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Summer 2009

Clean Water for North Carolina Clean Currents

A newsletter of clean water and community environmental justice issues

Some Highlights of CWFNC's First 25 Years of Action!

1984 - CWFNC is founded on a kitchen table in Charlotte by grassroots activists Lar Hayes and Si Kahn to work for greater public involvement in protecting communities from hazardous waste sites, contaminated drinking water and environmental health threats.

Late 1980s
- CWFNC involved in many Superfund sites (abandoned hazardous waste), builds capacity of communities to organize for better cleanups
- Nan Freeland and CWFNC press for investigation and clean-up of the toxic PCB dump in Warren County, to protect workers and community from toxic waste at Sledgelock



Nathanette Mayo calls for an end to "Toxic Terrorism" in her community around the dioxin-laced Koppers Superfund site, near Reasearch Triangle Park

- CWFNC helps organize statewide network to fight hazardous waste incinerator at 30 proposed sites, becomes NC Waste Awareness and Reduction Network



2000 - Stanly Citizens Opposed to Toxic Chemical Hazards (SCOTCH), NC WARN, and CWFNC protest contamination and air emissions from Solite cement kiln, near Albemarle

- Starts working with NC and TN groups to call for clean-up of Pigeon River, blighted for 80 years by Champion Paper

Early 1990s
- CWFNC staff and volunteers attend the first National People of Color Summit and help develop the Principles of Environmental Justice, still critical to CWFNC's choice of issues and work with communities.

- Clean Water Lead Testing, non-profit drinking water testing service, founded in collaboration with Dr. Rick Maas and others at Environmental Quality Institute at UNC-Asheville, rated "best" by Consumer Reports

Mid- to late 1990s
- Release of reports on water quality problems in the Neuse, Yadkin and Catawba Rivers
- Work with Stanly County Opposed to Toxic Chemical Hazards to reduce toxic emissions from Solite plant, require Air Toxics Rules to be enforced



2003 - WNC Stream Monitoring Exchange started by CWFNC and allies, trained dozens of volunteer biological monitors throughout region

- Work with community around "Koppers" and other Superfund sites for better clean-ups
- Challenge permits for Paw Creek oil companies, call for health studies

Late 1990s
- Nan Freeland helps found and co-chairs the NC Environmental Justice Network
- Support challenge to Champion to call for Pigeon River clean-up



2008 - Hundreds of protestors, including CWFNC and grassroots NC and TN allies, march around Canton papermill to demand clean-up of Pigeon River and toxic air emissions

You're invited to CWFNC's 25th Birthday Party September 19!

Clean Water for NC has worked with communities since 1984 for cleanups at Superfund sites, environmental justice, safe and affordable drinking water, polluter accountability, clean air and energy, and more.

Whether you are new to the organization or have been involved for years, we'd love to have you celebrate with us! Come for great stories of community triumph over environmental injustices. Movement artists Fruit of Labor Singing Ensemble will entertain and inspire us, joined by well-loved local musicians. Great food and fellowship, too!

Sat. Sept. 19 from 12-5pm at the **Burton St. Community Center** (134 Burton St., W. Asheville). **RSVP** to hope@cwfn.org or call 828-251-1291. See you there!

Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival On Tour!

Once again CWFNC is bringing North America's largest environmental film festival to Western NC, this year in partnership with UNC-Asheville's Student Environmental Center. Films will aim to inspire you to take part in climate protection, water justice and other environmental action.

Join us Friday, Oct. 23 starting at 7pm for a fun-filled evening featuring award winning films and local speakers to highlight key issues. For details, check our website (www.cwfn.org), and help as a volunteer! Contact gracia@cwfn.org.

Don't Miss these Great Upcoming Events!

August 21-23 - Southern Energy and Environment Expo!

This annual event showcasing energy solutions and enviro action will be at t the Western N.C. Agricultural Center, Fletcher (near Asheville Airport) August 21-23. It's the largest festival of its kind in the Eastern U.S.!

