

River Notes

We speak for the Neuse

Newsletter of the Neuse River Foundation

Spring 2007

*Through apathy
and broken promises,
the Neuse is
threatened again.*



For many years the Neuse River Foundation and its Riverkeeper program have been the leading force in restoring and protecting the Neuse River. We have made progress over the last 12 years. More than 200 million dollars has been spent on the Neuse's restoration. As the algae and fish kill problems lessened, prosperity returned. Unfortunately, the restoration of the Neuse has stalled. It is nowhere near finished. The hog industry continues to be the leading nutrient polluter. Municipal sewer spills are increasing and development pressures continue to be a problem as new permits to discharge partially treated sewage to the river are being considered. All that coupled with the state's inability to do adequate enforcement, adds up to big trouble for the Neuse. (See the Riverkeeper reports on pages 2 and 3.)

5th Annual Neuse River Spring Clean-up!

Saturday April 14th, 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM (Rain or Shine)

The annual Neuse River Clean-up began 5 years ago when Upper Neuse Riverkeeper Dean Naujoks joined the NRF team. At the time there were several small river clean-ups sponsored by various community groups in Raleigh. Dean's idea was to merge these small local clean-ups into one big annual event coordinated by NRF. In doing so, Dean was also able to get the City of Raleigh to provide extra trash pick-ups and the Wake County Commissioners agreed to waive the landfill fees. The first year 70 volunteers cleaned 20 miles of the Neuse River.

Four years later, the river clean-up had grown to include 50 miles of river from Falls Dam in North Raleigh to Smithfield. In addition, Larry Baldwin, Lower Neuse Riverkeeper organized a clean-up in downtown Kinston. In total, last years clean-up covered 62 miles of the Neuse River and netted 21,000 pounds of trash with 300 volunteers!

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TASTE of NEW BERN
MARCH 20, 2007

5:00 pm to 7:00 pm
Riverfront Convention Center

Tickets: \$20 per person
Proceeds benefit the Riverkeepers

252-637-7972
(Advanced sales only)



It has been awhile since you have heard from us, and we apologize for that, but we have been going through a lot of changes at the NRF lately...all for the good of the organization. But now we can catch you up on some things that have been happening.

As you might expect, a very common question that is asked of us is "How is the Neuse River doing?" Or at least some variation of that question. A common response that I give is to turn the question back to the person posing it, and ask how they think the Neuse River is doing. As you also might expect, the answers are varied. They range from the river being a trash dump to thinking that the river is as clean as it can get. And while I wish the answer was that it is as clean as it can get, I'm afraid I can't make that statement. And the reasons are quite varied as well, so let's get into some of them.

Lower Neuse Report

*By Larry Baldwin
Lower Neuse Riverkeeper®*

Why don't we start with hogs? You remember, they have been a pretty substantial issue in the past, and if the state agencies had their way, and the hog producer's had their way, the issue of pollution from hog waste would stay in the past. But that is not going to happen. Based primarily on the fact that the current moratorium on building new lagoon/sprayfields and/or expanding current hog operations will expire in August of this year, the issue of what hog waste is doing to our state is back in the forefront of concern. And the issue is taking on an additional focus as well by driving the formation of new alliances.

While it is easy to remember that hog waste is having an extremely negative impact on water quality, the concerns for what hog farms are doing to our air is now getting the attention it is due. Ammonia and hydrogen sulfide gases that are emitted from hog barns, lagoons, and sprayfields are having a very serious impact on those communities near them. Higher incidences of asthma and other respiratory problems have been, and continue to be, documented with many of these illnesses being prevalent in children. And the really sad part...the communities most affected are the lower-income and/or minority populations where the hog farms are most concentrated. For many years, these communities did not have a strong voice. But now, by partnering with the NRF and other environmental groups, they can add their particular concerns to the already well-documented affects that hog waste has on our rivers.

This new approach, or what we are calling an "intensified effort to stamp out lagoon/sprayfields", will involve documenting violations from the air and also taking water samples from the water where these hog farms dump their waste. It will take a lot of work and a lot of hours to put the evidence together. The evidence is there, we just need to be at the right places at the right time to document it. If you feel that this is an issue in which you would like to be involved, please let me know.

In addition to the intensified effort against hog lagoons/sprayfields, a great deal of my attention is being centered on development. As I'm sure you have seen, no matter where you live in the watershed, the development of new housing and businesses is unbelievable. And much of the development is taking place in areas that are environmentally sensitive. But everyone wants to live on the

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GOT MUD?

