

River Notes

We speak for the Neuse

Newsletter of the Neuse River Foundation

August 2007

NEUSE RIVER FOUNDATION COSPONSORS 51-HOUR HOG VIGIL

by Larry Baldwin, Lower Neuse Riverkeeper®

In our ongoing efforts to rid the state of Hog Lagoons and Sprayfields, the NRF cosponsored a *51-Hour Hog Vigil* which began at 3 PM on June 19 and ran straight through until 6 PM on June 21 (51 hours—hence the name). And by straight through,



that means that someone was onsite for the entire 51 hours. We camped out on the lawn, had our meals on the lawn, slept on air mattresses and in tents overnight, and made sure everyone who passed knew why we were there. More than 125 people from Neuse River Foundation, the Pamlico-Tar River Foundation, the New River Foundation and several community-based groups provided members of the General Assembly and the public with a true illustration of what a hog lagoon/sprayfield looks like, smells like and what effect it has on the environment.

We had static displays (pictures, videos, signs and cutouts) and also a model of a hog

farm, complete with a working lagoon filled with 40 gallons of authentic hog waste. Using a small plastic swimming pool lined with tarps, this model was set up on the lawn of the General Assembly so that everyone passing could get a whiff of what people in eastern NC live with every day.

Once they discovered that part of the display was to include real hog waste, the Director of Facilities Management (the department in charge of grounds maintenance for the state) approached us and stated that if we spilled even one drop of hog waste on the ground, they would consider it to be a hazardous material and call in the state HazMat Team to clean it up. Since the NRF was the sponsoring organization listed on the Occupancy Permit, the NRF would be charged thousands of dollars for the clean up.

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Upper Neuse Report

Dean Naujoks
Upper Neuse Riverkeeper®

When *American Rivers* announced the Neuse River was to be listed as one of the Nation's *Top Ten Most Endangered Rivers*, we asked sixth grade students from the Moore Square Management Middle School to be our voice in the call to action to protect Falls Lake and the Neuse River. If you have not seen their funny but powerful video *Give Me Back My River*, go to our new website at www.neuseriverkeepers.org. These young students essentially represent every middle school student and future generations who will need clean drinking water to survive. This is a basic fundamental human right, but many of us have taken this right for granted. Less than 1% of all the water on the planet is available fresh water.

The last time the Neuse was listed was ten years ago. Thankfully, the public demanded action to clean up this great river. The NC Environmental Management Commission responded by approving the *Neuse Rules* in December of 1997. This was the nation's first comprehensive pollution reduction strategy that

targeted a variety of pollution sources to reduce nitrogen throughout the entire river basin.

It seemed as if this river was on the road to recovery and that is precisely when the State lost focus about following through with commitments to clean up the Neuse River. When you factor this in with the acceleration of pollution from a growing population, you see a rather disturbing trend. Falls Lake, for example, at the head waters of the Neuse River, provides 400,000 Wake County citizens with drinking water. It is polluted and will be listed on the states' 303(d) list for impaired waters due to pollution impacts from nutrients and sediment.

Virtually everywhere development is occurring, rivers and streams are becoming degraded from sediment, fertilizers, pet waste, oil, gasoline and other polluted runoff that threatens the entire river ecosystem. Yet roughly 1 million people will move into this river basin over the next twenty years, putting additional strain on our drinking water supplies while increasing polluted runoff to the Neuse River. As a result of this growth, sewage treatment plants like Raleigh's and many other towns throughout the basin intend to expand their sewage discharge into the river while simultaneously planning to take more drinking water from Falls Lake and the Neuse River. Less water in the river, while increasing pollution concentrations, will have a profound impact on downstream communities and the Neuse River fisheries.

Once you look at the big picture, you begin ask yourself just how much more can the Neuse River take? Is what we are doing to this river sustainable? No, I don't believe it is sustainable.