Volunteers are needed! Contact Gracia at 828-251-1291 to help out at CWFNC's info booth. Free passes to first volunteers. Visit www.seexpo.com/

September 19 - Birthday Celebration

CWFNC is 25 Years Old! Join us from 12:00 – 5:00 at the Burton Street Community Center in West Asheville for CWFNC Updates and "best of" 25 years of action. Music by justice movement artists **Fruit of Labor Singing Ensemble**, joined by well-loved local musicians. Great food and fellowship for everyone!



October 23 - Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival on Tour!

CWFNC brings the nation's largest environmental film festival to WNC for the third time – Friday, Oct. 23 starting at 7pm. Award-winning short films and speakers on key issues, the festival has been SOLD OUT in the past! Watch for ticket sales and opportunities to volunteer. Contact gracia@cwfn.org.

WhoWeAre

Clean Water for North Carolina

Clean Water for North Carolina is a private, non-profit organization based in Asheville, NC. CWFNC works to ensure that all people have a right to live, work, and play in clean and safe communities. Together, we have the power and responsibility to work for a healthy and sustainable environment. Our staff works with an active and diverse board of directors and members to increase grassroots involvement in environmental decisions. CWFNC spearheads action statewide and helps grassroots and environmental groups, individuals, and local governments develop strategies to address threats to the environment.

Our Mission

Clean Water for North Carolina promotes clean, safe water and environments and empowered, just communities for all North Carolinians through organizing, education, advocacy, and technical assistance.

Board of Directors

- Montie Hamby • Winston-Salem
- Allen Hubbard • Charlotte
- Isaac Coleman • Asheville
- Nathanette Mayo • Shiloh
- DeWayne Barton • Asheville
- Marshall Tyler • Mocksville
- Joann Almond • Albemarle
- Jodi Lasseter • Durham
- Joanna Connolly • Lawndale

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Belinda Joyner, Northeast Organizer

CWFNC's Summer Interns Work on Critical NC Issues

We'd like to introduce you to our wonderful 2009 summer interns, who always play an important role in building our knowledge as a basis for advocacy and action. We welcome and thank all of them for their excellent work. You'll get a chance to meet them at our 25th Anniversary celebration in Asheville on September 19th!



2009 interns Jonathan Reich and Victoria Morton

JONATHAN REICH, a second-year Duke Law student and NC native, is researching power plants and paper mills, especially the huge "thermal" discharges, wasting massive amounts of energy into our waters. He has found that the state "variances" allowing power plants to release water above state and federal limits differ widely, even for two plants on the same body of water! State water quality officials also allow many power plants to operate with no thermal variances

or limits, claiming their cooling ponds are not "waters of the state." Jonathan is developing legal strategies to better protect NC waters from billions of gallons/day of hot discharges.

VICTORIA MORTON, a second year Duke Nicholas School of the Environment master's student, brings an engineering background to a topic of great interest for NC's water supply future. She is developing methods and data sources to calculate the amount of water evaporated downstream of power plants that discharge large volumes of hot water. The preliminary results are stunning, indicating that each major power plant is evaporating millions of gallons of water from rivers and reservoirs. This has raised eyebrows among state water policy planners who are beginning to recognize it as a significant factor for fair water allocation, despite the energy utilities' claims.



2009 intern Jessica Barnwell and 2006 intern Tyler Shipman who returned this year

JESSICA BARNWELL, a recent graduate of NC Central University's Environmental Sciences program, with experience on an urban stormwater project, is working to develop funding and local support for "green" youth jobs in water and energy. A key focus is developing neighborhood networks of streetside rain-gardens, to provide a cost-effective and attractive method to slow down and filter stormwater runoff that is polluting local streams and Jordan Lake. Building neighborhood interest in rain

gardens will build a demand for local youth teams to install native-planted, shallow dips that divert fast runoff and help clean it and return some of it to groundwater.

TYLER SHIPMAN, one of our 2006 interns in the Water and Energy for Justice program, has returned to assist Jessica in neighborhood outreach, preparation of materials and research on methods to install small rain gardens. Tyler, who's advising her family in saving water and energy, will graduate from Durham Technical Community College in December.

Clean Water for North Carolina

Thanks to Our Foundation Partners and Major Donors for their Generous Support!

City of Asheville Weed and Seed Program
Clean Water Network
The Conservation Fund
Park Foundation
Patagonia, Inc.