On February 15, 2007, Upper Neuse Riverkeeper Dean Naujoks spoke before the North Carolina Sedimentation Control Commission (SCC), addressing the issue of inadequate sedimentation enforcement. In his presentation, he provided visual evidence of sedimentation violations and outlined the plans to start a citizen training program called Muddy Water Watch (MWW). The program will train citizens to monitor construction sites to properly identify faulty maintenance and sedimentation violations. He also urged the commission to update a 1997 "Plan of Action", which determined that 133 Division of Land Resource (DLR) inspectors would be required to inspect 6,000 sites on a monthly basis.



Currently there are only 32 DLR inspectors, which are now required to monitor 9,100 active construction sites across the state—a 25 % increase since 1997. The amount of disturbed land has also increased from approximately 20,000 acres to more than 40,000 acres each year (2006). According to the EPA, sediment is the nations #1 water pollution problem. Both EPA Region IV and the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources receive more citizen complaints about sedimentation than any other environmental concern.

Upper Neuse Report

*From the office of the
Upper Neuse Riverkeeper®*

In addition to requesting the updating of the Action Plan to reflect 2006 data, he also asked that the SCC recommend again (as they did in 1997) that the NC General Assembly fully fund enough DLR positions to properly conduct monthly routine inspections in order to preserve our rivers, streams and coastal waters that provide important environmental and economic benefit to the entire state. It should be noted the 1997 Action Plan resulted from the enforcement work of the NRF volunteer "air force" when then Neuse Riverkeeper Rick Dove, documented a 200 mile sediment plume in the Neuse River. Much to the embarrassment of the state, the sediment plume appeared on the front page of the News and Observer. Governor Hunt promised to take corrective action by adding more than 100 new inspectors, but since 2000 no DLR inspectors have been added to the state payroll.

Upon NRF's request, the SCC is in the process of revisiting the 1997 Action Plan to update it to reflect 2006 data. It remains to be seen if the state will add any new DLR inspectors. The NC Homebuilders Association and development interests have defeated any attempt to increase funding for state sedimentation enforcement, which is why NRF is urging citizens to become more involved with sedimentation enforcement. The Muddy Water Watch (MWW) project is a two-year statewide project that will involve six NC Riverkeeper programs and more than 150 trained citizens across the state to address sediment problems in communities where impacts to water quality from sediment are greatest. The MWW project is scheduled to begin in the fall of 2007. Stay tuned for more information.

Mark your calendars!

Clean Water Lobby Day is May 2

Join us in Raleigh on May 2, where we'll let our state legislators hear our concerns about NC water.
Call either office for details: 252-637-7972 or 919-856-1180

New Faces:

The Neuse River Foundation is pleased to introduce three new members of the NRF team: Pat Gulley, Diane Baldwin and Mike Evans.

Pat—Joining the staff is Pat Gulley, who has been hired through a grant as the Special Events Coordinator. She will be responsible for planning, organizing, and running the New Bern Special Events: Taste of New Bern, Festival on the Neuse Duck Race /Kinston, Neuse River Days, The Golf and Fishing Tournaments and the membership recruitment parties held in member's homes throughout the year, as well as assisting the Raleigh office with the Upstream annual events such as the Film Festival. Additional categories of her job include assisting the Executive Director and other staff where needed.

Pat is a long time advocate of the Neuse River and believer in pro-active environmental protection. One of the ways we can call attention to the plight of the Neuse is by educating and involving the public in events that bring folks to the river. Pat may be reached at the NRF offices in New Bern Monday through Friday by calling the main office number, 252-637-7972 and by email at events@neuseriver.org. Please join us in welcoming her.

Diane—Visitors to the New Bern office are greeted these days by our new Office Manager, Diane Baldwin. Not only is Diane a bright new addition to the NRF, she is the bride of Lower Neuse Riverkeeper Larry Baldwin.

Since assuming her responsibilities last fall, Diane has done a wonderful job doing all those thousand and one things an office manager does everyday. Busy as she is, she always has time to answer a question or take on yet another task. Around here there is always something going on, and one of Diane's goals is to re-activate the NRF volunteer list. "Help is always needed and deeply appreciated," says Diane.

So check your calendars and come on down! If you haven't volunteered in a while, this is a great time to lend a hand. Several events are in the planning/working stages, and if that's not your thing, there is always a mailing to go out or articles to go into the archives. For more information, Diane may be reached by phone-637-7972 -or by email at info@neuseriver.org.

