

Meet Sound Rivers' summer-of-2025 Swim Guide interns on page 2.



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CURRENTS

Sound Rivers' Quarterly Newsletter | Volume 11, No. 2 | Summer 2025

The wonder of our waters

As sunlight filtered through tree branches on a recent Saturday afternoon, a surprisingly diverse chorus of birdsong provided a counterpoint to the dipping of kayak paddles in Cherry Run. Cypress knees dotted the shores of the creek, and, although there was little to no breeze, there were no insects to speak of and temperatures were pleasant as my family and I en-

contracts for Americorps, attacks on clean water laws (again); every day's news cycle is almost too much to bear.

But when the insanity of the wider world closes in, I hold on to those moments of beauty, those opportunities to recharge and recommit to our mission. And just as the beauty of our waters sus-

"In these troubled times, it is more important than ever to take a moment to rejuvenate in the natural beauty around us, and then connect with fellow members and volunteers."

tains me, so too does the commitment of our staff, the goodwill of our community partners and the support from our members.

Our staff continue their day-to-day work, even more focused on the mission of a clean-water future for all. They have upped their partnership game with local governments, university scientists, businesses and volunteer organi-

zations to identify pollution sources and find solutions. They have more ways for you and your fellow volunteers to be involved than ever before with Swim Guide, Adopt a Trash Trap, and our newest program, Water Watch. Our communications continue to evolve so that you can keep up to date with river happenings.

In these troubled times, it is more important than ever to take a moment to rejuvenate in the natural beauty around us, and then connect with fellow members and volunteers. The wonder of our waters and the good will of our friends are a balm that soothes the soul when so much seems to be spinning out of control.

Sincerely,

Executive Director, Sound Rivers



joyed a moment of beauty and serenity.

Fast forward to this week, and the drumbeat of chaos made that recent moment seem a world away. War, assassination, federal funding freezes, discontinued grant opportunities, canceled

MEET OUR 2025 SWIM GUIDE INTERNS



Jonah Dickerson

Sophomore, East Carolina University

Major: Geographic Information sciences and technology
Hometown: Gatesville, NC
Dream job: Undecided, but he knows he wants to stay connected to North Carolina and the people here.

"I'm hoping to learn more about North Carolina's watersheds and the challenges they face. Coming from a small rural town like Gatesville, I wanted to see more of my home state and get a better understanding of how our rivers and communities are connected. This internship is helping me see parts of the state I've never experienced and understand the environmental issues different communities face. It's opening my eyes to ways I might be able to give back to North Carolina in the future."



Samantha Lewis

Senior, N.C. State University

Major: Environmental Technology and Management, with minors in toxicology and biology
Hometown: Beaufort, NC
Dream job: "To work as an environmental toxicologist at an environmental consulting firm where she can aid clients in assessing and remediating their environmental impacts."

"This internship is providing me with hands-on water quality monitoring and contaminant tracing, supporting my career goal of working in environmental toxicology. The opportunity to learn how to quantify, source, and track E. coli is granting me with necessary skills that will aid me in reducing ecological risks and protecting public health."

"Additionally, I am excited to work with surrounding communities that are passionate about protecting their waterways. Community involvement is a key component of environmental stewardship."

Avalon Rosenberger

Senior, UNC - Chapel Hill

Major: double major in English and Comparative Literature and Environmental Science, with a minor in Marine Science
Hometown: Havertown, Pennsylvania!
Dream job: To become principal investigator of my own lab so I can explore questions about the natural world that intrigue me the most.

"I am hoping to use this internship to learn more about environmental nonprofit operations and river keeping. I also want to walk away from this summer with a more developed understanding of how to engage and include community members in environmental stewardship."

"I see my Sound Rivers internship as an incredible opportunity to gain first hand experience managing citizen science programs, fighting for environmental justice, and promoting stewardship of North Carolina's freshwater resources. This internship has already confirmed my interest in environmental nonprofit work, which I intend to pursue upon graduating in December."

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\$94,836**



Thank you –
your generous
donations ensure we
continue the fight to
keep your waterways

**fishable
drinkable
swimmable
FOR ALL!**

APRIL MATCH the most successful to date!

