in New Bern and Little Rock Creek, a tributary of Walnut Creek, in Raleigh. Volunteers and staff continue to monitor, audit and clean out the Trash Trouts.

## A NEW NEUSE RIVERKEEPER

*In early April, Sound Rivers welcomed Samantha Krop into the water-quality fold as our Neuse Riverkeeper. Sam dove right into issues surrounding CAFOs (concentrated animal feeding operations), sedimentation and erosion caused by rampant development on the upper Neuse and exploring the river she's advocating for. Sam has proven an invaluable resource for community groups seeking to stop irresponsible land use.*

## RIVER CLEANUPS

Sound Rivers staff assisted with many small river cleanups across both watersheds this year, ridding the waterways of tons of trash. Two standout events were the Marshall Floyd Cleanup on the Tar River in Oxford, held in honor of a longtime Sound Rivers' member and volunteer, and Splash for Trash on the Tar River in Greenville, an annual event held by the Greenville Rotary Club. Proceeds from the event (\$4,000) were donated to Sound Rivers by the Rotary Club.

## UNCOVERING THE LEGACY BIOGAS SPILL

Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Jill Howell and Neuse Riverkeeper Samantha Krop exposed a spill at biogas facility in Wayne County, leading to an article on the front page of the News & Observer. Millions of gallons of toxic foam spilled from beneath the cover of a lagoon holding decomposing hogs, hog waste, slurry from slaughterhouses and expired Smithfield meats, into the waters of Nahunta Swamp, a tributary of Contentnea Creek. The Riverkeepers continue to pursue the state's lack of transparency, continuing the months-long wait for documents requested through the Freedom of Information Act and exploring future steps.

## NEUSE NAMED RIVER OF THE YEAR



American Rivers named the Neuse River its River of the Year for 2022, an honor that give Sound Rivers' staff the opportunity to highlight the great work that has been done since the Clean Water Act was passed in 1972, as well as highlight the way the CWA has not lived up to its intended purpose and the issues still facing both the Neuse and the Tar-Pamlico rivers.

## SIMPSON STORMWATER

Sound Rivers also received a grant from the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality to do water-quality monitoring and map the stormwater infrastructure of the village of Simpson, on the Tar River. The research will allow Sound Rivers to suggest and help implement future stormwater projects.

## PROJECT FUNDING

*Stormwater solutions cost money, and the Bosch Community Fund, Harold H. Bate Foundation and Craven Community Foundation came through to the tune of \$35,000 to fund Sound Rivers' Program Director Clay Barber's latest stormwater management projects: a rainwater harvester at West Craven High School and a rain garden at West Craven Middle School.*

## WATERSHED RESTORATION

With the City of Washington, Sound Rivers is creating a watershed restoration plan for Runyon Creek. Funded by a \$44,000 grant from the North Carolina Land and Water Fund, the indepth study will determine ways to resolve current and future stormwater issues and recommendations for top-priority projects for the area. The 9-Element Watershed Restoration Plan will open the door to funding projects critical to decreasing pollution and flooding.

## DURHAM SEDIMENT CONTROL WIN



Neuse Riverkeeper Samantha Krop's focus on sediment control issues in Durham paid off when the Durham City Council declined to move ahead with a proposal for 280-acre development on land on the Natural Heritage Registry and home to an old hardwood forest and unique plants. More than a dozen developments under construction in the area are impacting erosion and sedimentation of Lick Creek; Sam has teamed up with the Southern Environmental Law Center to study how development is impacting species on and around the waterways in the upper Neuse, including Lick Creek.

# GOALS 2023

*In 2023, Sound Rivers will be working to:*

- ▶ Expand our program to remove trash from waterways by installing additional Trash Trouts in urban areas;
- ▶ Advocate for sensible, nature-based solutions to Tar and Neuse river flooding, work with N.C. leaders to ensure that state and federal funds are spent equitably, and support those most impacted by flooding;
- ▶ Push for strong N.C. wetland and stream protection rules – no matter what future federal administrations or the Supreme Court might do, Sound Rivers will be campaigning for strong state protections for our remaining vital wetlands;
- ▶ Continue water quality monitoring through our successful Swim Guide and beyond, testing for bacteria, sediment, nutrient and chemical pollution;
- ▶ Prevent pollution from stormwater runoff from getting into your waterways with our Campus Stormwater Program, partnering with schools throughout eastern North Carolina to provide solutions for stormwater while giving students outdoor educational opportunities;
- ▶ Assist local communities in demanding greater transparency on local zoning and serve as a valuable and accessible resource for local communities concerned about pollution and your waterways.

# RIVERKEEPER REPORTS

## Swim Guide expansion means year-round results



Neuse Riverkeeper Samantha Krop (left) and 2022 water-quality intern Maia Schweikert taking PFAS samples on the Neuse River in Clayton in July.

**P**amlico-Tar Riverkeeper Jill Howell has taken over the reins in Swim Guide's off season, paring down the popular program to monthly testing of 13 recreational sites throughout the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico watersheds.

"We know that recreation in our waterways is not limited to the summer months, so we wanted to provide water-quality information all year round," Jill said. "We picked some sites to provide coverage, some spots that have had issues over the past Swim Guide season, and spots where we know people are still recreating — but they're all public-access spots."

