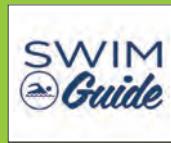


PIEDMONT TO PAMLICO: Staff heads out on an epic Tar River adventure — page 4



SWIM GUIDE:
Report Card
2025
page 2



INTERNAL:
Interns leave
lasting
impression
page 3



ADVOCACY:
The lowdown
on looming
legislation
page 6



LISTEN IN:
new podcast
'INDIGEN-US'
page 9

CURRENTS

Sound Rivers' Quarterly Newsletter | Volume 11, No. 3 | Fall 2025

The fight for clean water continues ... with you

That's a wrap! Another successful season of Swim Guide has concluded, and we say goodbye to three amazing students. I know I can safely speak for the entire staff when I say that there is no doubt that our summer interns — Avalon, Jonah and Samantha — are going to do great things in the future for our environment and communities. I hope you enjoy reading about their experiences

out of their summers, each week, to sample our waterways so the public knows where it's safe to swim. Check out the report card on the results of this year's testing on page 2.

“... we will continue to work together to advocate for sensible laws, policies and strong enforcement programs that will keep our waters fishable, swimmable and drinkable.”

I often think of Swim Guide as one of Sound Rivers' more enjoyable advocacy efforts. It does not require litigation or conflict, and area news media readily report on it. But it is an example of the vital information we provide — an effort that would not be possible without your support. I keep reminding myself that information is power. And I know the legislative and

policy news in this issue of Currents is tough to read for all who care for our environment. But at Sound Rivers, we take our role of sharing important information seriously. Regulatory rollbacks, harmful policies and grant cancellations are casting a shadow on our work to protect the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico rivers. But, we will continue to share this information, and with you (and we need you!) we will continue to work together to advocate for sensible laws, policies and strong enforcement programs that will keep our waters fishable, swimmable and drinkable. It will take time and much effort, but thanks to your support, Sound Rivers will continue to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of these two great waterways and the communities we call home.

Heather Deeks
Executive Director, Sound Rivers



this summer and what's in store for them as they work to complete their degrees. I would also be remiss if I didn't thank the more than 50 volunteers that took time

INTERNSHIP 2025

Another summer's passed by; another Swim Guide season has been wrapped up; and now Sound Rivers has wished a warm farewell to another trio of interns: Jonah Dickerson, Samantha Lewis and Avalon Rosenberger.

According to Sound Rivers staff, this year's interns have left a lasting impression.

"We've always had wonderful interns, but Avalon, Jonah and Samantha were all in this summer," said Volunteer Coordinator Emily Fritz. "From their general enthusiasm, to their helpfulness, to their enthusiastically

engaging in projects outside of Swim Guide, they were phenomenal!"

Every year, Sound Rivers prints an informal intern "exit interview" in the Fall issue of Currents. The questions are to the right, and our interns' answers start on the facing page. In addition to reading about their enthusiasm for their summer's work firsthand, you'll also hear from Sound Rivers' staff about the projects they took part in, from stepping up to provide much-needed assistance with the Riverkeeping team to building lasting systems to help organize and streamline Sound Rivers' programs' data.



SWIM GUIDE 2025 REPORT CARD

*Percentage shown reflects the number of times sites met recreational water-quality standards.

TAR - PAMLICO

89% Clubhouse Beach, Lake Royale
89% Clubhouse Boat Dock, Lake Royale
78% Moccasin Deck, Lake Royale
78% Pavilion Beach, Lake Royale
89% Pavilion Lawn, Lake Royale
88% Crow Landing, Lake Royale
86% Battle Park, Rocky Mount
86% Tar River Reservoir, Rocky Mount
86% Sunset Park, Rocky Mount
93% River Road boat access, Tarboro
92% Town Common, Greenville
100% Wildwood Park, Greenville
80% Port Terminal, Greenville
86% Yankee Hall, Paktolus
65% Downtown waterfront, Washington
100% Mason's Landing, Washington
50% Havens Gardens boat ramp, Washington
93% Chocowinity Bay, Cypress Landing
86% Broad Creek at Pamlico Plantation
100% Blounts Bay
75% Blounts Creek at Cotton Patch Landing
54% Dinah's Landing at Goose Creek State Park

Tar-Pamlico continued ...

