



# Clean Water for North Carolina

## Clean Currents

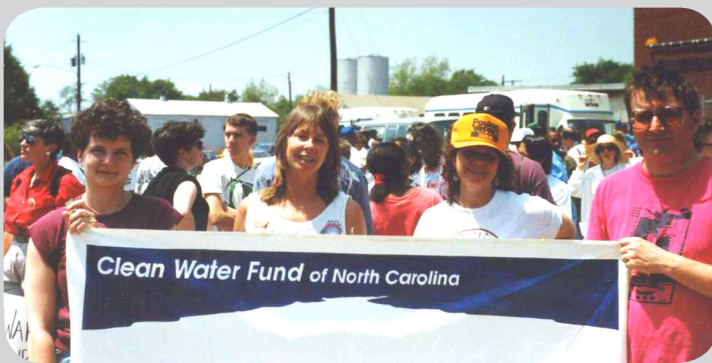
Fall 2019

*A newsletter of clean water and community environmental justice issues*

### Celebrating 35 Years of Working with Communities for Justice!!

In July of 1984, a group of volunteers committed to working with communities to protect them from toxic threats and to making the state's environmental policies more just and inclusive, met around a kitchen table in Charlotte and formed Clean Water Fund of North Carolina, with our lead office in Asheville. In the early

2000s, we changed our name to Clean Water for North Carolina, and opened an office in Durham. Thanks to all of you who have supported our work, volunteered for our outreach and advocacy and worked to make us a stronger, organization. **WE CELEBRATE YOU!!** Here are just a few snapshots from our 35 year history:



1991—Rally to support survivors of a Hamlet chicken packing plant fire that killed 25 Latino and African American women, and demand accountability for the plant's owners, who had locked workers in.. From the beginning, we were committed to working at the intersection of social and environmental justice.



2003—When Rev. Jerry Price (above, watching the removal of a nearby business's leaking underground waste tank) and the legislator for his southeast Raleigh district, Rep. Bernard Allen, heard that nearly 20 wells in their neighborhood were contaminated, they contacted CWFNC. This led to years of advocacy for statewide county well protection programs, inspections and testing for new wells, and an Emergency Drinking Water Fund for replacement safe water.



2006 - 2008, Clean Water for NC's Durham and Asheville offices hosted "Water and Energy for Justice" Youth teams, providing paid jobs for the summer break. Local high school youth from low income areas learned about energy efficiency, climate change, and restoring degraded streams, and skills to improve their homes and neighborhoods.



2011 - 2015 The fight against "fracking." CWFNC Staff, volunteers and allies gave many presentations to civic groups, churches and local governments on fracking and the impacts it would have on communities. We formed the FrackFreeNC Alliance, with over 35 member groups, most of them rural. Above, hundreds march to the NC legislature to stop a "rush to frack," allowing time to develop strong regulations. Since 2014, we've worked with allies and impacted communities to resist building the huge, fracked gas Atlantic Coast Pipeline through African-American and Native American areas.



## WHO WE ARE

### 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, as well as 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

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

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Belinda Joyner, Northeast Organizer

## A Fond Farewell to Xavier Boatright

When Xavier first came to Clean Water for NC, he told us he knew very little about how coal ash was affecting communities around the state. Those who have worked with him in recent years for coal ash justice probably find that hard to believe. Over his 3 ½ years with CWFNC, Xavier became someone that many allies and community members could turn to for his technical and community-based knowledge of coal ash impacts, as well as organizing on several Environmental Justice threats in western NC. He played an important role with the grassroots Alliance of Carolinians Together (ACT) Against Coal



Ash, facilitating many of the weekly calls between impacted community members and non-profit allies to stand together in organizing for complete excavation and safe water.

We celebrate the time we've had working with Xavier, with thanks for the research he has provided as well as the warm relationships he had with various communities. He has contributed to many program efforts at this organization, and always brought a fervor for justice and a gracious, positive attitude. We will surely miss having him with us, and we wish him all the best as he continues in his new job, working with impacted communities in South Carolina and beyond.