Pigeon River Fund of the Community Foundation of WNC
Julian Price Family Foundation (Pricey Harrison)
Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation
Stuart and Nancy Ryman

Fred and Alice Stanback
Shaler and Carolyn Stidham
Unitarian Universalist Church of Asheville
Rick and Shawney Weisler
Two Anonymous Donors

Thanks to our recent new and renewing members!

Maria-Luise and John Rager, Joann Almond, Allen and Rosemary Hubbard, Dan and Barbara Gerber, Leah Karpen, Marie Hall, Ferris Lyle, Amey miller and David Kiel, Katie Breckheimer, Stephen Schewel, Molly Beacham, Rev. Ella Skipwith, Richard Bierly, Bill and Stephanie Whitesides, Perry Eury, Diane Van Helden, Margie Meares, Etta-Jeanne Greski, Patsy Keever, Jahala and Wayne Williams, Ellain Brooks, Marbry and Judith Hopkins, John Noel, Valerie and Nick Slogick, Elizabeth Moore, Ed and Pam McNally.

Thanks to our new Stream Monitoring and Outreach/Fundraising volunteers

DeWayne Barton, Carole Larivee, Lou Dombrova, Harold (Wayne) Lhoest, Tim Milling, Sue Libera, Kristin Klemm, Lowell and Donna Coffin, Andrew Wiley, Josh Sanders, Dawn Buley and Patrick O'Brian. Thanks also to Pam McNally (fundraising) and Isis Steiger (Asheville Earth Day)

Clean Water Lead Testing Kits

Are you concerned that your drinking water or household products might contain lead? Just order a kit from our nonprofit CLEAN WATER LEAD TESTING service at www.leadtesting.org. Each kit includes all supplies and instructions for taking a sample, as well as complete laboratory analysis and recommendations mailed back to you. Order online or print out an order form to mail with your check.

To be sure that you have your kit and test results before any transition for our lab at UNC-A, we urge you to place your order by Thanksgiving!



Join Clean Water for North Carolina (or renew your membership!)

- Here's my donation to join or renew my CWFNC membership:
- \$20 \$35
- \$50 \$100
- Other _____
- I would like to volunteer; contact me.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

(Email is a faster & cheaper way for us to reach you.)

Make your check payable to:
Clean Water for North Carolina
and send to:
29-1/2 Page Avenue
Asheville, NC 28801

PCS Phosphate Gets Permit to Expand Mine, Destroy Wetlands

More than eight years ago, PCS Phosphate applied for a permit to expand its huge mining operation in coastal Beaufort County. State regulators told the company it was illegal to mine through the coastal streams and marshlands of the Pamlico River and Albemarle Sound. But PCS kept pushing, even taking the state to court to contest the need for certain permits. After applying the often-used industry strategy of arm-twisting combined with whining about being forced to close down, the company was granted a permit it could "live with" by the NC Division of Water Quality.

Coastal water advocates' hopes brightened earlier this year when the federal Environmental Protection Agency stepped in and recommended changes to an Army Corps of Engineers permit for the expansion. Although these changes would have protected at least the most critical wetlands and nurseries while allowing continued mining operations, the EPA eventually backed off of its own recommendations (even though five state and federal agencies publicly declared that the mine expansion would do

Georgia Sewage Plant to Pollute NC Waters?

In an attempt to lure industry back to the area, Rabun County, in northeast Georgia is seeking wastewater plant upgrades and a discharge permit for an old, chronically violating treatment plant formerly linked to a manufacturing facility. The former Fruit of the Loom factory's treatment plant is now county-owned and would discharge 2 million gallons per day into the Little Tennessee River, which flows north into NC. Although the proposed repairs are a good step, no industrial "customer" has been identified, so no specific limits for industrial pollutants were in the draft permit.

Rabun County officials propose to address any future industrial pollutants through weak and unenforced "pre-treatment agreements," whereby the industry promises to clean its toxic waste before sending it to the plant. These agreements leave downstream residents vulnerable to pollution and leave the public (i.e. taxpayers) legally responsible for any penalties for pollution incidents caused by industry rather than the treatment plant itself. Disturbingly, this draft permit allows for *even less* accountability: since the permit contains no specific limits for industrial pollutants, plant operators won't be liable in the event of an industrial pollution incident because they can't violate nonexistent limits.