92% Bonner Point, Bath
100% Plum Point, Bath
63% Wright's Creek boating access, Belhaven

UPPER NEUSE

100% Beaver Dam Lake day-use area, Falls Lake
100% Rolling View boat ramp, Falls Lake
92% Highway 50 launch/rec area, Falls Lake
100% Upper Barton Creek boat ramp, Falls Lake
100% Falls of the Neuse canoe launch, Falls Lake
73% Buffaloe Road launch, Raleigh
55% Poole Road launch, Raleigh
67% Smithfield Town Commons
56% Clayton River Walk
78% Neuse Golf Club, Clayton

LOWER NEUSE

86% Highway 11 boat ramp, Kinston
69% Maple Cypress boat ramp, Grifton
93% Cowpen Landing, Vanceboro
93% Spring Garden boat ramp, New Bern
69% Glenburnie Park, New Bern
69% Town Park, Bridgeton
92% Black Beard Sailing Club, upper Broad Creek
75% Lawson Creek Park, New Bern
85% River Bend kayak launch
100% Trent Woods
93% Brice's Creek, James City
92% East Street boat ramp, Pollocksville
7% Slocum Creek boat ramp, Havelock
93% Midyette Street boat ramp, Oriental
77% Pierce Creek, Oriental

We want thank the many volunteers whose work ensures the public knows where it's safe to swim all summer long! Swim Guide would not be possible without YOU!

JONAH DICKERSON East Carolina University

► My internship helped me realize that I want to work in the environmental field, protecting the health of our natural resources for the people who depend on them. It also showed me how crucial teamwork is in this work – collaborating with others makes it possible to create real, lasting impact.

► I already knew the people of North Carolina were amazing, but this summer I learned just how dedicated and special they are. Their passion and commitment are the backbone of Sound Rivers, empowering all of its programs and making real change possible.

► I was surprised by how quickly I felt part of the Sound Rivers team and the larger community supporting it. Seeing how much can be accomplished when people come together with a shared purpose

See JONAH, page 11

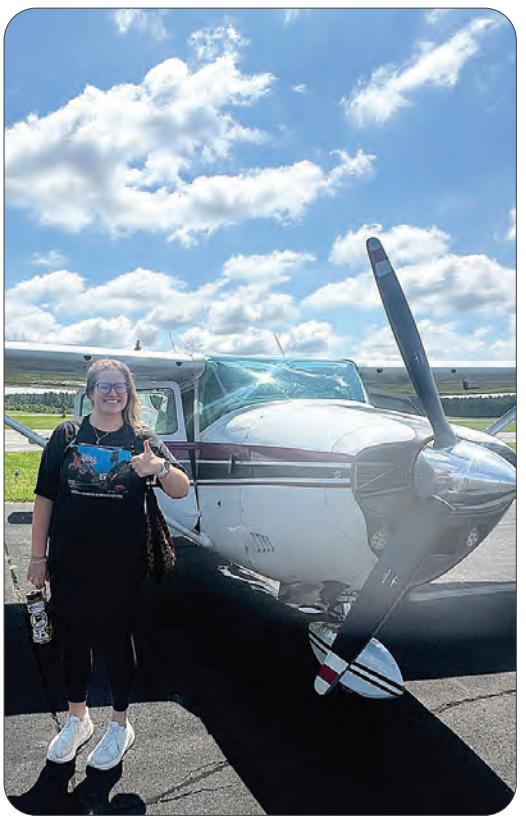


SAMANTHA LEWIS N.C. State University

► My summer at Sound Rivers provided me with insight into the type of work environment I want for my future. The staff at Sound Rivers are extremely supportive and uplifting of each other. I hope to find an organization as positive and kind as Sound Rivers when I begin my career!

► I think the most important thing I learned is the power of environmental education. Environmental education has the ability to empower communities and promote positive environmental behaviors.

► I was surprised to see how collaborative Sound Rivers is with other institutions, organizations and communities. I loved seeing how interconnected the Riverkeeper community is in North Carolina, as well as how Sound Rivers directly works those whom they serve.



Samantha was also a huge help to Neuse Riverkeeper Samantha Krop. Though intern Samantha had a three-day work week with Sound Rivers, she not only held down the Swim Guide fort in Raleigh, but she assisted Riverkeeper Samantha with sampling post-tropical depression Chantal.

"Trying to be everywhere that we have to be in upper watershed, having another person who is trained in the field, who is familiar with our sampling practices and has access to other researchers really made me feel like I had a field team, which is what I desperately need," Riverkeeper Samantha said.