We set a goal to raise \$35,000 for our April Match campaign this year, and you blew that goal right out of the water!

You surpassed Sound Rivers' expectations easily and, as a result, we were able to leverage some of those funds – along with a separate match from the Smith Family Foundation and several donations from Sound Rivers' supporters – to purchase a brand new 2025 Ken-Craft Bay Rider Skiff 2060.



"While our previous boats served Sound Rivers well, they'd become pretty unreliable, and we really need a reliable vessel when our Riverkeepers are out on the river, investigating water-quality issues like algal blooms, fish kills, illegal dumping and more," said Sound Rivers Executive Director Heather Deck.

Riverkeeper organizations like Sound Rivers are required to have a vessel for the river they monitor and protect. Since Sound Rivers covers both the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico, two boats are needed. A 13-foot Triumph, *Water Dog*, resides in the upper part of the watersheds, and the new Bay Rider will be put to use on the lower Neuse and Tar-Pamlico.

"We also are very grateful for Park Boat Company and Bay Rider, both of which worked with us to achieve our goal of a new boat," Heather said.

Thank you to everyone who made the dream of new, reliable boat a reality!

(Left) Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Katey Zimmerman at the helm of Sound Rivers' new Bay Rider boat that will spend equal time on the lower Neuse and Tar-Pamlico rivers.

Thank you, 2025 SWIM GUIDE sponsors!



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LISTEN IN RIVERKEEPING TALES FROM THE NEUSE & TAR-PAMLICO



NEW EPISODE!

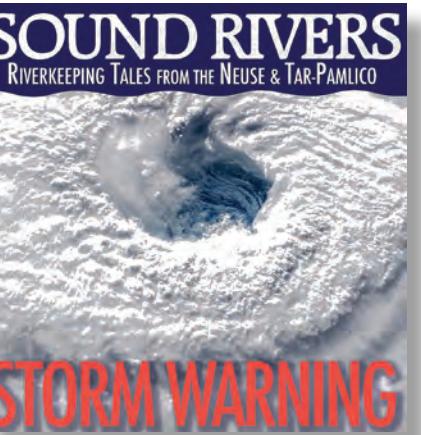
Fran. Floyd. Irene. Matthew. Florence. Helene.

If the list of names strikes a chord, then you know North Carolina's recent hurricane history. North Carolina's hurricane history is established ... and long. But in the past few decades, the cycle of hurricanes has changed and shows no sign of letting up.

The cycle is changing because our climate is changing.

"Storm Warning" features Dr. Hans Paerl, Kenan Professor of Marine and Environmental Sciences at the University of North Carolina

-Chapel Hill's Institute of Marine Sciences. In this episode, Dr. Paerl takes us from the big picture of climate change and global warming to its effects on the coming storms and the impacts to water quality.

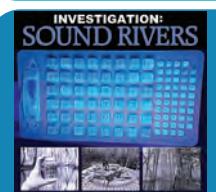


STORM WARNING



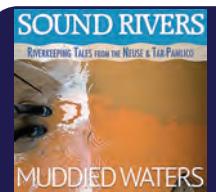
EPISODE 5: What About Wetlands?

"What About Wetlands" takes a walk through wetlands: where they are, what determines a wetland, the important role they play in ecosystems and the imminent threats they face. Featuring Neuse Riverkeeper Samantha Krop and wetlands expert David Lekson, "What About Wetlands" takes listeners on a journey through the type of wetlands found in the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico watersheds and why they are vital to water quality – and everything that relies on clean water and flood mitigation.



EPISODE 4: Investigation: Sound Rivers

In "Investigation: Sound Rivers," Water Quality Specialist Taylor Register takes you on a behind-the-scenes look at pollution investigations. Hunting down the source, breaking out DNA kits, forging unexpected partnerships and venturing into uncharted territory, Taylor takes a deep dive into what it takes to solve these waterborne whodunits and get the problem fixed. Featuring two recent cases – one open-and-shut, the other ongoing – "Investigation: Sound Rivers" explains how this Riverkeeping team pins down elusive sources and solves the case.