A lot of discharge permits are released for public comment with BIG problems. To get involved in protecting our rivers and streams through stronger permitting, become a Pollution Action Pipeline volunteer. Call Gracia at 828-251-1291.

long-term damage to fisheries in this estuary). "EPA has inexplicably reversed course, embracing a devastating mine plan that it determined would cause unacceptable harm just two months ago," said Pamlico-Tar RiverKeeper Heather Jacobs. "EPA isn't protecting the environment our children and grandchildren will inherit long after PCS Phosphate mining has left the area."

Over the next 37 years, PCS Phosphate can mine an additional 11,000 acres, including 4,000 acres of wetlands and more than four miles of tidal creeks and streams in the nation's second largest estuary. The mine expansion will be the largest single destruction of wetlands permitted in North Carolina history, jeopardizing a delicate ecosystem and one of the most productive American fisheries, supporting thousands of jobs. In addition to providing habitat, these natural wetlands improve water quality, buffer hurricanes, and act as freshwater reservoirs when water is scarce, an ever more critical need for North Carolina as the climate changes.

Hog Monitoring Rules Face Rowdy Hearing; NC Senate Tries to Stop All Enviro Rules!

Several years ago, NC's eastern RiverKeepers, along with the international WaterKeeper Alliance, filed a state petition to develop rules for monitoring surface and groundwater around hog operations. Now, after years of stakeholder meetings that led to a very compromised monitoring proposal, the industry has turned around and organized opposition from angry hog operators against even those weakened rules.

The Environmental Management Commission, NC's key rulemaking body, scheduled three hearings on the proposed rules, the first of which was rudely disrupted by hog operators. Before the Commission could even issue its report on the hearings, NC Senator Albertson introduced legislation to stop the EMC from making any environmental rules for two years! In an amazing show of hostility to environmental rulemaking, one committee passed the bill unchanged.

On the floor of the Senate, the bill was amended to apply only to the hog monitoring rules, rather than dozens of other rules under consideration. But even if the House of Representatives manages to stop the bill, this presents a frightening precedent for the planned chaos and roadblocks that bullying by one of the state's biggest polluting industries can create. The tens of thousands of citizens impacted by this and other industries will need to be more active and vocal than ever, or we'll see bullying taken to a high art by all polluters who see this as a successful strategy!

UNC-A Shuts Down Prestigious Environmental Quality Institute Fate of Clean Water Lead Testing and Volunteer Monitoring in Doubt

University of North Carolina-Asheville Chancellor Anne Ponder shocked many last month when she announced her decision to reduce staff at the Asheville campus of UNC by closing two accomplished scientific institutes that had been supported by grants and had brought in additional funds for the University. Best known is the Environmental Quality Institute, founded in the early 1990s by Dr. Rick Maas, an environmental chemist who died of a rare autoimmune disease in 2005, and statistics professor Dr. Steve Patch. The Institute carried out critical drinking water and consumer products research and specialized

Chloramine Disinfection of Water: Creating New Problems?

Guest writers: Deb and Arne Arnason, Wadesboro, NC

Does your city water contain chloramine? Have you experienced any bad effects, as our family has?

Last October, our Anson County Water Department decided to switch from chlorine (which dissipates rapidly) to a combination of chlorine and ammonia, called chloramine. They department had some complaints about the smell of chlorine, and chlorine "byproducts" like trihalomethanes that can cause mutations were high. The change cost my rather poor county \$500,000, and I have since learned that it might have been avoided with better pre-filtration before disinfection.

Last fall, I had several skin rashes, worst on my lower forearms, where the skin became extremely thin and bled easily if lightly scratched. With cold weather, it got worse -- I learned that the Water Dept adds more ammonia in cold weather. Our Water Department said chloramine was okay for people, but not for fish tanks or kidney-dialysis patients. Why?

Citizens Concerned About Chloramine, www.chloramine.org, says that chloramine was never adequately tested for health effects. Many people have developed problems involving skin, lungs, and other soft body tissues because chloramine is an irritant that can cause inflammation. While my husband, missing a lung from cancer, was visiting New Jersey, he felt fine. (Chloramine is banned there and in 12 other states). Upon his return, he became tired, requiring frequent naps and breathing heavily. It was the shower water! Chloramine is worse with heat and steam in enclosed spaces. His throat was red and raw after showering. When he opened the bathroom window, he felt fine, except for eye irritation.

