



Clean Water for North Carolina

Clean Currents

Winter 2016-2017

A newsletter of clean water and community environmental justice issues

Hurricane Matthew Floods Eastern NC, Revealing and Worsening Injustice

On October 8th, Hurricane Matthew brought record rainfall, devastating eastern NC, slamming Princeville, Goldsboro, Rocky Mount, Lumberton, as well as other predominantly low income towns and rural areas. More than 4,000 people in NC had to flee their homes and move to shelters. Weeks after the storm, many residents were still left without power and running water, as well as suspected well contamination for many homeowners.



The Lumber and Tar Rivers both crested at record heights at 24 feet, and the Neuse River reached a record height of 28 feet. The storm caused 8 dams to be breached in NC. Tens of thousands of dead hogs and other livestock littered eastern NC fields and waterways, threatening drinking water and water quality. A breach in the cooling pond at the retired H.F. Lee coal-fired power plant in Goldsboro and overwash of coal ash during the rising waters caused a spill into the Neuse River. While Duke Energy claimed the coal ash spill was minimal, WaterKeeper Alliance took photos showed substantial amounts of ash in the river and joined ACT Against Coal Ash in pointing to the continued vulnerability of ground and surface waters if coal ash is left in place.

Many families lost everything, as they don't have flood insurance. Thousands suddenly left their homes in the middle of the night as flood waters rose, leaving behind belongings, including lifesaving medicines.

In early November, 250 displaced people were still in shelters across NC. In Goldsboro, over 400 homes have been condemned. Agricultural crops suffered heavy losses over a wide region. Some businesses were forced to close, leaving locals without jobs. Bottled water is now generally available, but it's needed for bathing as well as drinking and cooking.

Princeville, incorporated in 1885, was the first town settled by freed slaves. Hurricane Floyd struck this

community in 1999, displacing many, and destroying most buildings. Most residents resisted the loss of their heritage, refusing a FEMA buyout. They wanted to take their chances and rebuild on their ancestral lands. After Hurricane Matthew, only 17 years later, some seem more ready to accept a buyout.

A few weeks before the Hurricane, a freak storm had

dumped 10 inches of rain in southeastern NC, saturating the ground, and leaving the Lumber River above flood stage. Runoff from Hurricane Matthew had nowhere to go, leading to flooding of homes, businesses and 70 miles of Interstate 95. Residents in Robeson County were without power and running water for weeks, and students couldn't return to school until October 31st.

Climate Justice and Increased Frequency of Extreme Storms

The aftermath of Hurricane Matthew has been extremely difficult for small communities who have lost so much, but have had little media coverage of their plight. These were already some of the poorest communities in NC, with high percentages of African Americans and Native Americans. Around the world, those who are most economically and socially vulnerable--those with the least wealth, health protection and job security--have always lost the most.

Most climate models predict that such extreme storms (and droughts) will become more frequent as climate change accelerates. As Clean Currents goes to press, the U.S. has elected a President who denies human caused climate change, pledging to re-invigorate extraction and use of carbon based fuels. If we do NOT act quickly and forcefully, both locally and globally, to rein in climate change, we'll all be responsible for deepening the injustices that struggling communities already face.

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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Welcome to CWFNC's Newest Board Member— Robert Hamilton



Robert grew up on a small cotton farm in Rutherford County, learning soil and water conservation lessons at an early age, later shifting to produce farming and timber management. He graduated from NC A&T University in Greensboro on a horticulture scholarship and initially taught horticulture in Burke County. Soon, he was recruited to become the Executive Director of Lincoln County's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service office, a federal program. Service on Lincolnton's Planning Board and Board of Adjustment enhanced his local government experience.

He then worked for private industry to develop applications of by-products with nutrient value for farmlands, ending his professional career working with the NC Pesticide Section.

In addition to work as an agriculturalist, Robert was an NAACP president in Lincoln County, and serves as pastor to the non-denominational Faith Worship Center in Lincolnton. We are excited to have Robert's very broad range of experience and skills to strengthen CWFNC's governance and planning of our statewide work.