AVALON ROSENBERGER University of North Carolina

► There are so many parts of this internship that brought me joy and fulfillment this summer. The social part of my brain loved connecting with our incredible volunteers and community members who care so much about protecting our waterbodies. That said, I also enjoyed the challenge of creating maps on ArcGIS and feeling proud of my finished product. I've taken a few GIS classes at UNC, but had never created a dynamic dashboard or used Survey123, so experientially learning that software and pushing myself to create a user-friendly map was a really important growth experience for me.

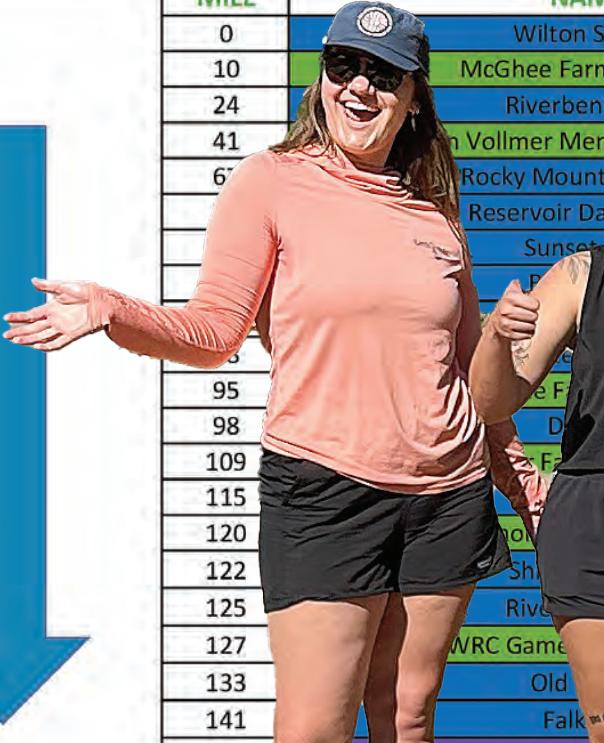
► I am walking away from my summer at Sound Rivers with new community connections, a deeper understanding of the complex issues

See AVALON, page 8



Tar-Pamlico Water Trail Mileage System with Access Points

MILE	NAME	GPS COORDINATES
0	Wilton Slope	36.194969, -78.583672
10	McGhee Farm Road	36.194969, -78.45377
24	Riverbend	36.194969, -79.846733
41	John Vollmer Memorial Farm	36.194969, -78.21809
67	Rocky Mount Reservoir	35.982888, -77.931793
70	Reservoir Dam	35.982888 or 36.03339, -78.68376*
73	Sunset Point	35.982888, -78.68376
83	WRC Game	35.982888, -78.68376
95	Old River	35.982888, -78.68376
98	Falkland	35.982888, -78.68376
109	Shoal Creek	35.982888, -78.68376
115	Shoal Creek	35.982888, -78.68376
120	Shoal Creek	35.982888, -78.68376
122	Shoal Creek	35.982888, -78.68376
125	River	35.982888, -78.68376
127	WRC Game	35.982888, -78.68376
133	Old River	35.982888, -78.68376
141	Falkland	35.982888, -78.68376



OCT. 13-25 | 'PIEDMONT TO PAMLICO' PADDLE

Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Katey Zimmerman, Water Quality Specialist Taylor Register and Volunteer Coordinator Emily Fritz are heading out on a trip of lifetime – a 12-day, 175-mile kayak trip on the Tar River from Oxford to Washington! Follow along on social media and soundrivers.org as the trio navigates the river, camps at Sound Rivers' camping platforms on the Tar-Pamlico Water Trail and experiences everything Tar River, from wildlife to first-hand looks at issues facing the river. soundrivers.org/piedmont-to-pamlico-paddle

[SUPPORT THE PIEDMONT TO PAMLICO PADDLE AT SOUNDRIVERS.ORG >](http://soundrivers.org/piedmont-to-pamlico-paddle)



OCT. 26 | WITCHES PADDLE benefitting Sound Rivers

Sound Rivers is teaming up with Inner Banks Outfitters and Pitt Street Brewing on the Pamlico for the 2nd-annual Witches (& Warlocks!) Paddle!