## Volunteer Spotlight—Thanks, Trinity!

Trinity Brown is a student at Mars Hill University with a focus on environmental studies. She grew up in Richmond County, spending a great deal of time on her family's poultry farm and has been a valuable resource to CWFNC, contributing to staff research on the impacts of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). She recently donated her time to greet guests at our 35th Anniversary Meeting. Clean Water for NC thanks Trinity and all of our volunteers who have contributed their time and efforts in the past year!



## Your Giving Makes All Our Work Possible!

As a grassroots non-profit organization, we rely on the gracious donations of our new and recurring members! Without this support, we wouldn't be able to work with communities fighting environmental injustices, such as Duke Energy's coal ash pits and fracked gas Atlantic Coast Pipeline, unregulated animal operations, and corporate takeover of water utilities.

Any amount can have a big effect for our grassroots work. Whether it's a one-time gift, or a monthly contribution of \$10, you'll help us to partner with communities, assist in advocacy and even publish educational materials, like this newsletter!

Making a donation to CWFNC is easy! Just visit [www.cwfn.org](http://www.cwfn.org) and click the "Donate Now" button on the left to make a secure contribution through Keela. You can also donate by check mailed to **Clean Water for NC, 1070 Tunnel Rd. Bldg. 4, Suite 1, Asheville, NC 28805** Your support helps us work towards Environmental Justice for all North Carolinians – thank YOU!

## Climate, Environmental Justice, and Pipelines

### Climate Justice IS Environmental Justice!

CWFNC realizes it's urgent to broaden our "EJ perspective" to include the ever-more critical challenges of climate change. **Danielle Purifoy**, (photo center) post-doctoral fellow in Geography at UNC-Chapel Hill, gave a key presentation to our 35th Anniversary meeting, opening our eyes to how climate change is related to and worsens the kind of EJ threats we generally think about.

Environmental Justice, Dr. Purifoy pointed out, is concerned with the racial politics of development, not only with the disproportionate impact of a particular facility on a community of color or low income. Issues of resource extraction and distribution (including fracking, pipelines and siting of energy facilities), the value of land proposed for a new project, and the political power of people who live there will all have a major impact on whether a project is built and allowed to start operations. If residents of an area are mostly people of color or low income, it's probably because the land and real estate values are relatively low. This creates a continuing cycle of disproportionate impacts, lower land values, and increased vulnerability to environmentally degrading projects.



Facilities which cause adverse health impacts also emit large quantities of climate forcing gases known as "greenhouse gases." Carbon dioxide is released in vehicle emissions, coal and gas fired power plants, and even in home energy use. Methane is emitted by Contained Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) and routine operations of fracked gas pipelines. Nitrous oxide is released by applying nitrogen fertilizer in industrial agriculture, as well as some factory emissions. Such facilities are more likely to be located in communities of color or low income, and the regional climate change they worsen only increases the impacts of emissions on the health and quality of life of residents.

Dr. Purifoy recommends approaches to reducing disproportionate impacts on vulnerable communities:

- Targeted investments in communities of color, avoiding displacement
- Comprehensive equity and risk assessments and long-term monitoring, with enforcement through federal Civil Rights cases
- Implementing plans to reduce risks and inequities over time, with independent evaluation
- Ending laws and policies which perpetuate harm.

## Estimating Methane Emissions, Climate Impact of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline



The Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) would be a huge fracked gas pipeline that would run 190 miles through 8 North Carolina counties. Originally estimated to cost \$5.1 billion, legal problems from hastily drafted permits have increased costs to over \$7.5 B. Critically, the route would put Native American and African-American residents

at disproportionate risk of fire and explosions, and there was no attempt to assess the climate impact of the ACP!

Federal agencies claimed that there's no methodology to assess a pipeline's methane emissions and climate impacts, but **Maria Delgado**, (photo left) our 2019 Duke Univ. Stanback Intern, decided to undertake such an assessment, with guidance on where emissions could occur from Prof. Anthony Ingraffea, an expert on fracking, pipelines, methane emissions and climate.