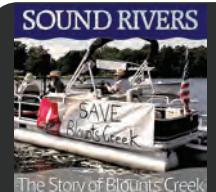
EPISODE 3: Muddied Waters

In this episode, Sound Rivers' Neuse Riverkeeper Samantha Krop takes a deep dive into the No. 1 pollutant in North Carolina waterways: sediment. It's dirt, it's natural, so why is so much of it ending up in, and harming, streams, creeks and rivers? Samantha explains how sediment pollution happens, where it's happening, what it harms, who's responsible and why not much is being done to stop it in "Muddied Waters."



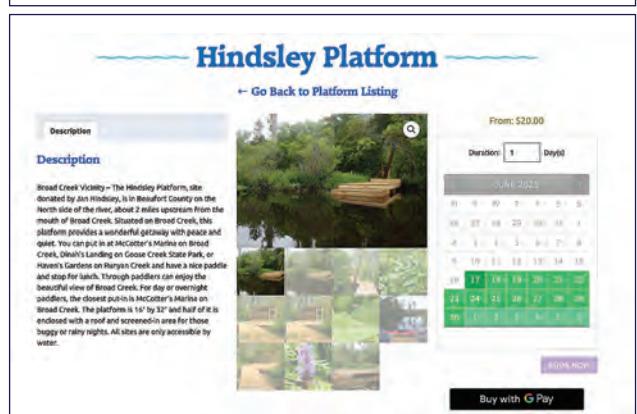
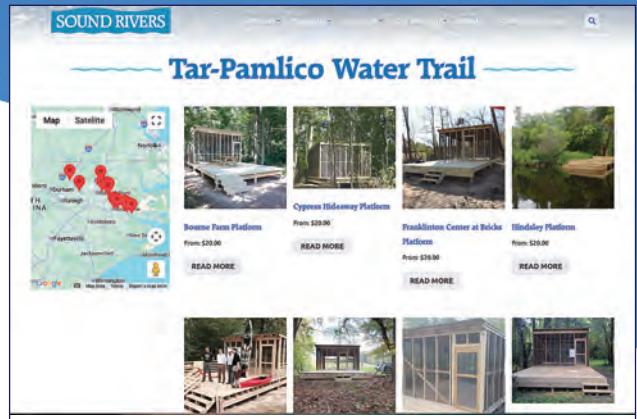
EPISODE 2: To Swim, Drink, Fish

This episode is all about Swim Guide: what it is, how it works, where it started and what it takes to keep it running ALL summer long! Since 2017, Sound Rivers has been a part of Swim Guide, sampling and testing popular recreational sites on the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico and sharing the results with anyone who wants to know where it's safe to swim. But we didn't start this program. And we're not the only ones doing it. Swim Guide is a worldwide phenomena.



EPISODE 1: The Story of Blounts Creek

This is the story of Blounts Creek, a pristine, peaceful tributary of the Pamlico River in Beaufort County, North Carolina, and the decade-long battle to prevent a mining company from destroying it. At risk was an entire ecosystem. In this episode, you'll hear about the grassroots movement founded to protect the creek, its habitats, fisheries and wildlife for future generations and the legal battle that would start on the banks of the creek and end in the highest court in North Carolina.



Water Trail Camping Platform rentals now on soundrivers.org

Camping platform rentals on the Tar-Pamlico Water Trail are now available on the Sound Rivers website.

"For a while, we've had issues with reservations on the original Tar-Pamlico Water Trail website, so we decided to upgrade by making the ability to view the platforms, reserve and pay for them more accessible," said Clay Barber, Sound Rivers' program director.

The camping platforms are strategically located along Tar-Pamlico Water Trail, accessible only by water and provide overnight shelter for those paddling the trail. The platforms are basic, featuring a deck, a roofed, screened-in area and a truly immersive experience in nature.

Platform rentals are \$20 a night, and the new rental site provides a map showing their locations, descriptions and photos of each platform.

VISIT THE NEW RENTAL SITE >



NEW FOR SUMMER 2025!

