

CLEAN CURRENTS

SPRING 2025

A NEWSLETTER OF CLEAN WATER AND
COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ISSUES

THIS ISSUE

*A Remarkable & Resilient
Environmental Justice Community:
Northampton County*

*Duke's Gas Build-out: An Attack on
NC's Water*

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A REMARKABLE & RESILIENT ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITY: NORTHAMPTON COUNTY

Even before Clean Water for NC met Belinda Joyner at the 2000 NC EJ Summit, Belinda had been involved in Environmental Justice issues in Northampton County. Since she joined our staff, she has gotten CWFNC involved and revitalized the Concerned Citizens of Northampton County, while connecting to other allies, such as Dogwood Alliance, to help in fighting massive wood pellet plants. In 2001 and-2002, Belinda and Hope did a door to door survey about people's access to drinking water in the area. We learned that many households were served by public water even in rural areas, but not in some of the most industry impacted areas, such as around a huge hog CAFO. From 2002, for over a decade, Belinda helped lead ongoing activism by Concerned Citizens to monitor proposed industrial polluters, especially in western Northampton County, which was used as a sacrifice" zone to recruit dirty industries.

In 2009, Belinda organized and educated local residents about the proposed new Enviva plant in Gaston, and after operations began, she led monitoring and resistance in collaboration with the Dogwood Alliance. Resistance to several wood pellet plants has been part of Belinda's advocacy since that time, along with media work and international education about the Environmental Justice, ecological and climate harms of this industry which falsely claims to be clean and climate neutral.



Belinda Joyner testifies at a hearing on Enviva in 2019

CONCERNED CITIZENS OF NORTHAMPTON COUNTY CONTINUED

Concerned Citizens
at an air quality
hearing for an
Atlantic Coast
Pipeline Compressor
station in 2017



From 2014, when the proposed 600-mile Atlantic Coast Pipeline was announced, Belinda, CWFNC and others in the FrackFreeNC Alliance led organizing, public events and permit challenges until it was canceled in 2020.

The resistance was visible in a well-attended, feisty air quality hearing and other rallies, and meetings against the pipeline and compressor station, part of grassroots resistance all along the pipeline route. In 2019, CWFNC, the Concerned Citizens and the NC Environmental Justice Network joined with other allies to challenge a major permit for the pipeline and filed a Civil Rights suit, one of many legal challenges that helped to make Duke Energy and Dominion decide to abandon the pipeline in 2020!



Since 2023, CWFNC, Belinda, and Richie Harding of Northampton First have been sampling wells and home surfaces around a huge CAFO to detect possible contamination from; groundwater or spraying of waste. This CAFO is the site of a “bio-energy” project to capture methane, likely leading to expanded production. It was a high priority to learn as much as possible about current impacts before expansion could occur & share the results & concerns with residents to hold the facility accountable.

This summer, CWFNC is offering a Northeastern Environmental Justice Internship to help build the next generation of EJ activism in partnership with Belinda and the growing range of community allies working on social, economic and environmental justice issues in and around Northampton County. We celebrate a community with a long history of resilience and determination for becoming a beacon of Environmental Justice!

★ Rep. Rodney Pierce, Belinda Joyner, & Rev. Richie Harding at Northampton Community Health day in 2024

WHO WE ARE

Clean Water for NC is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization with a mission to promote clean, safe water and environments and empowered, just communities for all North Carolinians through organizing, education, advocacy, and technical assistance.

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Thank you to all of
our members,
donors, &
foundations!

(On the advice of
civil liberties
experts, we're not
naming you
publicly, due to our
climate & fossil
fuel activism!)

ABOUT US

HOW CLEAN WATER FOR NC'S ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE INTERNS HAVE MOVED US FORWARD

CWFNC Search is Open for Two New Environmental Justice interns

CWFNCs Board has enthusiastically supported a staff proposal to hire two Environmental Justice Interns, for the summer of 2025. We are reaching out to colleges and grassroots organizations to find talented and motivated young people who can help our organization and community partners work in solidarity at a time when federal EJ programs are being defunded and strangled. EJ Interns have made a huge difference to our work over the years, and why we believe that they will do so again!