Methane is far more efficient at trapping radiation than CO2, with a Global Warming Potential 86 times that of carbon dioxide in a 20-year time frame. Methane affects the atmosphere for a shorter period than CO2, but during that period, the effect is much larger.

Maria added together likely methane emissions from upstream "fracking", routine leaks and releases during pipeline operations, accidents, and downstream releases where the methane is burned for homes and industry. The result? Operation of the ACP could raise methane emissions above EPA's estimate for all US gas infrastructure by almost 14%—a major contribution to climate impacts!

**Belinda Joyner, Concerned Citizens of Northampton County, speaks out on major impacts of the ACP at the Tri-State Pipeline Strike in Roanoke in September.**





### Grossly Unregulated, Poultry Operations Invade, Pollution Surges

North Carolina has an unpleasant history of impacting communities with the waste of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). Infamously known are the hog farms of eastern NC, whose waste-filled lagoons are pumped and sprayed onto fields unbearably close to residents. But a shocking 2018 report called “Under the Radar,” from the Environmental Working Group and Waterkeeper Alliance has revealed that poultry operations are now the greatest source of livestock pollution to NC waters, and the state environmental agency isn’t even keeping track.

While CAFOs that store wet waste are required to obtain a permit from the state, dry waste poultry operations are “deemed permitted,” meaning no permit application is needed for construction or operation. As a result, the state has essentially no record of the number of barns or animals, or even the location of each operation. It was only through the research of environmental groups that we now have a more accurate picture of massive expansion.

Riverkeepers collected data from small aircraft documenting each poultry barn (housing 20,000-30,000 birds per barn). The stench was unavoidable, even from the air, as they recorded violations of waste piles being left uncovered and exposed to wind and rain for over 15 days (essentially the only citable regulation for dry waste

operations). It is estimated that poultry waste produces 4.8 times as much nitrogen and 4.1 times as much phosphorus as the same weight of swine waste and is applied without regard to proximity to streams or wells.

Tallied data reveal the poultry industry has more than tripled in size over the last decade, swelling to over 500 million birds and rising. This growth is geographically uneven burdening some communities more than others. Catawba Riverkeeper, **Brandon Jones**, (photo left) reports that in just five years, Alexander County poultry population grew from 2.7-9.1 million. To complicate matters, some counties are experiencing additive impacts. Sampson and Duplin Counties, already plagued by the greatest numbers of hog operations, are now the top two counties for poultry, with 93 percent within three miles of at least 20 other poultry or swine farms (Under the Radar).



It is clear that more research is needed, but it’s not too soon to push for regulating these facilities. More surface water testing is needed, of course, but questions about well water impacts are left completely unanswered due to the ambiguity of poultry waste land application records. Clean Water for NC will join other environmental groups and community allies to collaborate in revealing a more complete picture of the impacts of this sprawling industry and protect impacted communities.

### UNC Team Tests Well Water Quality in Six Counties

Over 3 million people in North Carolina rely on groundwater as their drinking water source. However, it has only been since 2008 that county environmental health departments began inspecting newly drilled wells and testing for a set of common contaminants, leaving a big gap in knowledge about safety of hundreds of thousands of household drinking water wells.

Responding to widespread community concerns about toxic metals in groundwater, **Dr. Andrew George** (photo right), Community Engagement Coordinator at UNC’s Institute for the Environment, headed a team of researchers to collaborate with communities on free testing for private wells in six NC counties: Stokes, Wayne, New Hanover, Robeson, Iredell, and Chatham.

What do all these counties have in common? They have all been host to Duke Energy coal ash sites where toxic heavy metals are likely present. Sampling focused on common contaminants from plumbing, such as lead and copper, natural contaminants, as well as on coal ash-related heavy metals, including arsenic, vanadium, lead and chromium –all of which can leach into groundwater and cause serious health problems, including cancer.

Dr. George’s team announced sampling in each of these counties and met with the community and local organizations, announcing dates to pick up sampling materials and drop off samples, going door to door

where needed. Participating households collected a “first draw” sample, after water had been sitting in pipes for at least 6 hours, and a “flushed” sample, so researchers could analyze groundwater without any contaminants coming from the home’s plumbing.