Thanks and happy trails to Jennifer Weaver

In July, Jenn Weaver left her part-time position as a researcher in our Durham office. Since 2014, she studied and wrote on the environmental justice impacts of gas pipelines, guidelines for communities to work with local governments to pass ordinances to protect against fracking, and the injustices of private companies' water and sewer shutoff policies.

While working with CWFNC, Jenn also taught yoga classes and served on the Hillsborough Town Council. Since July, she has become co-chair of the newly formed Orange County Food Council and participated in get-out-the-vote canvassing. She's inspired by the upwelling support across the country for the water protectors of Standing Rock, and urges folks to support them AND organize against the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. She says, "At CWFNC I really learned the power of engaging with local communities, finding ways to lift them up and support local leadership." We miss her and wish her the best in her (many!) endeavors.



Drinking Water Justice

The Urgency of Working for Safe Water and Environmental Justice Grows After the 2016 Election

Based on President-Elect Donald Trump's statements over the past year, his administration will present challenges to many of the civil rights and liberties victories, and an end to reining in climate change, along with water and air protections. Even if we acknowledge that the Obama administration hasn't always taken the strongest path towards environmental justice or water and climate protection, the EPA has sought to enforce key environmental protections passed in the past four decades. In contrast, Donald Trump promises to scale back funding to the EPA, repeal major environmental regulations, and increase domestic production of fossil fuels. His plan to address infrastructure needs focuses on incentivizing private sector investments, including large tax credits to private companies.

In NC, a very narrow victory for challenger Roy Cooper against incumbent Governor Pat McCrory (not confirmed until Canvass Day, Nov. 18) may give NC new leadership in the Governor's Mansion. However, if Cooper's victory holds, he'll have limited power to

Roy Cooper, in response to media question about what steps he'd take for NC's environment: "Putting people at the Department of Environmental Quality who actually want to keep our air and water clean would be a good start. Appoint people who understand the issues."

keep in check a veto-proof Republican majority in the legislature. Cooper has a strong environmental record as a state legislator, and has been strong advocate for social justice and voting rights. We note his actions as Attorney General to oppose Duke Energy passing coal ash cleanup costs on to ratepayers. He has also promised to depend on scientific recommendations in handling coal ash and notifying well users of contamination.

In the last several years, the NC General Assembly and DEQ have undone many years of protecting our natural resources. They will continue to try to dismantle regulations protecting our drinking water, air, and land. We will need to be more organized and outspoken than ever to ensure safe drinking water, clean air, and environmental justice for the most vulnerable communities in NC. Thanks to you, CWFNC supporters, for all you do for clean water and just communities -- your actions will be sorely needed to call on newly elected (and re-elected) officials at all levels of government in the coming year to do the right thing!

Wake County Private Water Customers Organize For Better Service

Privatized water service is surprisingly common in Wake County outside of Raleigh. Small groundwater-based systems have proliferated over the last few decades as real estate developers and mobile home park owners sought to work around the lack of availability of Raleigh public water service in most of the county. In the past decade, hundreds of these community wells have been taken over by large for-profit companies like Aqua North Carolina and Carolina Water Service.

After connecting on a social media site last year, residents from more than a dozen Wake County communities realized they shared similar concerns with their drinking water provider, Aqua NC, and committed to work together to resolve them. They reported high frustration with the company's customer service phone line and unpredictable water outages when the company was flushing the lines without notifying customers. Also common among complaints was high iron and manganese levels, which discolors

water, clogs filters and damages appliances. In many cases the water quality is so poor that families have the additional financial burdens: buying bottled water, or purchasing, installing and maintaining expensive whole house filter systems. They may even have to replace ruined clothes and linens, or take their clothes to laundromats--all while still paying a high water bill!

At a multi-neighborhood meeting in August, Clean Water for NC shared what we've learned from past organizing in NC communities with privatized water, and described successful efforts by customers in Florida, Virginia and other states to hold utilities accountable. During the meeting, community members began planning for shared advocacy for fairer laws and more enforceable regulations ensuring clean, clear drinking water for everyone. Since then, residents have been reviewing NC statutes to find out where drinking water laws can be improved, and went door-to-door in their own neighborhoods with a petition to get more people involved!