The public is invited to this costume party on the river – prizes will be awarded “best of” in the following categories: “Witchiest Witch,” “Spookiest Ride” and best “Howl-O-Ween” duo for those bringing their canines along for the ride. Top prize is TWO TICKETS to Sound Rivers’ 38th-annual Oyster Roast!

Participants must bring their own vessels (kayak, canoe or paddleboard – no motorized



vessels). No registration is necessary; this paddle is free and open to the public, but donations are encouraged. All money raised will be donated to support

Sound Rivers’ work to protect the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico! For more information, visit www.soundrivers/events or IBXO’s Facebook event page.

UPCOMING EVENTS

NOV. 1

SOUND RIVERS AUCTION GOES LIVE!

Save the date! Sound Rivers’ annual online auction goes live on Nov. 1, and this year’s items up for bid are better than ever! Whether you’re looking for the perfect gift or to treat yourself, there are plenty of amazing options: art, home goods, gift baskets, adventures and vacation stays ... and more! If you’re unable to join us for the Oyster Roast, the auction is a great way to support your Riverkeepers’ work to keep your waterways fishable, drinkable and swimmable for all! Sign up for our eNews to get auction updates/register to bid at <https://auctria.events/SoundRivers2025Auction>.

[VISIT THE AUCTION PAGE AND REGISTER TO BID HERE >](https://auctria.events/SoundRivers2025Auction)



WATER WATCH TRAININGS



NOV. 5, KINSTON; NOV. 6, GREENVILLE

Join Neuse Riverkeeper Samantha Krop, Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Katey Zimmerman and Sound Rivers’ Water Quality Specialist Taylor Register for an 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! Find out more about Water Watch, and register to attend at soundrivers.org/water-watch-trainings/

[REGISTER FOR A WATER WATCH TRAINING HERE >](http://soundrivers.org/water-watch-trainings/)



OYSTER ROAST FESTIVITIES



NOV. 14

Come on out for this Oyster Roast pre-party at Pitt Street Brewing on the Pamlico! Sound Rivers has been selected as a Pitt Partner, where 15% of all proceeds from sales between 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. will be donated to Sound Rivers. Located on the river directly across West Main Street from the Washington office, it’s an ideal place to grab a brew, watch the sunset and meet your Riverkeepers!

307 W. Main St., Washington



NOV. 15

We’re celebrating Sound Rivers’ biggest FUNdraiser of the year with live music, craft beer, all-you-can-eat steamed oysters, chili and chowder! New this year is a raffle with winner’s choice of an eBike, his and hers cruisers OR an inflatable paddleboard!

[EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE OYSTER ROAST >](http://soundrivers.org/oyster-roast-festivities/)



ADVOCACY UPDATE

Significant and wide-ranging regulatory rollbacks intended to weaken environmental regulations and processes have been enacted at both the state and federal levels. From removing funding from projects and organizations mentioning the words “climate change” and “environmental justice” to expanding opportunities for industry to pollute, the threats to water quality and public health have escalated in 2025.

“The wholesale elimination of already approved grant funding along with wide-ranging regulatory rollbacks have moved at an unprecedented speed. Businesses, local governments, universities and non-profits are finding it more and more difficult to plan and prepare for what’s coming next. I feel like we’ve turned the clock back more than 20 years on so much good work to improve water quality and increase community resilience to climate change, in just a short period of time,” said Sound Rivers Executive Director Heather Deck.

Sound Rivers has been tracking state and federal efforts that could negatively impact our work and the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico. These are some of them.

State | Senate Bill 266

A bill that was passed, vetoed by North Carolina Gov. Josh Stein, then overridden, Senate Bill 266 is a re-write of state energy that exempts Duke Energy from the climate-change goals it agreed to four years ago, allows the company to charge customers for future power plants that aren’t yet built, and changes the formula used to determine power bills.

Sound Rivers began tracking impacts to waterways from the construction of the Moriah Energy Center last year and is currently keeping an eye on impacts of the continued expansion of the fossil fuel industry in Person County, but the concern is that the industry as a whole will contribute to a much larger issue: accelerated global warming and climate change.

Threats: Locks North Carolina and ratepayers into a future of fossil fuels facilities contributing to climate change, which will only exacerbate the challenges facing the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico and the communities that rely on them.

Federal | Executive Order

An Executive Order has changed how federal agencies award, manage and terminate federal grants. A political appointee will now oversee the grant process, with broad authority and explicit instruction to make sure grants are “consistent with agency priorities and the national interest.”