A biochemist at CCAC informed me that chloramine is often not suspected, as the reaction can occur hours after exposure. People react differently, but may develop problems like acid reflux or persistent sinus or eye irritation. I even feel dirty after a bath, despite the filters we put in; filtering chloramine often fails. We are considering putting in a well so we can stay here.

Chloramine also leaches more lead from plumbing than chlorine, a potential toxic hazard to young children if you have older metal pipes. If your annual water quality report or Water Dept. website says your water is disinfected with chloramine, are you feeling any effects? Visit www.chloramine.org or let us know if you experience problems.

in analyses of lead, arsenic and other toxic metals through a unique collaborative model with several non-profit organizations, including Clean Water for NC.

EQI has been a valuable research asset for Western North Carolina and has provided many important low-cost analytical services for state residents as well as clients across the country. Income from the testing supported drinking water research on dangerous contaminants, provided high-quality training for students and safe drinking water advocacy by nonprofit partners.

EQI also provided monthly testing of water samples collected from over 200 sites across the state by the Volunteer Water Information Network (VWIN) and RiverKeepers. Institute researchers collaborated with public and private agencies on special projects, including sampling after 2004 hurricane damage and researching the impact on water quality of land use and steep-slope development.

Bottled Water Safety and Consumer Protections FINALLY in the National Spotlight?

Two recently released reports on bottled water have brought national attention to many of the concerns CWFNC and many other groups have raised about the industry for years. Theoretically, bottled water held to the same safe drinking water standards as municipal tap water, but testing, reporting, enforcement and public right-to-know requirements are far less strict.

One of the reports, from the Environmental Working Group (EWG), showed lab results finding a total of 38 chemical pollutants in 10 popular brands of bottled water, with an average of 8 contaminants in each brand. More than one-third of the chemicals found are not regulated in bottled water, and some contaminant levels exceeded legal limits. The study criticized the industry for failure to disclose the water source, treatment method or contaminants in the water.

The other study, from the Government Accountability Office (GAO), also criticized the safety and consumer protections for bottled water. The GAO called on the Food and Drug Administration, which regulates bottled water as a food, to implement its own findings for conveying information to consumers regarding the quality and safety of bottled water. Accurate labeling is a first step in making consumers aware that bottled water is 1,000 times more expensive than tap water and no safer. Other studies have found that the production and consumption of bottled water is much more energy-intensive than the production of public drinking water.

These reports spurred a July hearing in a Congressional Subcommittee, but few Democrats attended and some Republican lawmakers ridiculed spending time on the issue during an economic downturn. The public will need to keep up pressure to ensure Congress makes strong regulation of bottled water a priority.

Pigeon River Permit 3 Years Late; New Downstream Water Quality Group Forms

For more than a decade, Clean Water for NC has been working to strengthen downstream and downwind accountability for the former Champion Paper Mill in Canton. The polluted effluent from this mill has flowed downstream on the Pigeon River to Tennessee since 1908, causing a black and foamy river for over 80 years. In the 1980s the first major improvements in water quality began. But it was a 1996 permit challenge by TN, Cocke County, Newport and environmental groups that brought about the most dramatic clean up through a precedent-setting Settlement Agreement. Shortly after the Settlement, in 1999, the mill was sold and the new company was named Blue Ridge Paper Products.

Despite commitments by the mill, state agencies and EPA to continue progress in water quality "at the quickest possible pace," a weak 2001 permit from the NC Division of Water Quality has allowed progress to stall out. The permit expired in 2006 but was allowed to continue in order to involve TN and EPA in reviewing the Mill's performance. Since 2007, when the mill was sold again and became Evergreen Packaging, officials from North Carolina have stalled the permitting, knowing that the public process would call strongly for further clean-up of the Pigeon.