Sites are monitored for *E. coli* bacteria in freshwater and enterococci bacteria in brackish or salt water and get a pass or fail result.

Samples are being tested from public-access points at Falls Lake and Buffalo Road in Raleigh, the Riverwalk in Clayton, the bridge at N.C. Highway 11 in Kinston, Lawson Creek and Glenburnie parks in New Bern, off Midyette Street in Oriental, Port Terminal, Town Common, and Wildwood Park in Greenville, Havens Gardens in Washington, Dinah's Landing at Goose Creek State Park and Cotton Patch Landing on Blounts Creek. Results can be found at [soundrivers.org/swimguide](http://soundrivers.org/swimguide).

## PFAS found in Neuse, Tar-Pamlico

**P**amlico-Tar Riverkeeper Jill Howell and Neuse Riverkeeper Samantha Krop are joining in the effort to debunk an environmental myth: PFAS aren't just in some of the places; they're in all the places.

PFAS, widely used by industry since the 1940s, are known as "forever chemicals" because they are made to not break down for thousands of years, and have been linked to serious health conditions, including cancer. While NCDEQ discovered the presence of Gen X—a group of PFAS used for industrial processes by the Chemours facility in Fayetteville—in the Haw and Cape Fear Rivers in 2017, until now, little has been done to find out if PFAS exist elsewhere in our waterways.

"How the PFAS issue is seen statewide, is that it's not a statewide problem. But what we expect is that it's everywhere," Jill said.

The two Riverkeepers have taken part in two studies: a national study initiated by Waterkeeper Alliance

and Cyclopure, a PFAS-testing company. For that study, waterkeepers in 34 states were each given two sample kits, to sample water both upstream and downstream of sites fitting the PFAS-producing profile. The results are disturbing: of 114 waterways sampled nationwide, only 19 did not have the presence of at least one PFAS; waterways in 29 of the 34 participating states contained PFAS.

This included sites on the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico. On the Neuse, Sam took samples near Clayton, upstream and downstream of a sludge field, where biosolids from wastewater treatment plants are spread onto fields. Jill sampled the Tar River, first at Falkland, then Greenville — lying in between are a wastewater treatment facility and an airport.

"Regulations around this are either nonexistent or bad," Jill said. "The levels that we saw — we're still assessing what they mean. The range was from 5 to 60, where Chemours is in the hundreds of thousands. But

we're collecting the samples from surface waters, and our surface waters are sources of drinking water. A huge concern is that treatment facilities have no way to remove PFAS."

A second study, this one initiated by Waterkeepers Carolina, is ongoing. Among the places Jill has sampled, include the Tar River around two sludge fields in Tarboro

and the Pamlico River at phosphate mining company Nutrien in Aurora. Sam used the opportunity provided by the Neuse River Rising paddle to take water samples on the Neuse River at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base in Goldsboro and International Paper in Vanceboro.

Despite the serious health risks, there are no universal, sciencebased

limits on the various PFAS chemicals in the United States. For many PFAS chemicals, the EPA has not set a health advisory limit that would give the public a baseline to determine what amount of PFAS is unhealthy in drinking water.

"There is no data out there, so we're just trying to gather some initial data," Jill said.



(Above left) Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Jill Howell describes next steps as Preston Ross III, from The Great Raleigh Cleanup, and Joyce Gaffney, with Raleigh's Stormwater Unit, look on. (Above right) Raleigh Parks & Rec's Greg Morris and Neuse Riverkeeper Samantha Krop secure the Trash Trout to a tree on the bank of Little Rock Creek.

## Walnut Creek watershed gets a Trash Trout

**I**n mid-November, Neuse Riverkeeper Samantha Krop and Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Jill Howell were on site at Little Rock Creek, a tributary of Walnut Creek in Raleigh, to install a third Sound Rivers Trash Trout to collect trash from the creek.

Trash Trouts prevent trash from flowing downstream and will be used to gather data for "Improving Human and Ecosystem Health through Microplastic Reduction," a statewide, ongoing research study into how plastic pollution affects the waterways.

Raleigh's Stormwater Unit, Walnut Creek Wetland Center staff and Sound Rivers worked together to

identify the best location to install the Trash Trout. The device is built to withstand flash rain events, allowing water to flow through the trap unimpeded, at the same time capturing larger pieces of trash floating downstream.

Once trash is captured, it will be manually removed and "audited," or sorted. The Great Raleigh Cleanup, an organization dedicated to removing litter from the landscape, and the Neighborhood Ecology Corps, an environmental club of middle-school children based out of the Walnut Creek Wetland Center, will be in charge of monitoring and auditing the Trash Trout.

"In addition to being about infor-

mation or research-gathering, it's also about education and getting community members involved in their watershed. Walnut Creek is a really special part of Raleigh, and it has a more recent history of community engagement. It used to be a dumping ground, but now it's a really beautiful area because of that community engagement," Sam said. "It has a lot of local, neighborhood buy-in, which makes it an ideal location for a Trash Trout."

Sound Rivers currently has two other Trash Trouts installed on Duffyfield Canal in New Bern and on Jack's Creek in Washington.

For more information about the Trash Trouts, visit [soundrivers.org](http://soundrivers.org).

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