

Sound Rivers Update:

Organizational Overview and Perspective on NC Environmental Laws and Policies: Current Trends and Impact

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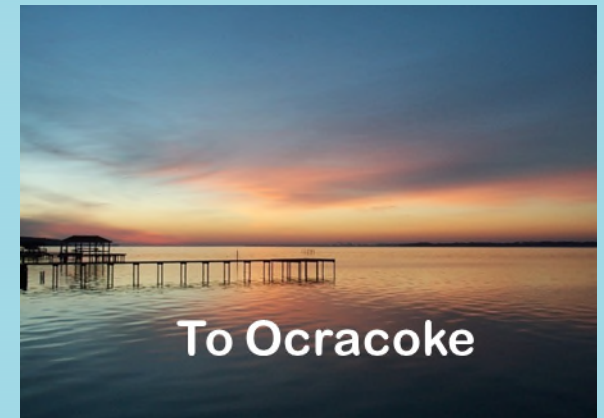


Organizational Overview



- The Neuse & Pamlico-Tar River Foundations merged April 1, 2015 to form Sound Rivers
- Three RIVERKEEPERS® serve as part-time advocates, scientists, educators and community organizers
 - Upper Neuse – Matthew Starr
 - Lower Neuse – Travis Graves
 - Pamlico-Tar – Heather Deck

- RIVERKEEPERS® provide the organizing principle and embody Sound Rivers mission
- Sound Rivers mission is to protect, enhance and restore the Neuse and Tar-Pamlico River basins while promoting environmental justice



Voice for the Rivers for 35+ years

- Seek Enforcement of Clean Water Act
- Protection of high valued aquatic habitat
- Create awareness about Value of Clean Water
- Participate in Nutrient Management Efforts
- Push for Regional Wastewater Solutions



Riverkeeper Program Role

- Part-time investigator, scientist, educator, lobbyist, advocate and public media spokesperson.
- Provides scientific expertise to community
- Notifies agencies that enforce water quality rules
- Monitors the responses to pollution events.
- Cooperates with partners to monitor and restore waterways
- Educates public on how they can help protect water

North Carolina River Basins



River Facts

Neuse River

- 248 miles Falls Lake to Sound
- Longest river in NC
- 3rd Largest basin in NC
- 2,000,000+ residents, 11 counties
- 6,000+ square miles
- 3,400 linear stream miles
- 264,552 Estuarine acres
- Six miles across at the mouth, widest in US

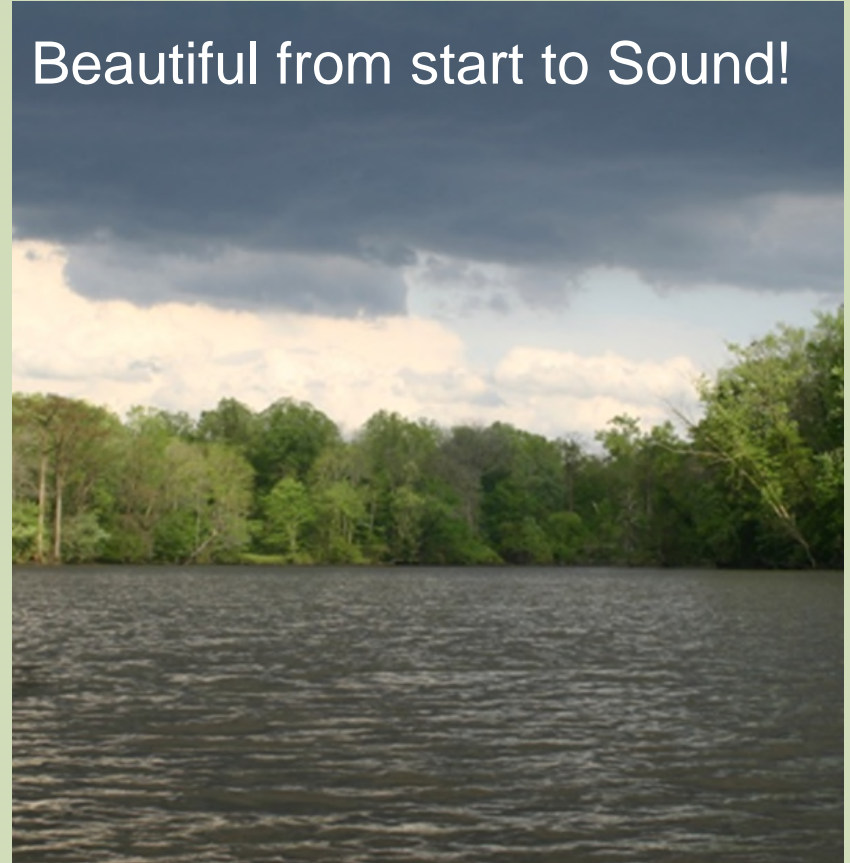
Pamlico-Tar

- 180 miles long
- 17 Miles of Atlantic coast
- 4th Largest basin in NC
- 500,000+ residents, 16 counties
- 5,500+ square miles
- 2,500+ linear stream miles
- 663,000 Estuarine acres
- 3,997 acres freshwater lakes and reservoirs

Combined basins

- 12,000 sq miles
- 6,000 linear miles of streams and rivers
- 920,000 estuarine acres
- 2.5 million people

Beautiful from start to Sound!