If our political leaders were to simply look at what is happening in Atlanta and Los Angeles, which are now facing mandatory multi-billion-dollar water-quality improvements, they would

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For me, it's all about hogs, sediment, development, stormwater runoff, buffers, wetlands, discharge permits, new monitoring programs, revamping the Creekkeeper Program and responding to possible pollution issues. It keeps me pretty busy.

The majority of my time recently has been involved with the hog campaign on the legislative front, but that will now change to a monitoring mode.

Other major sources of degrading water quality come from the introduction of sediment and stormwater from unsustainable development. You will hear more on this topic in the coming months. In fact, this is an area where you have an opportunity to do some "on-the-ground" investigating. If you would like to be a part of that program, I am always looking for additional eyes and ears. And the same thing applies to buffer and wetland destruction. The loss of these essential natural cleansing processes has a huge impact on the quality of our rivers and streams.

You may be familiar with NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) Permits. These are permits that any business or municipality must have in order to discharge wastewater into a stream, creek or river. Every five years these permits come up for renewal, and we have the right to challenge the renewal of a specific NPDES permit or permits. This process takes time and researching of documents to determine if there are concerns with specific dischargers that would prompt a permit challenge on behalf of the NRF. I'm looking for some detail-oriented volunteers to help with that process.

And here is the big one. We are in the process of revamping the Creekkeeper Program. Jim Starr, a member/volunteer here in New Bern, is our new Creek Master, and we will be working to tweak this Program. In the past, the Creekkeepers focused primarily on water quality sampling. This will continue, but not as the priority of the program.

Over the past ten-plus years, we have had some great success with the Creekkeepers and the work they have done. They are to be commended for their dedication. Now the focus will turn to monitoring the watershed via patrols. The visibility of having a large group of volunteers who have been trained to look for pollution sources will go a long way in keeping those who would pollute our waters from feeling free to do so. The benefit to our Neuse River is that there will be more eyes and ears that are watching and actively protecting her. Look for that opportunity to work as a Creekkeeper within the next few weeks.

Another major activity is the continuation of the Junior Volunteer Riverkeeper® Program. This is an educational project that we started three years ago providing a classroom presentation to every 8th grade class in Craven County public schools, with a field trip on the Neuse aboard

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Lower Neuse Report

Larry Baldwin
Lower Neuse Riverkeeper®

understand it is absolutely imperative to protect water quality in Falls Lake and the Neuse River. All future economic growth depends on it.

- Local governments need to implement effective stormwater ordinances that promote low impact development, green roofs and green infrastructure to ensure meaningful conservation measures while controlling the overall volume of polluted runoff from hardened surfaces. They need to implement effective sediment and erosion control programs that are thoroughly enforced to control construction site runoff.
- We need more municipalities to commit to investing in water reclamation and water reuse instead of simply buying additional nitrogen capacity.
- We need a Governor and a General Assembly that will follow through on their promises to phase out Hog Lagoon and Spray systems, setting a date certain.

We need political leaders who truly represent the sixth graders featured in *Give Me Back My River*, who will not cave into short-sighted special interests that profit from their polluting our public trust waters.

The Neuse River Foundation is so deeply committed to cleaning up this river that we have created an endowment to assure that long after my time as Riverkeeper®, there will still be funding to ensure that there is always a Riverkeeper® working to safeguard the Neuse.

We need citizens like you to join us in our long term commitment to cleaning up the Neuse River. It is, after all, your river. Please don't ever forget that this river belongs to all of us.

the R/V Humphries for some of those students as well. The Humphries is a research vessel owned by NC State University and operated under the direction of Dr. JoAnn Burkholder.

The Program is being expanded for the coming school year. The first part of that expansion actually involved a name change. The program is now known as *Neuse Riverkeepers® RiverKids*. We plan to include Pamlico County next year and to further expand the program into upstream utilizing Falls Lake as an educational tool. We are excited about this growth, and we are also looking forward to our continued association with Dr. Burkholder and her lab. She has been an amazing champion of the Neuse River as well as a supporter of the Neuse River Foundation and its Riverkeepers®.