We are pleased to report that there is a new Cocke County Waterways Advisory Council, formed by longtime Pigeon River advocate Gay Webb and County Mayor Cliff McMahan, which is focusing on the upcoming permit and clean-up of the County's rivers and streams. At a recent meeting, when Evergreen and their PR folks came to talk to the group about the company's commitments in preparation for the permitting process, members of the Council stated their skepticism, their dissatisfaction with the condition of the river and the expectation that there would be a public hearing in Tennessee. Watch for the release of this historic permit this summer and help us with the final push towards a CLEAN PIGEON RIVER!

Yadkin RiverKeeper Challenges Alcoa's Right to Operate Hydro Dams

The Yadkin RiverKeeper has filed an official challenge to the "401" water quality certification for the Alcoa Corporation's three hydroelectric power dams, calling into question whether the international aluminum giant will be allowed to continue to operate on the Yadkin River for another 50 years. The challenge asserts that Alcoa was allowed to profit from years of polluting operations, and must be held accountable for dozens of hazardous sites and contaminated sediments of Badin Lake.

Surprisingly, Governor Beverly Perdue has intervened in the case, asking to halt all permits until the case can be resolved, and the judge has granted her request. The 401 certification granted by the NC Division of Water Quality included an unprecedented provision calling for a multi-million dollar bond to be posted by Alcoa to ensure some pollution problems (but not the hazardous waste) were cleaned up. Clean Water for NC has supported such "pre-

Dam Inspections: One Step for NC Coal Ash Safety

This spring, Reps. Pricey Harrison, Susan Fisher and others introduced a strong bill to increase monitoring and public protections for coal ash impoundments at power plants. The bill required ground-water monitoring for toxic metals, synthetic liners and other regulations, but it moved slowly, due to resistance from the utilities. So, in the rush of final legislation for the session, one part of that coal ash bill was inserted into a power plant emissions and then passed both House and Senate. Senate bill 1004 removed the exemption for coal ash ponds from NC's Dam Safety Act, now requiring that they be inspected annually by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Concern has been high since a Tennessee Valley Authority coal ash dam burst last December, sending 5.4 million cubic yards of toxic power-plant sludge onto a nearby community. The US EPA recently reported that NC has 12 of the nation's 44 "high hazard" ash pond dams (likely to kill people if they fail). We still need to work for stronger regulation of coal ash dam inspections were an important step!

Other provisions of S1004 created a fast permitting process for Progress Energy to convert an old coal plant to natural gas to meet Clean Smokestacks Act requirements for sulfur dioxide and encourage electric utilities to displace coal plants by purchase or construction of a "carbon offset facility," allowing them to charge customers for the estimated cost of coal that would have been burned.

NC's "High Hazard" Coal Ash Ponds

- 1-Asheville Plant (Progress) (2), Asheville, Buncombe Co.
- 2-Marshall Steam Station (Duke), Terrell-Lake Norman, Catawba Co.
- 3-Allen Steam Station (Duke), Belmont, Gaston Co.
- 4-Riverbend Steam Station (Duke) (2), Mount Holly, Gaston Co.
- 5-Buck Steam Station (Duke) (3), Spencer, Rowan Co.
- 6-Belews Creek Steam Station (Duke), Walnut Cove, Stokes Co.
- 7-Dan River Steam Station (Duke) (2), Eden, Rockingham Co.

permit" bonds for many years as a means to hold polluters more accountable. Alcoa, seeing that the permit was going to be delayed by the RiverKeeper's challenge, decided to contest this part of the permit, so this promises to be a precedent-setting case.

Lower Yadkin County legislators, in the area that lost hundreds of jobs when Alcoa's Badin aluminum works shut down, filed a bill this spring (Senate Bill 967) that would create a Yadkin River Trust to develop the River and take over operations of the dams. While we oppose Alcoa's continued unaccountable operation of the dams, there have been some concerns about this legislation, as it has been heavily backed by development interests and focuses less attention on environmental restoration or fair water access. We are glad that the Yadkin RiverKeeper has pushed for some improvements in the bill and will provide oversight and advocacy to protect the River and its communities.

NC SAVE\$ ENERGY Alliance Digs in for the Long Haul

After months of organizing grassroots support to pass **NC House Bill 1050**, which would create a statewide, independent (i.e., non-utility-run), energy efficiency program, it looks like our Alliance of 35+ groups will need to build toward next year's legislative session. NC SAVE\$ ENERGY is based on six states' successful efficiency programs and would create thousands of new jobs, provide energy savings for residents and ensure a cleaner, more secure and affordable energy future.