Sound Rivers has a new T-shirt out for summer of 2025: "Two Rivers."

The "Two Rivers" T-shirt illustrates the sheer breadth of the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico watersheds – an educational piece in a flowing, wavelike design.

"I see this design as way to inform the general public about what Sound Rivers does, but in a really fun, colorful way," said Vail Rumley, Sound Rivers' communication director.

The new T-shirt can be found at Sound Rivers' online store: sound-rivers.printify.me or by using a smartphone to access the site with the QR code.

In addition to the new "Two Rivers" T-shirt, the Sound Rivers store offers designs with the very recognizable heron, fish and oyster logo long associated with Sound Rivers and a newer, vintage-inspired design.

The catalog also includes a Sound Rivers-branded long-sleeved 40+ UV protection sun shirt, car/refrigerator magnets, a copper-insulated bottle, pint glass, tote bag and a bandana collar for pets.

"Ultimately, the online store is an ongoing fundraiser, one where anyone get something they like, with the design they like, in return for a donation, and feel good about shopping because it's for a really good cause," said Executive Director Heather Deck.

All proceeds from store sales are used to support Sound Rivers' work to monitor and protect the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico watersheds.



Buy now!



ON THE RIVER

Sound Rivers shares favorite spots on the Neuse & Tar-Pam

Anyone who loves the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico likely has a specific place that has special meaning to them. That place may be peaceful; it may be calm. It may be rich in wildlife or filled with adventure. It could transport you back in time, back to simpler days. Sound Rivers' staff is no exception – each staff member has a favorite place on the water they return to time and time again. Here are a few of their favorites and why.

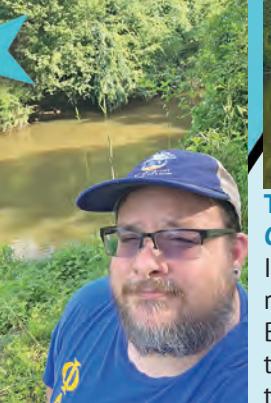


JAY POTTER, development director

Crabtree Creek Trail, Raleigh

I enjoy walking, either alone or with my pup, along the beautiful Crabtree Creek Greenway Trail because, for a moment, it allows me to forget that there are busy streets and buildings just yards away. It also reminds me how important urban waterways are and why it is important to keep them clean and healthy.

2



TAYLOR REGISTER, water quality specialist

Cow Pen Landing, Neuse River

I grew up catfishing with my family in this part of the river, so naturally it holds a special place in my heart. But if fishing isn't your thing, it's also a great spot to put in a kayak or small boat, there's tons of little tributaries to explore and plenty of wildlife to see!

SAMANTHA LEWIS, intern

Lake Wheeler, Swift Creek/Neuse watershed, Raleigh

Lake Wheeler was one of the first outdoor recreational areas I found when I moved to Raleigh! Prior to college, I wasn't familiar with natural areas there. Visiting the park has been a great way to spend the afternoon and get away from campus!

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SAMANTHA KROP, Neuse Riverkeeper

Brices Creek, New Bern

Brices Creek is a clean little blackwater creek that flows from the Croatan National Forest and into the Trent River in New Bern. Its giant cypress trees, osprey nests, sinewy curbs and peaceful backwater makes it my all time favorite place in the Neuse Basin to motor or paddle.

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CLAY BARBER, program director
Port Terminal, Greenville

I love this beautiful place because of the many years of amazing memories it's given me paddling, fishing, swimming, taking pictures and exploring the awe-inspiring swamps of the Tar River. After college, I began helping others have those experiences as a paddle-sport outfitter, river guide and clean up volunteer, and then constructing the accessible kayak launch was one of my first assignments with Sound Rivers; it just feels like this place and I have grown together over decades, and benefitted each other in the process.

HEATHER DECK, executive director

Cherry Run, Tranters Creek/Tar River watershed, Washington

"Our family loves to be immersed in bottomland hard-wood forests. The cooling shade, abundant chances to see wildlife and the wonder if you can keep going around the next bend, all makes it a fun adventure."

(Pictured is Heather's daughter, Anna.)