Clean Water for NC's 32nd Annual Meeting

Standing Up for Safe Energy Jobs and Water Justice!

Clean Water for NC hosted our 32nd Annual Meeting in Statesville, featuring speakers on coal ash, energy and climate justice, and retooling NC's energy future.



Sue Fife and **Lisa Hughes** of Person County (pictured above) spoke about their experiences while living in the shadow of the Roxboro coal power plant. The plant was built in the 1970s on land previously owned by African American farmers. When residents rebuilt homes on the edge of the property, they experienced blowing coal dust and learned of well contamination in 2015. Sue and Lisa have been working with their neighbors, many of whom depend on bottled water, to get further well testing and an alternative drinking water source.

Ericka Faircloth, of CWFNC's Durham office, told how the Atlantic Coast Pipeline will disproportionately impact NC's Indigenous and African American communities. In NC, the pipeline is proposed to go through 8 counties, half of which have Native populations above the state average of 1.2%. The proposed pipeline ends at an existing compressor station in Robeson County, a region where the indigenous population is 38.4%. Of the 8 counties the pipeline is proposed to cross, all exceed the state average for African American percent population, so residents of color would be disproportionately impacted.



Nancy LaPlaca, Senior Energy Analyst at NCWARN (pictured, left) explained why trends toward energy production with fracked gas are dangerous on several levels. Methane, a stronger heat-trapping gas than carbon dioxide, creates a stronger climate impact. Duke Energy and other utilities are in a mad rush to build pipelines due to guaranteed return on their investment, and burn inexpensive fracked gas to generate electricity. Nancy shared how taking assertive action and transitioning as quickly as possible to renewable sources and efficiency are critical to have a rapid and significant impact on climate change.

The meeting concluded with commentary on redesigning NC's energy future for jobs, safe water and economic justice. Jobs are always presented as a big selling point for new fossil fuel projects, particularly in economically stressed areas like eastern NC, but the Atlantic Coast Pipeline will only require 18 permanent jobs. Multiple studies show that investments in renewable energy and efficiency upgrades of homes and businesses produce many more jobs, which are more diverse, stable and safe.

Roger Hollis (pictured below) and **Larry Aiken** shared the history of their area in Cleveland County around the Cliffside coal plant, and the community's quest for clean water and energy. Larry had been a sharecropper in the Cliffside Community for 55 years. Roger and Larry have been key organizers, empowering their community to take a stand for coal ash justice. Standing room only public hearings, media events and the testing of additional wells in the area are some of the community's most recent accomplishments. The Cliffside community is unified, and persistent in their efforts toward safe water and accountable management of coal ash.



Communities in Action

Arden Community Continues to Organize for Clean Water around Asheville Coal Ash

When House Bill 630 passed the NC Legislature this summer, it required Duke Energy to provide a permanent safe water source to all well users within 1/2 mile of coal ash sites by October, 2018. However, the bill specifically excludes people who are separated from coal ash by a major river. Arden community members with well water contamination will not get water lines paid for by Duke unless they can prove that the contamination in their wells comes underneath the French Broad River from the coal ash dump. The most recent community meeting, to explain HB630, well fracture testing and local geology, included local legislators, independent groundwater experts, and about 15 impacted well users. The French Broad River's shallow depth was noted along with community test results that revealed well fractures in wells at depths of 500-750 feet! Multiple hydrogeologists have reached similar conclusions about the unpredictable flow of fractured bed rock aquifers, building the Arden community's capacity to challenge their exclusion from water lines. Residents have spoken at Buncombe County Commission meetings to share their knowledge and want to establish a deadline for testing water supply wells for contamination, so Duke would begin providing impacted residents with replacement water.

Roxboro/Mayo Plant Hearing Draws Unprecedented Opposition to Duke Coal Plant Permits!

On October 4, the day after the presentation to the Person County Commissioners by community residents close to Duke's coal fired power plants, many of them came out again to object to many aspects of the Roxboro and Mayo Plant discharge permits. Of 25 speakers, only two supported the proposed permits for these plants—unprecedented in a county dominated for decades by power plants' economic power. Speakers had strong concerns about contamination of creeks, inadequate monitoring and weak or nonexistent limits for many creeks. Several commenters were angered that uncontrolled seeps from coal ash dams would be legally permitted in order to facilitate permanent coal ash dumps.