According to Heather, grants that fund research and environmental projects could now be decided by someone who may have no expertise, but the right political affiliation. The order also indicates an appointee can pull funding at any time, which can lead to a chilling effect on universities and institutions and nonprofits speaking out against bad policy decisions.

Threats: Much-needed grant funding filling gaps in community services held hostage by political forces.

State | House Bill 402

Passed, vetoed by North Carolina Gov. Josh Stein, then overridden by the General Assembly, House Bill 402 is North Carolina’s version of the REINS Act, which is named so because it’s meant to rein in government oversight and severely curtail agency boards’ and commissions’ rulemaking abilities by requiring more fiscal analysis of bills: any rule that would cost the state more than \$1 million over five years would require approval by two-thirds of the rulemaking commission/board; a rule costing more than \$10 million to implement over five years would require unanimous approval of the commission/board; and if it cost more than \$20 million, then it has to be voted on and approved by the legislature.

The Environmental Management Commission – the body responsible for adopting rules for the “protection, preservation and enhancement of the state’s air and water resources” – is made up of representatives from conservation organizations, industry, local governments and farming, which is very diverse, but could now severely hamper the commission’s work.

Threat: HB402 will slow down or stop creation and enforcement of environmental regulations.

State | DAVE as DOGE

Passed by the legislature within the mini-budget, a new division in the State Auditor’s Office, DAVE (Division of Accountability, Value, and Efficiency), was created. This is the state equivalent of the federal DOGE. This budget bill set a DAVE deadline of Dec. 31, 2025, to review what the state’s spending money on and decide if any state agencies, divisions and positions should be eliminated. The issue is not streamlining and cutting back on wasteful spending, according to Sound Rivers Executive Director Heather Deck. It’s an unworkable timeline that won’t allow for adequate evaluation and a risk that nonprofits like Sound Rivers could lose state funding.

Threat: Sound Rivers’ Campus Stormwater Program is one program at risk of funding loss; DAVE comes at a time when the grant landscape is already getting tougher.

Continued on Page 8...

Threats: Many.

Advocacy Update continued from page 7.

State & Federal Funding Restrictions

Another issue that could impact Sound Rivers' funding is restrictions enforced by the federal government on certain grant programs. One such program is a community grant program offered by a local university, which awarded Sound Rivers a mini-grant for "Kinston Clean Creeks," a partnership with Lenoir Community College's science department to document pollution impacts to the creek and how those impacts affect the community. Since this grant program receives funding from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, it is now subject to those restrictions according to an emailed response to a grant inquiry: "We are no longer allowed to fund any projects or organizations that explicitly mention environmental justice, climate change, diversity, equity or inclusion."

Federal | City and County of San Francisco v. EPA

The U.S. Supreme Court heard the case in March and ruled in a 5-4 decision in favor of the City and County of San Francisco. The decision significantly limits the EPA's authority and has major implications for how National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits are administered nationwide. The Supreme Court ruled the EPA cannot impose "end-result" requirements in Clean Water Act permits, which hold permittees responsible for the quality of receiving waters; that the CWA only allows for permits to set specific, quantifiable limits on the pollutants a facility discharges, not for broad requirements that make a permittee responsible for the overall water quality of the receiving body.

This shifts the burden of monitoring pollution discharged into waterways from the polluters themselves to underfunded and understaffed state agencies, which are already stretched thin.

Threats: Less regulation, more polluted waterways.

AVALON

continued from page 3

► facing water quality and public health, and a strengthened desire to study socio-ecological relationships.

On a hard skills level, I now know how to create an interactive and dynamic ArcGIS dashboard, I can process IDEXX samples for fecal indicator bacteria (riveting!), and I possess a deeper understanding of how one

environmental nonprofit integrates environmental justice, public health, and citizen science into their mission and daily operations.

► I was really surprised by the community support Sound Rivers boasts. Each time I interacted with the volunteer community, I was blown away by their level of commitment to the organization and their passion for

keeping our rivers clean and safe!

Project: Water Water dashboard

"When Avalon came on with Sound Rivers, we asked what her strengths were and what she was interested in," said Water Quality Specialist Taylor Register. "We didn't realize we had two people who were into GIS, and thought we could definitely use a dashboard for Water Watch."