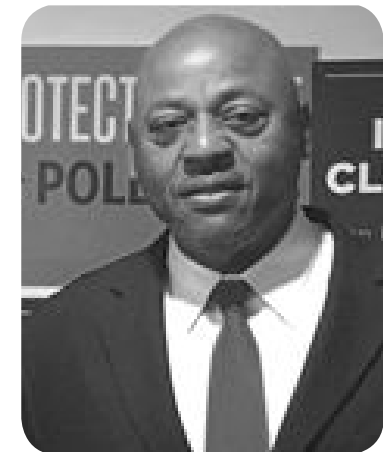
Researchers at Virginia Tech University analyzed the samples and the UNC team met with communities to report back results. Fifteen percent of wells in the Chatham County study showed copper levels above the health based standard, and 10% were above the lead standard—both indicating contamination from home plumbing. Two contaminants often associated with coal ash showed up frequently at levels above the state health standards. Hexavalent chromium was above the standard in 51% of Chatham wells tested and 80% of Iredell County wells. Vanadium levels were above the state standard in most wells in Chatham, New Hanover and Iredell Counties.



Flushing at the tap used for drinking water is the least expensive way to substantially reduce lead and copper levels, while filtration is needed to remove toxic metals like hexavalent chromium and vanadium. As metals aren’t commonly passed through the skin, an under-sink filter that’s “NSF 53 certified” to remove metals can make water safe to drink, not requiring a costly whole-house filter. We urge well users to test every 3 to 5 years for the most common contaminants.

### Working for Coal Ash Justice: Celebrate, Prepare, Advocate

In April 2019, the people of NC had reason to celebrate. After hundreds showed up for public meetings near six coal ash sites, and thousands sent in public comments, NCDEQ stood with communities and ordered Duke Energy to fully excavate remaining coal ash and move it to lined landfills. It was a peak moment in years-long efforts of neighbors and allies laboring together to protect coal ash communities from harmful health impacts and environmental damage.



Duke wasted no time in demonstrating that the fight was far from over. Only two weeks after the order, Duke filed an appeal, challenging DEQ’s authority to issue the mandate as well as their judgment in ordering full excavation. As we go to print, a ruling that DEQ does indeed have that authority has just been announced. Duke claims DEQ was wrong to choose the most protective closure method for communities, saying their preferred method of putting a cap over the coal ash in place would be

“protective enough.” Yet, Duke’s own monitoring data showed groundwater contamination at every un-excavated site in the state, and, if Duke had its way, much of the capped ash would be left sitting in unlined pits below the water table. While the decision is resting in the hands of state judges, many advocates and community members prepare for what is next to come.

One fast-approaching issue is coal ash “recycling.” In compliance with the NC Coal Ash Management Act (CAMA), Duke is required to build recycling centers at three locations in the state. These plants will yield 300,000 tons of reprocessed coal ash for use in the concrete industry. Plans for the centers reveal that Duke did not choose the best available scrubber technology, which would have significantly reduced air emissions during reburning of coal ash. Air permits have been approved by the Division of Air Quality, yet community members near these plants, like **Bobby Jones** (photo left) and **Deborah Graham** (photo right), have expressed concerns that the proposed monitoring protocol could miss spikes of particulates and other emissions.

Depending on the outcome of the appeal, there are several avenues for action on coal ash disposal. If the DEQ order is overturned, advocates are

likely to continue the fight for full excavation. However, even if full excavation is implemented, communities will need to pressure for disposal of coal ash in lined landfills on Duke property. Duke must be held accountable for any future pollution issues that may arise from the disposal of their coal ash and cannot be permitted to truck pollution into landfills in any NC community.

The Alliance of Carolinians Together (ACT) Against Coal Ash is gearing up to continue to work for justice in NC and support other communities facing similar threats. Many other states have less protective state laws, and federal rollbacks on coal ash management are proposed, threatening communities with open waste piles, unmonitored use of coal ash in construction projects, and reduction of groundwater monitoring protections. ACT is planning to bring folks together at a meeting in early 2020 to learn more about coal ash threats and solutions in the U.S. and abroad, to work for securing future victories for all who are impacted.