Kelli Reed, our first EJ Intern, in 2004, had just graduated as Valedictorian at Winston-Salem State University, with a degree in Social Sciences. She joined us working on an intensive project to follow up on private well contamination incidents in several diverse communities around the state, and assess how the communities' race, wealth and education impacted their ability to get safe replacement water. Detailed file reviews and extensive community interviews showed that people of color communities, and communities with low wealth and low educational levels experienced much less success in getting safe replacement water. Kelli's work and our staff connections with impacted communities played a huge role in our work with Rep Bernard Allen and other legislators to establish a "no fault" emergency drinking water fund to supply safe replacement water, and built our work to protect well users statewide.

Huei-An Chu, a graduate student from UNC's School of Public Health, worked with us to develop recommendations to improve notification and participation by EJ communities in public processes for permitting and environmental policies. Interviewing state staff tasked with EJ, we found a deep lack of understanding of the huge power gap between big polluters and an impacted community.

Andres Gaviria, a student in Environmental Health at East Carolina University, joined us in extensive outreach to talk with folks about who they see as responsible for protection of water quality. He also assisted an eastern NC community whose public well had very high manganese levels and discolored water. While not toxic in drinking water, the discoloration and odor caused folks in this low wealth community to spend significant amounts for bottled water. This jump started our work to advocate for inclusion of Manganese in federal drinking water standards.



**WILL BARBER III, 2016
EJ LAW INTERN**

Will Barber III, an incoming NCCU Law student, joined us for a summer of looking at regulations and laws that had the potential for making a big difference in achieving Environmental Justice. The following year, CWFNC joined the NC Environmental Justice Network and a dozen other organizations in filing a Title 6 Civil Rights suit to challenge the NC Dept. of Environmental Quality's approval of a major water permit for the huge Atlantic Coast Pipeline. Filing this suit got extensive media coverage and became part of the persistent resistance to the ACP that finally made Duke Energy and Dominion abandon the pipeline project in 2020.

Thanks to the work of these EJ Interns for moving CWFNC forward! The Northeastern NC and Western NC EJ Interns will make a big difference for CWFNC's work, too! **Thanks so much for your support, which makes these internships possible!**



**KELLI REED, 2004
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE INTERN**
(with Harold Stanley, an impacted landowner)

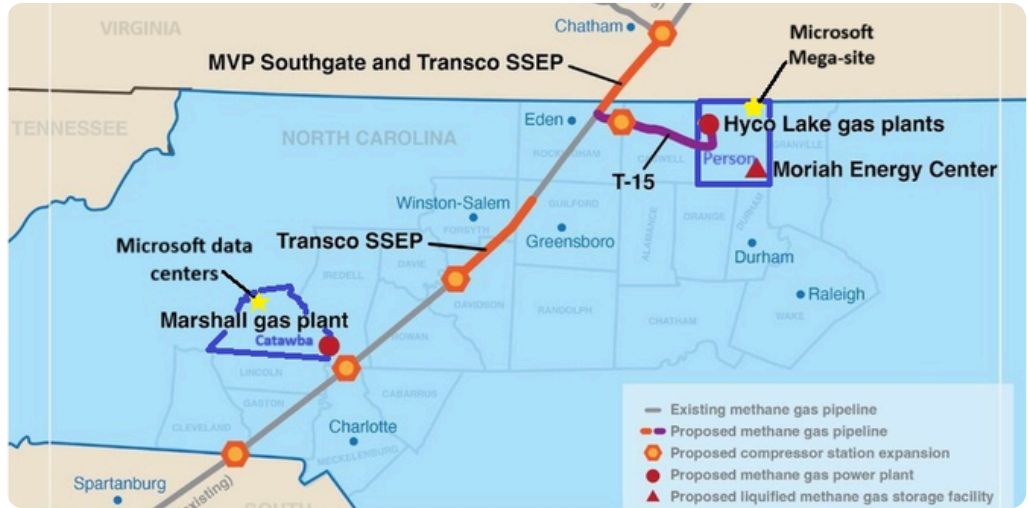
4 DUKE'S GAS BUILDOUT IS AN ATTACK ON NC'S WATER

Duke Energy's plans for making electricity threaten North Carolina streams, drinking water, air quality, and even water utility infrastructure.