SOUND RIVERS NEWS



CLAYTON GETS TRASH TRAP NUMBER 11!

Sound Rivers' Litter-Free Rivers program expanded again, with the installation of a trash trap on Little Creek in Clayton. More than 60 people attended the ribbon-cutting on May 8, after which local Scouts did the honors of installing the trap on lines previously set by Sound Rivers' staff.

Sound Rivers now has 11 trash traps on urban waterways in Washington, New Bern, Raleigh, Greenville, Tarboro, Kinston and Clayton, and volunteers and staff removed nearly a ton of trash from the traps in the first five months of 2025!



(Above) Local scouts donned waders and took on the tasks of carrying the Clayton trash trap into Little Creek and connecting its anchor lines.



(Above) Members of the Wake Audubon Society celebrate a successful trash trap cleanout in June. For more information about adopting a trash trap of your own, email emily@soundrivers.org.



STORMWATER WEEK No. 2 A SUCCESS

Sound Rivers Program Assistant Sierra Stickney Digan returned to West Craven Middle School in early May for a second "Stormwater Week," an opportunity to introduce younger generations to the importance of stormwater control measures and their impact on water quality. In addition to fun projects illustrating how wetlands work to clean water, students assisted with a campus rain garden cleanup and transplanting native grasses from one rain garden to another.

According to Sierra, the interactive activities were a hit!



(Above) Before and after photos show Eagle Scout candidate Brayden Burdette's transformation of the Tim Barkley camping platform with the help of some scouting friends.

TAR-PAM WATER TRAIL PLATFORM GETS A REHAB

With the launch of the new Tar-Pamlico Water Trail camping platform reservation system, Sound Rivers Program Director Clay Barber and Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Kately Zimmerman are launching a simultaneous effort to ensure the platforms are maintained.

They got an unexpected hand with the effort in Eagle Scout candidate Brayden Burdette, a member of Boy Scout Troop 9 in Greenville.

Brayden, who is Clay's nephew, is using the camping platform renovation as his Eagle Scout project, and made it happen in early June. Lining up a major discount on supplies from Lowe's Home Improvement and two days of lunches from Marabella Old World Pizza and Bill's Hot Dogs in Greenville, Brayden invited his fellow scouts and leaders to help him fix up the Tim Barkley Memorial camping platform on Barber Creek, a tributary of the Tar River.

The group replaced all of the platform's screens with a double layer – fine screen to keep out bugs and chicken wire to prevent damage from debris – replaced the screen door, a rotten deck board and built a handrail, in addition to building an 8-foot picnic table that is now bolted to the platform.

UPCOMING EVENTS



WATER WATCH TRAININGS

AUG. 20 in WASHINGTON

AUG. 21 in NEW BERN

Join Neuse Riverkeeper Samantha Krop, Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Kately Zimmerman and Sound Rivers' Water Quality Specialist Taylor Register for this in-person training where you'll learn everything you need to know to be a part of the Sound Rivers Water Watch team.

Get trained in the field to collect scientific observations about water quality, flooding, erosion, habitat and more. With your help, your Riverkeeping team can monitor and protect more stream miles in the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico watersheds, and build a community of volunteers who know their water-quality science! Register to attend at soundrivers.org/water-watch-trainings or

[REGISTER FOR A WATER WATCH TRAINING HERE >](#)



LOOSE ON THE NEUSE SUNDAY, AUG. 3!

JOIN US IN CELEBRATING OUR LOCAL WATERWAY



A RIVER CLEANUP AND OUTDOOR FESTIVAL

[REGISTER FOR LOOSE ON THE NEUSE HERE!](#)



Sound Rivers is proud to team up with Orvis Raleigh and Neuse River Outfitters for this epic river cleanup and afterparty on Aug. 3.

Participants will be shuttled from Anderson Point Park in Raleigh to the Milburnie launch site. Water and beverages will be staged along the paddle.

After the cleanup, stick around and celebrate at the afterparty at Anderson Point! Enjoy music, craft beer, lawn games and a raffle with Loose on the Neuse prizes and swag!