## Safe, Affordable Water

### Whistleblower Says PFAS Contamination Could Have Been Stopped!

Almost 15 years ago, CWFNC worked with the Water Keepers and the Steelworkers Union to fight contamination and worker exposure at DuPont-Fayetteville Works by C-8, a perfluorinated compound used in the production of Teflon, and stain resistant and non-stick products. 3M Company had stopped production years before because it viewed the compound as too toxic, too easily spread in the environment and too persistent. Within 2 years of starting production in Fayetteville, high levels of C8 in workers' blood and groundwater were detected. However, DuPont denied any problem until EPA fined them for failing to disclose health and environmental risks. Among health effects reported for C8 and related PFAS compounds are: animal carcinogen, causes

mammary tumors, liver toxicity, raises cholesterol, and causes birth defects.

After press conferences, and local community members confronting the CEO at shareholder meetings, DuPont finally agreed to a weak settlement agreement



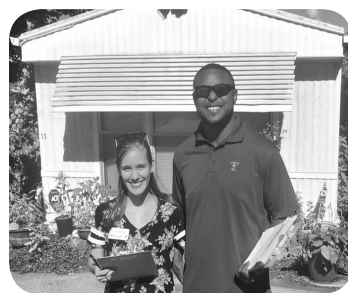
### Outreach to Find Drinking Water Challenges Faced by Mobile Home Communities

Many people who struggle to find affordable housing turn to mobile homes as less expensive housing option. Unfortunately, living in mobile home parks comes with inherent challenges and vulnerabilities, especially for drinking water access, quality, and affordability. This summer, we worked with our Duke University Stanback intern, **Elizabeth Allen**, to conduct a "listening canvas," reaching over 100 mobile home park residences to learn whether and where advocacy was needed to protect residents' right to water.

We heard from dozens of households who shared their experiences with water shutoffs and shortages. This inability to access reliable, year-round water was related to a number of reasons, including extreme weather events, leaking infrastructure, and poor maintenance of community wells.

This outreach allowed us to understand residents' perceptions and attitudes towards the quality of their drinking water. Numerous households revealed that they did not trust their water, some noting problematic colors, tastes, or odors. However, multiple people did not want to notify their landlord because they didn't want to make their landlord angry or worsen their living situations. Mobile homes are often owned by the tenant while the land is rented from a landowner, meaning eviction could result in a tremendous loss of investment.

As part of our grassroots Environmental Justice work, we look forward to continuing this project to work with some of these communities to ensure all residents have access to safe, affordable, and reliable drinking water, and do further outreach to identify the policy problems where our advocacy could help protect residents.



with EPA to phase out production of C-8. In 2016, a new set of related compounds, including GenX, began showing up in water and air, and even in drinking water sources.

Early this year, we learned that **Tom McKinney** (photo left), a former inspector who had worked in both the water and air quality branches of NC's regulatory agency, had tried for years to get water and air regulators to talk to each other and eliminate the source of contamination from the Fayetteville production site, now under the ownership of Chemours. Tom spoke powerfully at our 35th Anniversary Meeting about "The Mysterious 15 Year DEQ Cover Up" and failure to stop contamination, even long after it was documented.

He told of a 2005 "lockdown" of information by NC's Air Quality Director, followed by "silos" of information and a misleading 2012 DEQ "memo and report" on conditions at the Chemours Fayetteville facility, ignoring the lack of advanced wastewater treatment to remove PFAS recovered by air scrubbers before discharging water. Finally, DEQ hid critical information from the NC Science Advisory Board in 2018, preventing them from calling for action to prevent contamination. CWFNC will work with McKinney for stronger regulatory attention to stop PFAS releases.

### Supporting Communities' Fight For Fair Rates, Service

Through our work, we've found public, locally-controlled utilities are most likely to offer quality, affordable water and sewer service, while customers of private for-profit water utilities often face worse conditions. CWFNC helps provide information on upcoming rate hearings, connecting communities to fight for safe, fairly priced water, and organizing with customers to advocate for customer rights with NC Justice Dept officials and the Utilities Commission.