What is Duke Planning?

Duke Energy is proposing three huge gas powerplants in Person & Catawba Counties. To feed them, Duke needs massive pipelines crisscrossing North Carolina. The three pipelines are: Transco's SSEP, Enbridge's T-15, the MVP Southgate.

(Map by Appalachian Voices, CWFNC added Microsoft locations.)



Drinking Water & Wells

These pipelines would cross drinking water sources. Pipeline construction erodes sediment into water. Water with more sediment is more expensive to treat and needs more chemicals. After Hurricane Helene, a major cause for the delay in restoring drinking water to Asheville was sediment in the water.

When methane pipelines leak or break, chemicals like benzene or propane might get into groundwater. These chemicals can harm health. NC's county well programs do not test for all these chemicals.



Sediment from the Moriah Energy Center construction site in Person Co. erodes into a stream. The stream flows to Lake Michie, a drinking water supply for Durham.

Methane gas is as bad for our climate as coal. It leaks from pipelines, compressor stations, & powerplants. Climate change can:

- Make dangerous storms like Hurricane Helene more likely. These storms can:
 - Take out public water infrastructure, like in Asheville
 - Flood and contaminate private wells
 - Destroy septic systems.
- Worsen droughts, shrinking our drinking water supply.

Streams, Rivers, & Wetlands

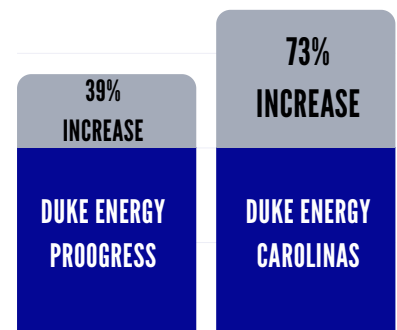
Combined, these pipelines would cross hundreds of streams, rivers, and wetlands. In the long term, **pipeline operation can threaten all downstream water systems.** How?

- Pipeline water crossings can cause erosion, permanently harming stream banks and riverbeds.

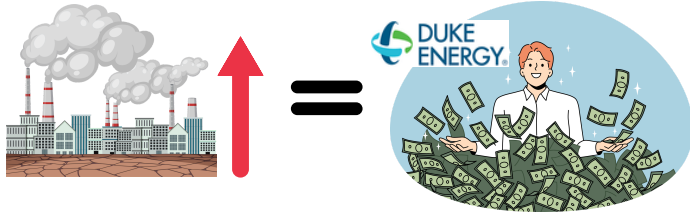
- Flooding can expose buried pipelines. Exposed pipelines are more likely to corrode and rupture.
- **Communities pay the cost.** A study of the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) found that over the years, MVP would cost communities millions of dollars due to harming land, decreased property values, & less economic growth. Duke Energy plans to buy gas from the proposed extension of MVP, called MVP Southgate.

Duke Customers: Your Electric Bill Will Go Up

Duke's gas buildout is part of a plan they estimate will raise your electric bill:



Why is Duke's plan so expensive? NC law ties how much profit Duke keeps to how much they spend on infrastructure. More new expensive infrastructure= more money for Duke.



Powering data centers & foreign countries with gas

Duke estimates most of the new demand for electricity will come from industrial mega-customers. By 2028, Duke Energy projects data centers will make up 25% of new demand.

A new report from the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis found there is a significant threat of overbuilding pipelines and power plants to meet demand from data centers. Ratepayers will pay the cost of this excess infrastructure.

Major tech companies like Microsoft, Apple, Amazon, and Alphabet (Google) benefit. They struck a deal with Duke Energy to pay clean energy tariffs, to increase “clean energy” (which they define as including nuclear) and pay their fair share of construction costs. However, public testimony to regulators and lawmakers cited increased demand from data centers, especially Microsoft's, as a reason to build these new gas projects.