What does Sound Rivers do?

Sound Rivers “A PRIME” non-profit

- Advocates
- Protects
- Restores
- Investigates
- Monitors
- Educates

Programs and Examples

Advocates – Sound Rivers Core Purpose

- Argues for science based legislation and regulations
 - Organizes and encourages the public to speak out for conservation and protection
 - Lobbies the legislature and regulators
- (Upper Neuse RIVERKEEPER® is a registered lobbyist)

Programs and Examples

Protects

- Reports identified violations of rules and regulations
- Seeks enforcement of existing rules
- Negotiates with violators to seek correction
- Takes legal action as last resort

Programs and Examples

Restores

- Build raingardens, wetlands and bio-retention cells to reduce storm water runoff effects
- Lead clean-ups

Programs and Examples

Investigates

- Respond to member and public reports and inquiries
- Observe and measure reported problems
- Analyze scientific and regulatory reports

Programs and Examples

Monitor

- Take samples from suspected pollution sources
- Assess on-going trends for water quality


Programs and Examples

Educate and build awareness

- Focus on youth education and awareness
 - School programs
 - Youth kayaking
 - Kids RiverFest
- Increase awareness and engagement with adults
- Expand access and use of rivers
 - Water Trails/Camping platforms
 - Launch sites
- Explain economic value of recreation

Neuse River – Mountain to Sea Trail

1 | Mountains-to-Sea Trail Last Updated 9/4/2015



Preparing to paddle the Neuse from Kinston
Photo by Lucy Marston

The Neuse River – MST Segment 11A-16A

**FALLS OF NEUSE DAM TO PINE CLIFF RECREATION
AREA – NEUSE RIVER PADDLE ROUTE**
By Sound Rivers

The Neuse River runs 227 miles from Falls of Neuse to the Pamlico Sound. This guide provides directions for paddling 216 of those miles as a way to complete the MST from the Falls Lake dam in Wake Forest to



- 16 x 32 Camping Platforms
- 8 currently on Tar-Pam
- Applying for first 2 on Neuse

State of the Rivers

- Declared Nutrient Sensitive Waterways (NSW) in late 1980's
- Nutrients, sediment, bacteria and metals key problems
- Urban areas show increases in bacteria and metals
- Lower rivers continue to see deleterious effects caused by excess nutrients
- Atmospheric deposition of nitrogen key issue
- Signs of water quality decline in the Tar and Upper Neuse continue