Recently, we worked with customers of Aqua North Carolina (NC's largest private, for-profit water utility) in communities across the state. We successfully challenged the company's proposed high rates, and poor record of customer service and water quality, a testament to the hard work and organizing by Aqua customers (water rates only rose \$.18 per month).

We continue to work for safe, affordable water for all North Carolinians by challenging a rate hike by another corporate utility, Carolina Water Service, connecting with customers to strategize opportunities fight for fair rates and quality service.

## Clean Water for North Carolina

### Thanks to Our Generous Foundations and Major Donors!

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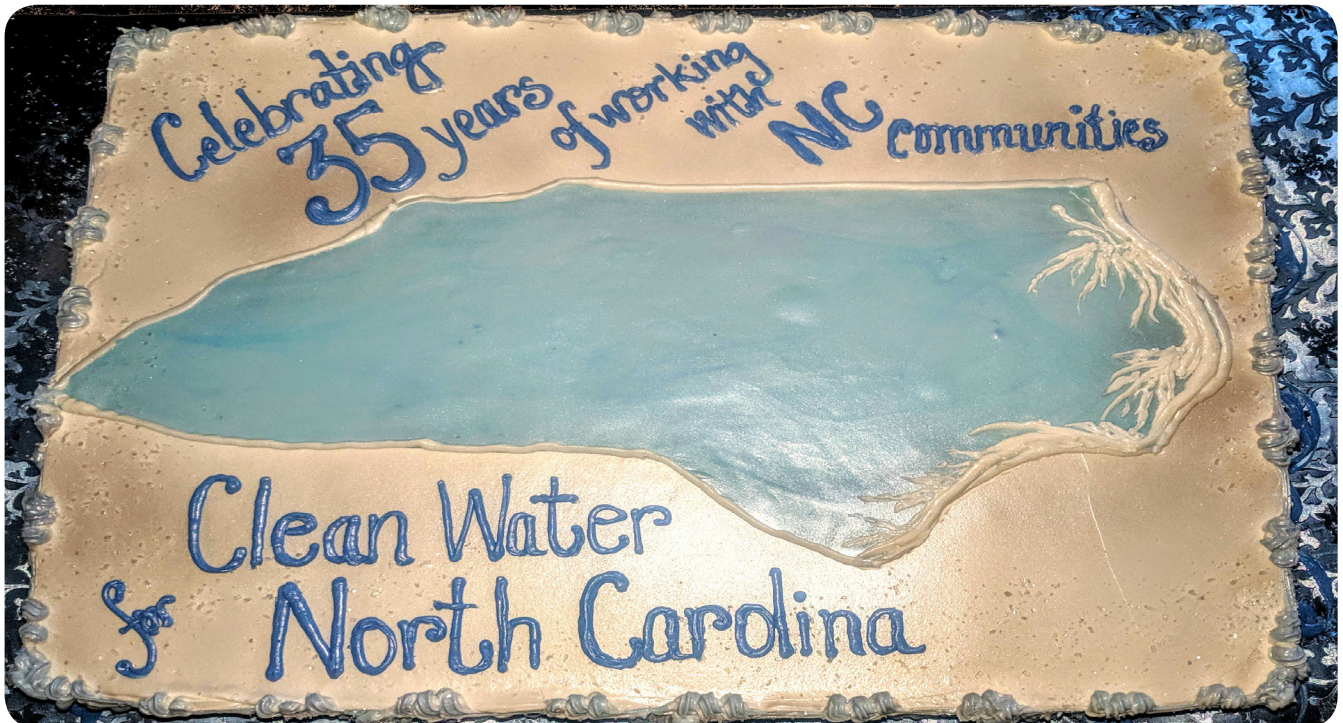
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## 35th Anniversary Issue!



*Beautiful cake prepared for our 35th Annual Meeting by Karen Donatelli Bakery, Asheville NC*