Roxboro Coal Ash Neighbors Present Concerns and Call for Support from Person County Commission

Following up on months of discussion and continued testing of household wells as far as 0.6 miles from the coal ash compliance boundaries at one of NC's largest deposits of toxic ash, Roxboro residents decided to present their ongoing concerns to their County Commissioners and ask for their support. Well owners Sandra Majors, Vickie McIver, Faye Woods and Christopher Crawley all have wells that show concentrations of one or more coal ash associated contaminants, some of them more than 1/2 mile from the coal ash. They asked for more well testing, the use of science based health advisories to well owners, assistance with paying water bills for up to 20 years, and consideration for reduced property taxes, as Duke Energy will now be allowed to leave the coal ash permanently in place, looming over the community and crushing property values. Elsie Grant, in her 70s, has still not had her well tested, despite being close to the 1/2 mile radius. "I had no idea that when I returned to help my mother and inherit her home, I would inherit a permanent legacy of coal ash, too!" She also called for investigation of an unpermitted site used for dumping--perhaps coal ash--near her home.

Cliffside Community Asks DEQ to Halt Wastewater Discharge Permit Approval

On Nov. 10, the NC Department of Environmental Quality hosted a public hearing at Boiling Springs Town Hall to hear public comment on the renewal of the permit that would allow Duke Energy to discharge wastewater from several locations into the Broad River from its Cliffside (Rogers) plant. Wastewater discharges at the Cliffside plant affect water quality in both Cleveland and Rutherford Counties, and downstream in South Carolina. Under this permit, 21 previously illegal seeps through the dam of the ash basin into the Broad River and Suck Creek would be made legal. Roger Hollis, Cliffside resident and community advocate, strongly disagrees with the permit's authorization of these seeps. Cobalt has no monitoring or effluent limits in the draft permit, despite its known presence as a contaminant of concern in Cliffside area well water. The Cliffside community presented DEQ with a petition asking that the permit not be approved until all folks in the community have access to safe drinking water. Community members also plan to advocate for a public hearing on Duke Energy's plan to bring natural gas to Cliffside to make the plant able to burn coal and natural gas.



Polluter Accountability

ACT Disposal and Air Pollution Meeting Breaks Down Barriers!

In October, the Alliance of Carolinians Together Against Coal Ash gathered in Chatham County to hear from experts and industry representatives on coal ash disposal and air pollution. At the heart of NC's current ash disposal controversy, the Brickhaven mine reclamation site, not far from where we met, receives more coal ash than any other site in the state. Impacted communities in North Carolina are working to explore possibilities and learn more about beneficial reuse of coal ash in cement and other solid encapsulation methods to replace threatening disposal practices that Duke Energy is currently implementing. Some key features of the meeting:

- **Jamie Cole**, NC Conservation Network, spoke about disposal requirements and deadlines in House Bill 630. Duke Energy can get extensions for nearly all coal ash cleanup and beneficial reuse.
- **Pete Harrison**, WaterKeeper Alliance, spoke on dewatering coal ash ponds and disposal discharges. NCDEQ attempted to let Duke dump water under current permits with no monitoring, but EPA requires

evaluation of pollution increases during dewatering.

- **Therese Vick**, BREDL, noted that little air monitoring has been done around coal ash disposal. Chatham Co. sampling shows increases in some air particulates by more than 400% during ash transport.
- **John Wagner**, Chatham Citizen Against Coal Ash Dumps, spoke about the risks of capping coal ash in place, including possible ongoing leaching of contaminants into groundwater.
- **Henry Batten**, Concrete Supply Charlotte, spoke on NC's industry demands for coal ash. Southeastern Fly Ash Group (SEFA) has reprocessing technology that makes ash 100% usable in cement. NC cement suppliers currently import over a million tons of ash annually. Duke Energy will be required to recycle ash for cement use at three of its sites.
- **Dr. Kunigal Shivakumar**, NC A&T University, is developing an ash composite block that is light weight, heat resistant, and can be reusable in cement and other emerging uses for coal ash. Current tests show very little leaching of contaminants.