Taylor and Avalon looked at the North Carolina Department of Envi-

LISTEN IN RIVERKEEPING TALES FROM THE NEUSE & TAR-PAMLICO

New podcast episode celebrates Indigenous Peoples Month

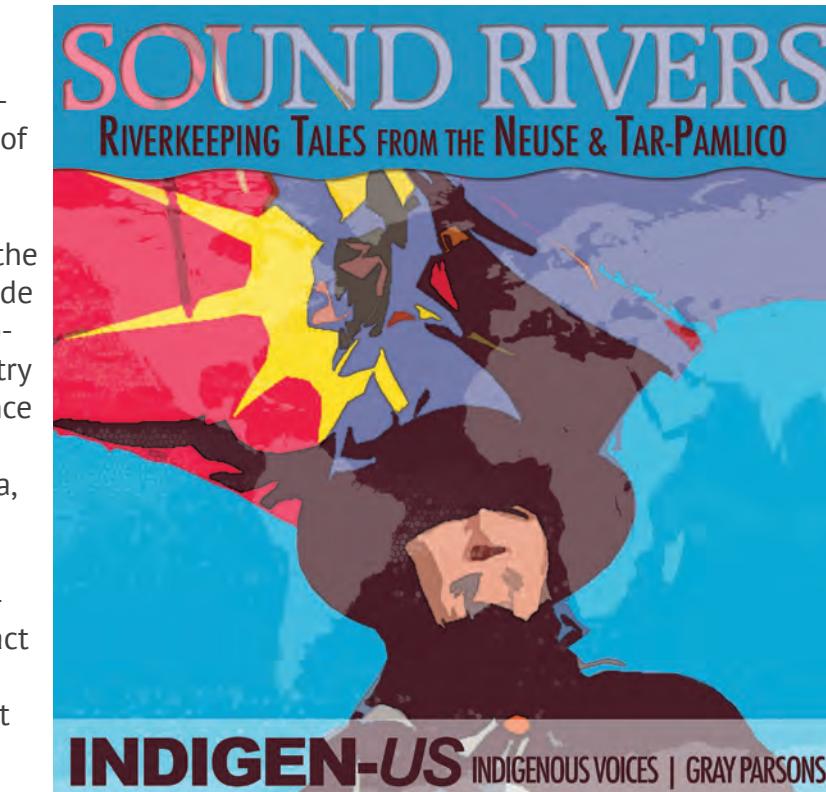
A new episode of "Sound Rivers: Riverkeeping Tales from the Neuse & Tar-Pamlico" is a celebration of Indigenous Peoples Month and stewardship of the natural world.

Sound Rivers' seventh podcast, "Indigen-US," features Gray Parsons, a descendant of the Mattamuskeet and Machapunga people from Hyde County. Parsons is the president/founder of Secotan Alliance, and has dedicated his life and artistry to advocating for living sustainably and in balance with Mother Earth.

Born and raised in Washington, North Carolina, his relationship with the natural world, and the Pamlico River, was established at an early age. A published author, poet, singer and drummer, Parsons' compositions reflect a deep belief in the fact that all humans have indigenous origins: "All of our ancestries include people who at some point in their development understood and practiced a deep reverence for that which sustained their lives."

In "Indigen-US," Parsons shares his story, his artistry and his views on what prevents the collective "US" from reestablishing a "righteous relationship with Mother Earth."

"It was such a pleasure to meet Gray and get to sit there across the table from so much wisdom," said Sound Rivers' Communications Director Vail Stewart Rumley. "While I have certainly enjoyed ev-



ery interview I've done for 'Riverkeeping Tales from the Neuse & Tar-Pamlico,' I felt like I learned the most from Gray. He just exudes a core knowledge that we should all have, yet have somehow lost."

"Indigen-US" will be available on Oct. 9, during Indigenous Peoples Month. The podcast is available on at soundriver.org/sound-rivers-podcast and on Apple Podcasts, Amazon Music and Spotify (search for "riverkeeping").



(Above) A screenshot of the Water Watch ArcGIS dashboard Avalon created this summer.



at <https://sound-rivers.printify.me>

A changing season is upon us, and right on its heels? 'Tis the season to be jolly. This year, greet the holidays with a gift that keeps on giving!

Sound Rivers' online store provides one-stop shopping for the river-lovers in your life.

The added benefit is that all proceeds go to support the Sound Rivers mission: to monitor and protect, advocate for and educate about the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico.