And one last item to report, the NRF New Bern office will be moving to a new location in the near future. We will be occupying the former Evening Breeze Outfitters property at 1307 Country Club Road. This new facility is going to be a great move for us, and will allow for some needed expansion to accommodate all of the work we are doing. Stay tuned for a grand opening date.

As you can see, things continue to be very busy at the NRF. One of the reasons we are able to tackle as many different issues as we do is because of our amazing Staff, Board of Directors, and especially our volunteers. It is definitely a team effort, and the big winner is the Neuse River. Thanks for helping us continue our fight for a clean, healthy Neuse River.

51-Hour Vigil, Cont.

When asked why hog waste was considered “hazardous material” in Raleigh, but was called “fertilizer” in the rural parts of the state, there was no reply.

The 51-hour vigil accomplished its goal—we educated some, agitated others, and things were looking up for positive legislative change. The early indications were that the grassroots efforts of the ten current NC Waterkeeper® programs, led by the organizing efforts of the NRF, were starting to finally hit home. Unfortunately politics got in the way, and several back-room deals led to weak legislation that could essentially allow waste lagoons to remain in perpetuity.

Our legislative leaders, from both the House and Senate and both sides of the aisle, had a great opportunity to do the right thing. There was momentum in the early stages of the session that would, once and for all, put an end to the negative impact that hog farm lagoons and sprayfields have on the environment and on the communities living in close proximity to the farms. Governor Easley himself went back on a promise he made while campaigning for office. Seven years ago, he went on record to say that, if elected, he would rid the state of lagoons and sprayfields within five years. He was one of the main brokers of the deals that propose legislation to allow lagoons and sprayfields to remain in existence for years to come, with the potential of increasing the number by replacing lagoons that are failing or have failed.

We feel that our *51-Hour Hog Vigil* had some success, focusing attention on the environmental AND community impacts of these cesspools. We will continue to work toward ridding the state of lagoons and sprayfields. Let me know if you have an interest in working on such a project; we welcome you to join other concerned members of the NRF who are already involved. I can be reached at riverkeeper@neuseriver.org.



Riverkeeper® Assists State Regulators in Finding Source of White Goo

In late June, when Doug Rader, an aquatic scientist with Environmental Defense, discovered a rolling carpet of polluted water in Crabtree Creek, he took pictures and followed the source more than two miles upstream. But he was unable to determine who or what caused the creek to turn white. The NC Division of Water Quality (DWQ) was also unclear as to who was responsible for the white sediment plume. The News and Observer contacted Upper Neuse Riverkeeper® Dean Naujoks for help.

Dean immediately knew the culprit was the Hanson Rock Quarry due to previous discharges of stormwater runoff. State investigators now blame the North Raleigh quarry for the failure of a stormwater pond that poured thousands of gallons of polluting sediment into Crabtree Creek.

Minnows spotted in stream once considered dead

Thursday June 21, 2007: The email from Frank LeBron simply read "Great news from Fox Tail Run. The small creek that the Raleigh EM Johnson Water Plant completely destroyed is recovering. They stopped discharging in February and there are minnows and crayfish in the entire creek below the discharge point." After many years of sludge and a variety of chemicals being discharged into the unnamed North Raleigh Creek, life is beginning to return.

Waterkeeper Alliance Annual Conference

The Annual Waterkeeper Alliance Conference headed to New Orleans this past June to help bring much needed tourism revenue into the city still recovering from Hurricane Katrina. The Alliance also wanted to show support for the three Waterkeeper® programs located in Louisiana Gulf Region (Lower Mississippi Riverkeeper®, Turkey Creekkeeper and Atchafalaya Basinkeeper).

More than 155 Waterkeeper® programs from around the world came together for four days of learning, sharing and networking to fortify the Alliance. Conference panels covered topics ranging from water issues to fundraising. The international representation at this year's conference was truly inspiring, and included programs from India, China, Senegal, Bolivia, Colombia, Mexico, Australia, and Canada.