Join Sound Rivers staff and board members, Orvis Raleigh and Neuse River Outfitters for this great cause and a great time!

RIVERKEEPER REPORTS

on the NEUSE

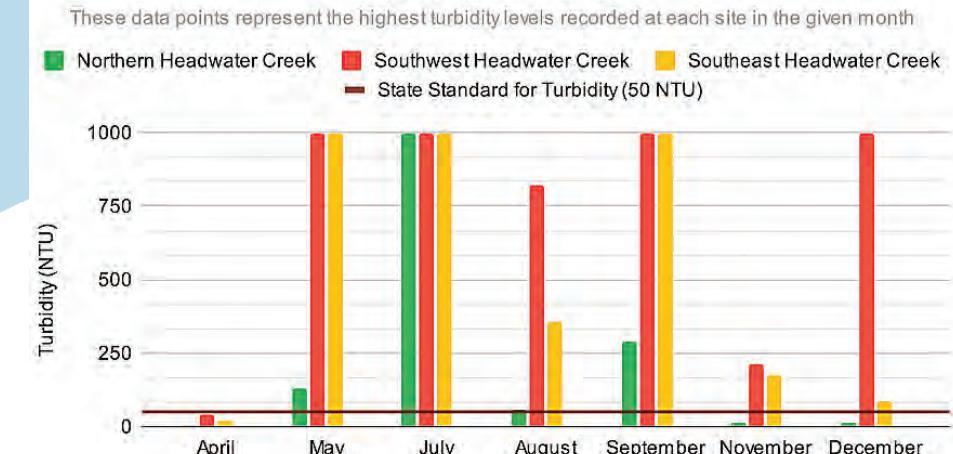
Moriah Energy Center impacts growing

While the fight to prevent Dominion Energy's Moriah Energy Center from being constructed in Person County may be over, new permits show the impacts from the liquified natural gas facility were likely underestimated.

"As expected, it's not just about the facility itself, they're going to tie it into 3-mile transmission line – a Piedmont Electric 230 kilovolt pipeline from Piedmont EMC's Red Mountain substation on Bowen Road to the Moriah Energy Center," said Neuse Riverkeeper Samantha Krop. "They're building the LNG storage tanks, and now community members are finding out about these other impactful aspects of this fossil fuel project. All this stuff comes later, but what we know is they don't have a great history here, and they're continuing to expand the scope of the project. And pipelines can be really destructive."

Of concern were two streams run-

Extreme Turbidity Events Surrounding Moriah Energy Center in 2024



(Above) Water Quality Specialist Taylor Register has kept careful record of Neuse Riverkeeper Samantha Krop's collection of data documenting sediment pollution caused by construction at the Moriah Energy Center, a liquid natural gas storage facility in Person County. This graph shows the highest levels of turbidity from three waterways flowing through the site in comparison to the state standard for turbidity (illustrated by the dark line near the bottom of the graph).

Since 2023, Samantha has worked with community members who opposed the project for many reasons, including potential issues with groundwater supply and how neighbors with wells will be impacted by the facility's significant draws on groundwater; that the facility will be located in a sensitive part of the watershed; sediment pollution caused by its construction that could decimate at least 10 threatened or endangered aquatic species found in nearby Deep Creek and Flat River.

Despite many people speaking out against its potential environmental impacts at a public hearing in December 2023 – the same public hearing in which no person spoke in favor of the facility – Person County commissioners voted unanimously to approve the project.

"From the moment construction began on the facility, sediment pollution was a problem," Samantha said.

ning through the site, both tributaries of Deep Creek, which flows into the Flat River. Deep Creek is home to such threatened and endangered aquatic species as the Neuse River Waterdog, Roanoke Bass, Carolina Ladle Crayfish and several species of mussels.

Samantha spent the next year tracking turbidity and other impacts in those waterways, even taking staff from the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality's Division of Water Resources on a tour of creeks running with muddied water – well over the state standards for turbidity.

"DWR staff acknowledged that Dominion's construction of the Moriah Energy Center was responsible for the pollution, but a loophole in regulatory state law prevents action from being taken in situations like this," Samantha said.