"Every item purchased through our online store is not just a way to show your support for Sound Rivers, but also funds the critical work our Riverkeeping team and program staff do on an everyday basis to protect these vital waterways," said Executive Director Heather Deck.

The Sound Rivers store was launched last fall in

response to supporters asking how they could get their own branded merchandise – and it's been a great resource, according to Communications Director Vail Rumley.

"What I do is create and upload the designs and pick out what items, in what colors, we're going to feature," she said. "Since all merchandise ships straight to buyers from the manufacturer, it allows me and other Sound Rivers staff to focus on what matters: working for clean water and sharing that work with all our supporters."

Recent additions to the store include the long-sleeved and hoodie versions of the popular "Two Rivers" T-shirt that debuted this summer!

Sound Rivers' online store can be found at <https://sound-rivers.printify.me> or by using the QR code above!



TWO RIVERS

Celebrate the Neuse & Tar-Pamlico AND Sound Rivers with this unique design evoking a full moon over the river. Available in a T-shirt, long-sleeved T-shirt and fleece hoodie in multiple colors. **\$25 - \$65**



VINTAGE TOTE

Heading out on the river? Throw your sunscreen, towel and the latest paperback in this roomy tote made from 100% cotton. Measures 15-by-16 inches with canvas straps. **\$24.95**



THE ORIGINAL

A variation on our original logo featuring a heron in the air, a bass in the water and an oyster in the riverbed – the perfect representation of the Neuse & Tar-Pamlico. Available in short-sleeved, long-sleeved and kids T-shirts in multiple colors. **\$19.95 - \$35**



COPPER-INSULATED BOTTLE

Your beverages will stay cool ... or hot in this insulated bottle designed with Sound Rivers' original logo. With double-wall construction, liquids can remain hot up to 12 hours or cold for a full 48 hours. These bottles are condensation-proof and scratch and fade resistant. Available in the colors above. **\$39.95**

JONAH

continued from page 3

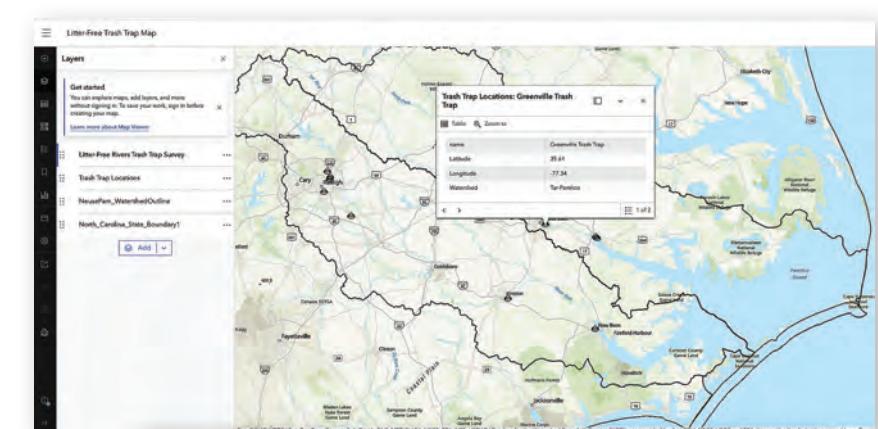
► truly inspired me, and I also discovered just how amazing Bill's Hot Dogs are!

Project: Trash Trap dashboard

With a major in GIS studies, Jonah made the most of his skills by creating an online dashboard for Sound Rivers' fleet of Litter-Free Rivers' trash traps.

"The idea of this map is that our volunteers cleaning out trash traps will be able to use the dashboard to fill out a survey, add pictures, data, such as the amount of trash removed from the trap and the number of volunteers," said Pamlico-Tar Riverkeeper Katey Zimmerman.

"We'll be able to see how many times a given trap has been cleaned out in the past year and the total



(Above) A screenshot of the dashboard Jonah created to track trash trap data.

pounds of litter removed from the trap."

While Sound Rivers currently has a spreadsheet displaying all that data, Jonah's trash trap dashboard will eliminate the need for staff to manually enter the information emailed from volunteers.

It also has another great benefit,

Katey said.

"Just having more public-facing data for people to see is always a good thing, and for all of our volunteers that are cleaning out the trash trap, they can see the totals – they can see how much they're doing for the environment and their waterways," she said.



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