CWFNC Hosts Peoples' Hearings Along the Proposed Route for Atlantic Coast Pipeline

Public Hearings on the Atlantic Coast Pipeline held by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in 2015 were only announced at the last minute, so there was low turnout and little chance for participation. It was clear FERC wasn't going to ensure public participation in the pipeline permitting process!

On July 28th, CWFNC and other groups working to challenge the pipeline hosted the first Peoples' Hearing on the ACP in Fayetteville. This was a chance for residents along the pipeline corridor to give comments which we recorded and sent to FERC on a DVD for review; we also mailed written comments to FERC.

Speakers addressed the proximity of the pipeline to homes and schools and the inadequate emergency response for leaks, explosions or other accidents. They spoke about the pipeline's impacts on ancestral lands and burial sites, and the unfairness of using eminent domain to take homes and property that they've worked

their entire lives to obtain. About 65 people attended from as far away as Nash County; the majority were from Cumberland and Robeson Counties.

On September 22nd, Nash Stop the Pipeline and CWFNC co-hosted a second Peoples' Hearing at the Red Oak community center, using the same extended comment format as the earlier hearing. 45-50 people attended from 6 nearby counties, with the majority of speakers from Nash, Wilson and Johnston Counties.

Farmers and agricultural experts expressed concern about the inability to grow crops over a pipeline for up to 20 years after construction, and disruption of fertile farm fields. Many residents were upset over eminent domain and how the pipeline may force them

to rewrite their wills; they do not feel right leaving a home to their children with a dangerous pipeline under the property. One speaker pointed out that the ACP owners could run any substance through the pipeline they wanted, including oil or gasoline, and the public and landowners would have no way to challenge this!



Clean Water for North Carolina

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Thanks to Jennifer Liming, Volunteer Extraordinaire



Last year, Clean Water for NC was fortunate to connect with Jennifer Liming, a long-time chiropractor in the Asheville community whose passion for water – its quality and its role in human health – led her to step back from the practice she founded and focus on working for clean drinking water. Jennifer's enthusiasm to make a difference in people's health and wellbeing has been evident in outreach in the community to promote CWFNC's mission and her work to help us research current contamination issues, such as the presence of hexavalent chromium in public drinking water systems and the need for a standard for this toxin. She enjoys hiking, yoga, reading plus spending time with friends, her husband and their black lab, Madison. Thanks, Jennifer, for your commitment to safe water for all!

Thank You to Our New & Renewing Members!

Jo Ellen Wade & Carol Diamond, Jeri Cruz-Segarra, Terry Waldspurger & George Bartholomew, Jeri Gray, Charlene Morton / Greater Harvest FGBC, Robert Hamilton, Joan MacKenzie, Thomas Duckwall, Jim and Beverly Carroll, Mark Kroeger (in honor of Rachel Carson), Rosemary Thorn, Joseph Prager, Iris Schwintzer, Alistair & Mitra Hoehne, Glenn Bozorth, Chris Carlson, Pat Tompkins, Elizabeth Holsten, Lynn Kohn, Bernice & Arnold Green, Wayne & Jahala Williams, Stuart & Carola Cohn, Kelly & Bob Koney, Deane & Sandy Irving, Steve & Nina Gurley, Gayle Tuch, Loch Hoffman, Kia Whittlesey, Joe Hudson, Philip Pritchard, Lisa Thurman, Kathy Wolfe, Pat Abell, Carol King, Kimberly Lillig, Mark Schulz, David Rogers, Richard Nolan, John Hinnant, Sally Morgan, Mike Jones, Allen & Rosemary Hubbard, and Nancy Bryant

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Inside this issue of Clean Currents: Coal Ash, Eastern NC Flooding, & More!



Neighbors of coal ash sites were among the guest speakers at our Annual Meeting in Statesville this September. Read how their communities are working for safe drinking water on pages 4 & 5.

Inside this issue, you'll also find our summary of the devastating impacts of Hurricane Matthew in Eastern NC, communities organizing against the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, and the importance of working for water and environmental justice after the 2016 election. Thanks for reading, and we wish you a peaceful holiday season!