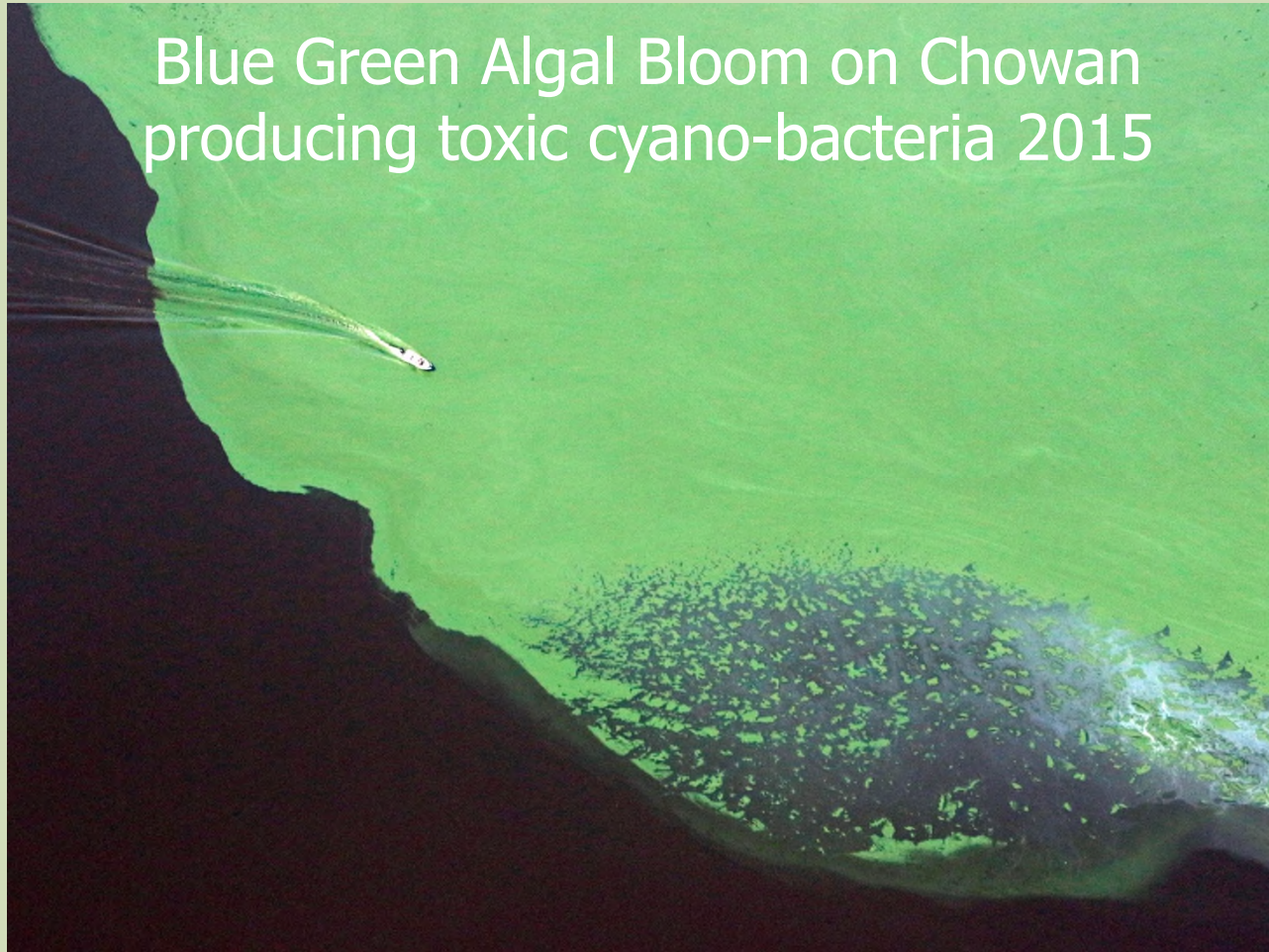
Current Status (N & P)

- Estuarine nutrient impairment continues
- Have not met loading goals
- Rollbacks to NSW strategy and rules
- Increases in Org. N in upper watershed (no trend in Total N)



Algal Blooms

Blue Green Algal Bloom on Chowan
producing toxic cyano-bacteria 2015



Challenges, Issues, Opportunities

- Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs)
- Urban Development
 - Increased point source
 - Stormwater runoff
- Loss of riparian buffers
- De-regulation, loss of regulatory expertise, planning/data
- Water supplies & ecological flows
- Regional wastewater solutions
- Protection of high quality aquatic habitat and recreational resource

North Carolina Legislative and Regulatory Environment

- Environmental Regulatory Staff reduced by more than 50% since 2010
- Regulatory agency mission shifted to customer service for permit seekers, not protect environment
- No rapid response teams on Tar-Pamlico or Neuse basins
- Cape Fear River at Wilmington redesignated as “swamp waters” rather than addressing deteriorating low DO

Overworked: The DEMLR Example

- Substantial staff reduction since 2010
- 25,000 conducted 2010
- 15,000 inspections in 2014
- Each site reached an once every ten months on average
- Average city or county inspector monitors about 37 construction sites
- Average state inspector is responsible for about 870 sites
- In 2012, program staff wrote lawmakers that cuts had created “a tremendous strain on the program’s ability to carry out its responsibilities.”
- More cuts since 2012

NC Sediment & Erosion Control Enforcement

Fiscal Year	Employees	New Projects	Inspections	Citations	% Citation	Referred to Enforcement	% Referred
2010	61	2,106	24,745	560	2.26%	69	12.32%
2011	52	2,118	20,152	363	1.80%	29	7.99%
2012	44	1,959	15,659	247	1.58%	18	7.29%
2013	40	2,037	15,289	195	1.28%	6	3.08%
2014	40	1,974	14,883	168	1.13%	7	4.17%

- In June 2009, the program had 65 employees; now it has 40, and expects to lose another four. (Source: WFAE)
- 2009 & 2010 – Violations recorded in 11 of 12 months
- 2013 – Violations in 3 months, 2014 – Violations in 5 months
- 2015 – Violation months not recorded after March

Why Care About The Environment?

- Major North Carolina asset
- Quality of life draws people to NC
- Public Health
- Moral and ethical imperative

For today and future generations!



Ancient Proverb
“We do not inherit the
earth from our
ancestors, we borrow it
from our children”

The work you do matters!

Thank you for minimizing the human impact
on the great and mighty Neuse River!



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