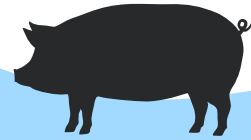
Southeast electric bills are paying for a highway to export gas.

In February, a report from The Southern Alliance for Clean Energy found that “Duke customers will be paying a monthly premium for more gas than is needed” to fuel gas powerplants. Pipeline companies can sell that excess gas by exporting it overseas.

The report found, “Southeastern ratepayers are helping to finance the infrastructure that ultimately benefits 1) pipeline company shareholders and 2) foreign countries.”

**TAKE ACTION TODAY AGAINST THE GAS BUILDOUT!
SEE ACTION ALERT ON THE COVER!**

TESTING WELL WATER IN FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES NEAR HOG OPERATIONS



After years of advocating for protection of well users, CWFNC received funding to provide well testing for residential wells in frontline communities near CAFOs (Contained Animal Feeding Operations)- especially swine operations that have been shown to contaminate groundwater on and near their properties.



A well near a hog CAFO, tested by CWFNC.

These facilities are often located in communities of color or low-income, which face disproportionate environmental impacts. Posing risks to groundwater quality, CAFOs can contaminate drinking water wells with bacteria, nitrates, & other pollutants. Well testing for bacteria & nitrates are part of the standard tests carried out at the NC Public Health Lab, from samples collected by county Health Departments.

In addition to spreading contaminants by groundwater from waste ponds, spraying animal waste on nearby fields may contaminate groundwater or carry bacteria in windborne droplets.

The Richmond County Coalition for Justice and Black Empowerment has alerted CWFNC to several water quality concerns in their area and residents close to sources of pollution are requesting our assistance with well testing.

In Surry County, CWFNC did outreach near two swine CAFOs in Dobson to spread awareness on the importance of regular well testing and the potential risks their well water could face. Some residents from the Dobson area within ½ mile of both a hog CAFO and dry poultry operations have responded to request CWFNC's help with testing.

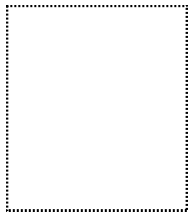
CWFNC is dedicated to ensuring that everyone has safe, clean drinking water. If you live within ½ mile from a hog CAFO, CWFNC can pay your county health department for collecting a sample from your well. Contact Hope Taylor at hope@cwfn.org or (919) 401-9600 to talk about your well and what testing CWFNC would recommend.

CLEAN WATER FOR NORTH CAROLINA

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TODAY! TELL THE NC UTILITIES COMMISSION: NO NEW GAS PLANT

Right now, the NC Utilities Commission is deciding whether to allow Duke to build ANOTHER gas plant in Person Co. The utilities commission already approved one gas powerplant there. The county is already home to toxic coal ash pollution from the Roxboro Coal Plant.

Microsoft bought an industrial mega-site close to transmission lines from the plant. Recently, a gas lobbyist testified to NC legislators that faster gas permitting was needed, citing a new Microsoft data center at that location as one reason why.

Submit your comment online, today!

Some points to consider:

- Duke customers refuse to pay for powerplants that serve big tech companies like Microsoft. Microsoft can generate their own CLEAN electricity with solar + storage.
- Reports show NC's residential & industrial need for electricity, can be met with efficiency & clean, renewable energy.

How to comment:

1. Visit: ncuc.gov/contactus.html
2. Put your name, email, the docket number is: E-2 Sub 1349
3. Write your comment. Tell them why you as a Duke Energy customer or local resident don't want this new gas plant!
Click submit.

JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

**Your gift helps mentor the next
generation of
environmental justice activists,
by funding CWFNC's
2025 EJ internships!**

TWO WAYS TO GIVE

Online at
cwfnc.org/donate

(scan this QR code to go
there now!)



**Mail: Make your check payable to
CLEAN WATER FOR NC,
P.O. BOX 69, STEM, NC 27581**

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