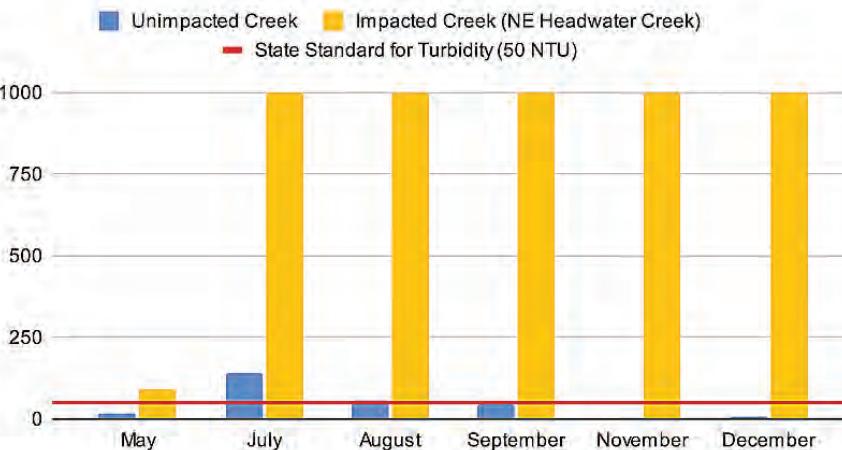
Currently, the community members who organized to oppose the facility from the start are now organizing

against the pipeline and the larger buildout of LNG facilities in Person County.

"They can't all be wins, and this is one of many stories, some of which are wins and some of which are losses, but the fight continues. It's important to hear these stories so people know they're not alone in these fights," Samantha said. "And we're going to continue our advocacy work on all ends with the sediment issues."

(Right) This graph shows the average turbidity of one creek impacted by sediment filled runoff compared to another not receiving runoff from the Moriah Energy Center site.

Unimpacted vs. Impacted by Moriah Energy Center Construction in 2024



(Above) Water Quality Specialist Taylor Register (left) and Sound Rivers intern Avalon Rosenberger kayak on Slocum Creek in search of samples with UNC Institute of Marine Sciences staff.

determination, the Riverkeeping team of Taylor, Neuse Riverkeeper Samantha Krop and Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Katey Zimmerman narrowed down the source to human fecal bacteria likely from failing septic systems at homes on Wolf Pit Branch, a tributary of Slocum Creek.

The team has worked with the Town of Havelock and Craven County and is now working with UNC to resolve the ongoing pollution.

on the TAR-PAMLICO

Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Katey Zimmerman continues to monitor activity at Martin Marietta Materials' Vanceboro quarry.

Aerial surveillance at the end of May showed no evidence mining has started at the 649-acre limestone mine.

In June, Katey spoke with the director of the Division of Water Resources

and his staff about the mine's permit. The most recent permit, which included stronger monitoring provisions that Sound Rivers advocated

for, was rescinded due to a recent US Supreme Court ruling. A weaker permit was then issued. As DWR considers the implications of the court ruling as they rewrite the permit, Sound Rivers

will continue to advocate for strong monitoring and pollution discharge limit provisions.

The mining company has been permitted to discharge up to 12 million gallons of fresh water per day into the creek, putting at risk an entire ecological system known as a nursery for saltwater species.

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SAVE THE DATE - NOV. 15, 2025
FOR THE
SOUND RIVERS OYSTER ROAST

*IMPORTANT OYSTER ROAST INFORMATION!

Tickets go on sale Sept. 18!

We are so very grateful for your ongoing support of our biggest fundraiser of the year. For the past three years, Oyster Roast tickets have sold out within two weeks, so again this year, we are reserving the first week of ticket sales for Sound Rivers' members only. We want to **make sure YOU have first dibs** on this eventful evening, hanging out with other river-lovers, shucking all-you-can-eat oysters under the stars and dancing the night away! **Renew your Sound Rivers membership before tickets go on sale.** Sign up for our weekly eNews to get Oyster Roast reminders and all of Sound Rivers' latest news! Visit soundrivers.org/enews-sign-up today.

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