A wonderful group of House sponsors and co-sponsors signed up to back the bill, but the first time it came up for committee review, the utilities quickly dispatched six teams of experienced lobbyists in one of the greatest shows of legislative clout we've ever seen. The bill was discussed, but not voted on, as several Committee members raised utility-planted concerns about the proposal. We have a lot of work to do convincing the public, businesses and legislators that a small "public benefit fee" is not a tax, but an excellent investment that will bring savings, jobs and environmental benefits for all North Carolinians.

Stopping Toxic Titan Cement Plant is a Tough Sell in NC Legislature

Thousands of eastern N. C. residents and their allies throughout the state, led by the "Stop Titan" coalition, have called on local and state officials to hold off on permitting a cement plant near the town of Castle Hayne that would be among the largest ever built in the U. S. But officials who recruited the plant say that the \$4.5 million in incentives offered to Titan to locate the plant there is an investment in jobs and economic development.

Clean Water for NC joined with Stop Titan volunteers last spring to start door-to-door surveying in working-class neighborhoods close to the plant, and we found even more concerns about the plant's toxic air and water impacts than we had expected. It seems the folks that the company claims need the jobs at Titan may not be willing to sell out their community's health for vague promises of economic development after all!

At the urging of her constituents, NC Senator Julia Boseman (New Hanover County) has tried twice to introduce a bill calling for a one-year moratorium for permits for the new plant. Unfortunately, the Commerce Committee, which was lobbied intensively by industry and economic development officials, has rejected the bill. When an industry is recruited in a closed process and then offered huge incentives, it's a steep uphill climb to stop the plant siting. However, we believe that grassroots efforts can still win the day, by organizing deeper into local communities to build awareness of the proposed Titan plant's hazards as well as a shared vision for safe local economic development.

Just as health insurance companies are at the forefront of the fight against a "public option" for health care, Duke and Progress Energy are fighting this proposal for a cost-effective program that puts people, jobs and reduced energy use before utility profits. Duke's lobbyists claimed that the utilities were "better suited" to run programs reducing energy consumption, and criticized NC SAVE\$ ENERGY's surcharge, which would average less than \$2/month. However, Duke is seeking a much higher consumer rate hike that will average about \$11 a month per household, partly to build unnecessary new power plants.

Help us to build support for NC SAVE\$ ENERGY with businesses, congregations and town and city governments. Call CWFNC's offices in Durham or Asheville today to find out how you can help! More information is online at www.ncsavesenergy.org.

Pumping Wastewater into Groundwater?? Activists Help Drown a Bad Bill!

When the Onslow Water and Sewer Authority (ONWASA) saw a new Marine base and other development coming and couldn't pump treated sewage into coastal waters, it wanted to avoid buying more of the expensive coastal land into which they'd been spraying wastewater. In an ever-shifting sequence of presentations to NC legislative committees, they've proposed that the General Assembly give wastewater utilities the authority to pump treated wastewater into groundwater. First they said it was for disposal. When state environmental officials said no, they changed the message to "storage and retrieval," claiming that this approach would conserve water, stop saltwater intrusion and accomplish other minor miracles. House Bill 643 was filed this spring by Rep. Tucker to create this new type of permit for storing wastewater ("reclaimed") in aquifers, starting with ONWASA.

For CWFNC and the 2.7 million NC residents who use groundwater through unregulated private wells, this was a dangerous precedent. Tess Sanders, the White Oak/New RiverKeeper, whose household water comes from the same aquifer that ONWASA had been eyeing for dumping this waste, passionately headed the effort to stop this terrible proposal and expose it as shortsighted and unstudied.

The more ONWASA representatives changed their stated purpose for the aquifer storage to make it more palatable, the more skeptical legislators became. The utility didn't have any funding or definite plans to retrieve and distribute the reclaimed water, and even the Onslow County commissioners were mostly opposed to the idea. In the end, the bill was changed to a "study bill," with a final report to come two years from now. Rep. Tucker, unfazed by the defeat of his proposal for ONWASA, said it would give them "more time to sell the idea" to the public and legislators. We doubt it.