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From the Desk of...Pat

It has been eight months since I joined the NRF staff, and what a busy eight months it has been! *Taste of New Bern*, *Festival on the Neuse* and *Neuse River Days* have all taken place, and we are currently hard at work planning the *Neuse River Backwater Open Fishing Tournament* (Sept.29), the *NRF Benefit Golf Tournament* (Oct.5), *Mumfest* (Oct 13 -14) and the *Riverkeeper® Film Festival*, being held in Raleigh (1/19/08) and for the first time in New Bern (1/26/08), along with a preview party in Oriental (date TBA)

Volunteers are the key to making these events a success! If you're an early riser, and I do mean early, the fishing tournament might be just the place you'd like to contribute some time. If being on the golf course is more your style, come help us register the players, monitor the course and stay for a buffet lunch compliments of the Taberna Country Club. Mumfest will see us launching the little yellow fellows for a race in the Neuse and the film festivals promise to be a wonderful evening of viewing the creative work of many filmmakers with their unique interpretations of the theme " Water."

And be sure to save the date and plan to come to the Friends and Family Picnic scheduled for September 21 at the home of Nat Baggett. Situated on the Trent, Nat's home and grounds are not only a beautiful place to celebrate the NRF family; it is approachable by the Trent, so arrive by boat if you've a mind to.

My docket this summer also includes representing the NRF at expos in Kinston and New Bern during the month of August. These events are a wonderful way to get our message out to a large group of people who came for the express purpose of gathering information about organizations in their local community. I am so excited about these opportunities!

Before you know it, it will be time to start planning the next year's Taste, Festival and Neuse River Days. Time really flies when you're having fun!

Give me a call and join in!

See you at the picnic! (I'm bringing the baked beans.)



Earth Share
OF NORTH CAROLINA

NRF Website

Our new website is up and running.

Please check

www.neuseriverkeepers.org

for news of the river and current information on our events.

It's a Party

NRF is hosting a Friends and Family Picnic
at the home of *Nat Baggett*
5007 Trentwoods Dr, New Bern

Friday, September 21, 2007

5:00-8:00pm



Come by car or come by boat but
come and bring a friend!

RSVP by 9/7/07 252-637-7972

Volunteers Needed

Ongoing Jobs

"Librarian" needed to organize the new conference room library when we move. This is a critical need, as the reference library is much needed for research.

Research permit challenges, See Page 3

Help with mailings. Folding, stamping, labeling, etc. Good coffee.

Creekkeepers, See Page 3

One-Shot Deals

Help at fishing tournament or golf tournament, See Page 7

Help at Mumfest, See Page 7

Attend the Friends and Family Picnic, See Page 7

Save the date

September 21, 2007..... Friends and Family Picnic, New Bern (*See Page 7*)
September 29, 2007..... Neuse River Backwater Open Fishing Tournament,
New Bern
October 5, 2007..... NRF Benefit Golf Tournament
October 13, 14, 2007.... Mumfest, New Bern
January 19, 2008..... Riverkeeper® Film Festival, Raleigh
Jan 26, 2008..... Riverkeeper® Film Festival, New Bern
TBA Riverkeeper® Film Festival, Preview in Oriental
TBA Taste of New Bern
April 5, 2008 Neuse River Clean-up
May 31, June 1, 2008... Neuse River Days, New Bern

2008 NRF Board of Director's Nominations Open

Nominations for the 2008 Board are now being accepted. Nominators and nominees MUST be NRF members in good standing (membership dues up-to-date) as of September 8, or the nomination will be invalid. Nominations must be received in writing on a nomination form available from either NRF office. Nominees are required to provide a general description of their qualifications, background, etc. in 150 words or less for NRF members to review. All forms must be postmarked no later than September 8. Directors will be elected at the NRF's Annual Meeting, scheduled for October 18 at the Christ Episcopal Church Ministry Center in New Bern.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET RIVER NOTES BY EMAIL?

Save time, save money, save paper, save volunteers. Use the enclosed membership renewal envelope to send us your name and email address, even if you don't need to join or renew just now.

Each copy of River Notes we send costs us nearly \$.75, plus valuable volunteer time folding, stamping and stuffing the envelopes.