Mike—Mike Evans fills a new position for NRF as Education and Outreach Coordinator. Mike began his employment with NRF in October 2006; Mike is based in Raleigh but spends part of his time in New Bern. He comes to us from the NC Wildlife Federation with 15 years of related experience in community outreach. "The response to my message of water protection has been and continues to be very positive," he says. Mike is easy going with a big smile; don't be surprised if you see Mike at your front door. He will be out in the community talking to folks about water quality issues and the importance of clean water in the Neuse River Basin. Please make him feel welcome.

Neuse Riverkeeper Fudge!

The NRF is proud to launch a new addition to the product line-Neuse Riverkeeper Fudge. A new flavor, created exclusively for the NRF by Bear City Fudge, in New Bern. "This yummy concoction combines chocolate fudge, caramel, peanuts and peanut butter in tantalizing layers of flavor." Set to debut at the *Taste of New Bern*, this taste treat will be available in ½ pound boxes, and priced at \$8.00, the fudge will be sold through the NRF offices in New Bern and Raleigh. TAKE SOME HOME TODAY!

President's Message

A little more than 18 months ago I stepped into the NRF presidency. It was at time when non-profits like ours were struggling to fully fund their operations. While we were having financial problems, we didn't want to take a step backwards in our effort to restore and protect the Neuse.

We have made progress. In large measure many of you have reached deeply into your pockets to provide additional support. More than 250 new members have joined in the effort. Our initiative to establish a Board of Trustees to help maintain financial stability is also progressing well. We continue to receive grants to help us with our advocacy and other operations and we have developed a strategic plan that will guide us in the future. This is all very good news.

But here is the best news of all. One of our members has granted our greatest wish an office in New Bern, on the water with plenty of space for our operations. We will be renting this space at a price substantially less than what we now pay. Where? It is located on Lawson Creek at the Pembroke exit of Highway 70. You may know the building as Evening Breeze where kayaks and canoes were sold. Renovations to the building will be made and we hope to be in our new digs by early summer.

To all who have made this possible, I say, Thank You, thank, you, thank you.....
But if you think this means we can sit back and relax...come on! We've got work to do.
Rick Dove

Save the date!

March 20—Taste of New Bern
April 14—Neuse River Clean-up
April 28—Festival on the Neuse
May 2-Clean Water Lobby Day!
June 2 & 3—Neuse River Days
January 19, 2008 Riverkeeper Film Festival

New Website!

www.neuseriverkeepers.org

Due to some technical issues with our current website, we are developing a new site—listed above. Please check the new website for current information on news and events. We appreciate your patience.

I want to help speak for the Neuse River!

New member Renewal Special donation

Check annual membership/donation level:

Individual.....	\$25	Protector.....	\$50
Family (list names)...	\$35	Guardian.....	\$100
Student (full time).....	\$10	Advocate.....	\$250
Special Donation...\$___		Defender.....	\$250

*Membership includes a subscription to **River Notes**.
All donations are tax deductible.*

Contact me about:

Hosting an "Evening with the Riverkeeper"
Becoming a "Neuse River Day" sponsor
My company's workplace-giving program
Volunteer opportunities

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City/state/zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Return completed form with your check or credit card #
to: **NRF, PO Box 15451, New Bern, NC 28561**

**Lower Neuse
Riverkeeper,
Cont.**

water, and out in nature, with little regard to the affect that development has on fragile ecosystems. Wetlands are being destroyed, riparian buffers are being destroyed, and the natural beauty of the Neuse River and her tributaries is being raped for the sake of building a home. Add to the issue of what is being done to the environment the fact that most of these areas targeted for development have little or inadequate wastewater capacity. Can development and the river coexist? I think they can, but we will have to be willing to make some concessions. It is not a matter of if we can develop or not, but instead a matter of *sustainable development*!!!! This will be a hot topic for 2007, and I'm sure well beyond. But we will have to meet it head on or run the very real risk of development being as much a threat to our Neuse River as hog waste is already.

So when we look back at the original question of "How is the Neuse River doing?" the answer has to be that we are far from being the healthy river system that we want and need. Don't be fooled by reports and claims that you hear from state agencies and polluters about nitrogen reductions and an improvement in the quality of the water. Their claims are not based on all of the factors involved. It would be great to be able to get further into the discussion on these pages, but space is limited. But the sad fact is that many people have become complacent in our efforts to protect this valuable natural resource. *OUR* river is not where it should be, and can be, as far as being a healthy, vibrant water body. The Neuse River is not getting the attention it deserves...except from the NRF and our members such as each of you. We appreciate the fact that you understand what we are up against, and your support means a great deal to us.

There are many ways to enjoy this river, and many opportunities for you to help us in our efforts. You will see some of the events we have planned when you read some of the other articles in this newsletter. Please do what you can to help us out. And visit our new website, www.neuseriverkeepers.org, to see what is going on and how you can help. There will be new opportunities posted frequently, so check us out daily.

As the spring and summer months approach, there will be increased activity on and around the Neuse River, and I hope you will be joining in those activities. But always remember that we are the stewards of the Neuse, and it is our responsibility to protect her and pass on to our children and grandchildren a river that is healthy. As the quote says..."We do not inherit the river from our parents, we borrow it from our children".

As always, please feel free to contact me with questions, concerns or issues. I will strive to do my best to provide our children with a Neuse River they can be proud to call their own.

River Clean-up Cont.

Of course, the real success would be a river with no trash. But, don't let the numbers discourage you; the previously cleaned sections are staying cleaner. The 2006 figures included removing two rusting cars from Crabtree Creek—a project we had never before attempted. (Crabtree Creek is a tributary of the Neuse that runs through the heart of Raleigh.) This year we hope to pull out a garbage dumpster!

If you are looking for a fun springtime activity please join the Riverkeepers on Saturday April 14th in Kinston or Raleigh. If you are unable to participate please consider making a donation to help support this important project. For information visit our new website: www.neuseriverkeepers.org or call 919-856-1180 or 252-637-7972.

From the Desk of...Pat

Calling All Volunteers!

As someone who has been on both sides of the fence, as staff, as a Board member of an organization and as a volunteer (oops, that's three sides!) I have a deep and abiding respect for the volunteer. Who else puts in countless hours, works tirelessly without fanfare, and stays 'til the job is done? Well, maybe Mother... Seriously, moms and volunteers have much in common. They do it out of love for someone or something. They know that their efforts will make a difference. Volunteers at the NRF know that everything they do contributes to keeping the Riverkeepers out there on the water, and in the offices of polluters, and in front of the legislators who can write the laws to effect changes needed.

Every year, the Neuse River Foundation holds several fund-raising events. We couldn't do it without the folks who step up to the plate and help us get the job done.

- The *Taste of New Bern* is coming up on Tuesday, March 20, 2007. If you would like to do double-duty by supporting the NRF and coming out to volunteer that night, your ticket will be half price, as our way of saying thank you. We are scheduling everyone to work one hour of this two hour event, (5:00pm to 7:00pm) to allow everyone to have the opportunity to try all the tempting treats on hand.
- The *Festival on the Neuse* in Kinston will be held the last week-end in April, and the NRF will be there on Saturday April 28 to host the annual Rubber Duck Race. Volunteers are needed prior to the event to help sort the ducks and be sure we have a numbered duck to match each numbered ticket. On Race day, folks are needed to sell tickets at the NRF booth in Kinston, and help on the river during the race. Come on out and cheer for the little yellow fellows as they race downstream!
- *Neuse River Days*, the biggest event of the year, will be held the first week-end in June, at Union Point Park. We need folks to help out both on the water and in the park on Saturday June 2, and Sunday June 3, 2007. Ticket sellers, booth staff, race monitors and more play an important part in helping us have a successful event.

We greatly appreciate help in the office as we are working to organize; secure sponsors confirm vendors and do all the thousand and one tasks that are always a part of planning. If you have expertise in a particular area, we would be glad to help you put it to good use! Please call the NRF offices or send an email to events@neuseriver.org. No volunteer is ever turned away! Without you...we're sunk!

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NRF awarded *Conservation Organization of the Year*

Front row: Jackie Murphy Miller, NRF Program Assistant holding the award statue. Next to her is Diane Baldwin, NRF Office Manager. In the back row, left to right, are Dean Naujoks, Upper Neuse Riverkeeper; Rick Dove, NRF Board President; Dave McCracken, NRF Board Director; and Larry Baldwin, Lower Neuse Riverkeeper.

To all NRF members ----

NRF was recognized as “Conservation Organization of Year” for 2006 at the 45th Annual Governor’s Conservation Achievement Awards of the North Carolina Wildlife Federation. This is the highest honor given to an organization committed to conservation in North Carolina. The award was presented February 10th at a banquet dinner in Raleigh. We wish that every NRF member could have attended the event. This achievement belongs to all of us. Your support and volunteer efforts are an integral part of our program; without you there would not be a Neuse River Foundation.