Voice of the Haw

The Haw River Assembly December 2019



P.O. Box 187 · Bynum, NC 27228 · (919) 542-5790 email: info@hawriver.org · www.hawriver.org

HRA Takes Action on Industrial Contaminants in the Haw River

After several years of monitoring known sources of PFAS contamination in the Haw River basin, Southern Environmental Law Center sent a Notice of Intent to Sue the city of Burlington on behalf of Haw River Assembly. This letter puts Burlington on notice that it must stop contaminating the Haw River, the drinking water source for Pittsboro and other communities downstream. Preventable pollution from the city's two wastewater treatment plants plagues the river. Burlington must take action to ensure that industrial sources that are contaminating its discharge are held accountable for their pollution; it cannot put the burden of cleaning up PFAS or 1,4-dioxane on downstream communities. If the city does not act promptly to stop this pollution, Haw River Assembly will file a case in federal court.

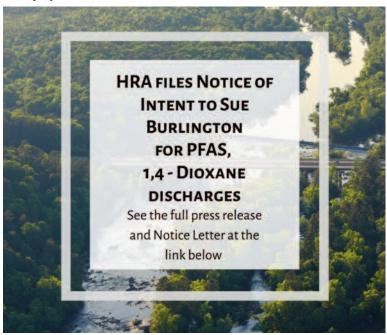
Burlington's wastewater treatment plants receive waste that has PFAS and 1,4-dioxane from industrial facilities. Because Burlington's wastewater treatment plants currently can't remove these chemicals, Burlington is sending them into the Haw River and its tributaries as part of its wastewater discharge and sludge applied to fields. Burlington's contamination has been confirmed by recent sampling conducted by Haw River Assembly and by Duke University. North Carolina State University also confirmed that Burlington has been sending PFAS into the Haw River and its tributaries since at least 2013.

A study is now underway by Duke University professor Dr. Heather Stapleton, to analyze blood and water samples from residents of Pittsboro to investigate what level of exposure they have of PFAS chemicals, from drinking water whose source is the Haw River.

Also, recent very high spikes of 1,4-dioxane in the Haw River were found to be from industrial sources in Greensboro and Reidsville. Following our 60 day NOI to Burlington, the state issued notices of violation to the wastewater treatment plants for the cities of Greensboro and Reidsville. These 1,4-dioxane discharges violated water quality standards and the conditions of their wastewater permits.

State regulators must hold wastewater treatment plants responsible for sending toxins into our drinking water – as is mandated by the U.S. Clean Water Act.

- ▶ Wastewater treatment plants and companies that discharge chemicals, such as PFAS or 1,4-dioxane, into surface waters used for drinking water *must* be required to warn downstream users about this threat to public health.
- ▶ Industries *must* be required to disclose what is in their waste, and install technology to remove toxic chemicals like PFAS and 1,4-dioxane, before they send it to municipal wastewater treatment plants that are not equipped to treat these chemicals.
- ▶ The sludge from wastewater treatment plants containing chemicals like PFAS *should not* be spread on fields, where it can run off into nearby streams during storms. These chemicals have been found in high quantities in streams adjacent to fields where Burlington sludge has been sprayed.



See hawriver.org --> River Issues --> Industrial Contaminants page (http://hawriver.org/river-issues/industrial-contaminants/)

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Thanks to **Jan Burger** for art throughout this newsletter: HRF Heron, Boy with Butterfly, River Watch Heron, and Clean-Up-A-Thon logo.

To join the Haw River Assembly or renew your membership, send a check to **HRA, P.O. Box 187, Bynum, NC 27228**; or go online at http://hawriver.org/join-hra/.

All contributions are tax-deductible.

Note: After many years, we're raising our

Note: After many years, we're raising our membership dues by \$5.

Thanks for your support!

Individual: \$30 Family: \$45

Sustaining: \$60 Heron Circle: \$100 & above

Low Income: \$10

The Haw River Assembly is a nonprofit grassroots organization founded in 1982. Our mission is to protect and restore the Haw River, its tributaries, and Jordan Lake; and to build a community that shares this vision.

(919) 542-5790 www.hawriver.org

Notes from the Haw

We had a gorgeous autumn day for the HRA Annual Meeting on November 10, at the Old Mason Farmhouse at Jordan Lake. Built in 1850, the Mason house was bought by the Army Corps when land was flooded for Jordan Lake, and later rehabbed by Preservation NC. Our Haw Riverkeeper, Emily Sutton, and her husband, Ben Paynter, are the current resident caretakers there, and hosted our gathering – big thanks to them both! They led folks on a walk to the shoreline at Jordan Lake, and then we gathered back at the house for a delicious potluck meal.



hoto by Fred Tutn

We heard updates about HRA and issues we are working on, and held our elections for the 2020 HRA Board of Directors. We re-elected five of our current Board members for another term of two years: Jo Sanders, John Wagner, Ayo Wilson, Melvin Dubose, and Sharon Garbutt (five more Board members are in mid-term, and continuing on). We are very pleased to welcome the six new Board members elected: Crystal Cavalier, Jeanne Ambrose, Iris Seaton, George Pauly, David Jester, and Diane Ford. They bring a wide and wonderful array of experiences, interests, and love for the Haw River to help us fulfill our mission to protect our waters.

We said farewell to two retiring Board members, Katherine Baer and Anne Cassebaum, and are very grateful for their time helping lead this organization. Much thanks to Katherine for her help with our current Strategic Plan. We gave special recognition to Anne for the time and wisdom she has given HRA since joining the Board in 2007, and sharing knowledge of the river with all of us through her book "Down Along the Haw".

We also gave a special "Extraordinary Volunteer" award to Maja Kricker, who has been one of our most avid streamwatchers. She helps us lead programs for both children and adults, sharing her joy and knowledge about the macroinvertebrates she finds in the water, and what those critters tell us about water quality. Never afraid to get wet in the pursuit of science, Maja has our deep gratitude!

Like the river, we flow on, changing and being changed by the many people who join us in protecting it.

Wishing very Happy Holidays to all of you, Elaine Chiosso, Executive Director



Maja Kricker (center, standing on rock) demonstrates stream watch at the Haw River Festival, with new Board member Jeanne Ambrose (left) and Haw Riverkeeper Emily Sutton.



Katherine Baer, Anne Cassebaum, and Jo Sanders tell folks about our work at the Haw River Festival HRA booth.

hoto by Elaine Chiosso



HAW RIVERKEEPER® Issues in the Watershed

from Emily Sutton, HAW RIVERKEEPER®

MVP Southgate

The MVP Southgate proposal is in a critical phase of the project, and our best shot at fighting the pipeline. The 401 certificate is the permit that allows the project to cross waterbodies in the state; only the state of North Carolina can approve or deny this permit.

NC Department of Environmental Quality has already denied this permit once, but has allowed MVP Southgate to apply again. The state agencies, local governments, and even competitor pipeline projects have all expressed critical views of the project during the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)'s Draft Environmental Impact Statement process, stating there is no demonstrated need for this pipeline project. Statewide news outlets have also criticized the project, stating that there is no need for additional fracked

gas infrastructure as we continue to fight the Atlantic Coast Pipeline project in the eastern part of the state.

MVP mainline in Virginia has been issued a stop work order and no work has been allowed for several months. They have also been sued by the Virginia Department of Environmental Protection for over 200 water quality violations. While MVP Southgate is an entirely separate project that can move forward independently of the mainline, the same shareholders and investors are behind both projects. Two key investors in the mainline project have already divested from the project.

Though we are encouraged by this and hopeful, it is so important that we have an outpouring of voices from across the watershed to submit comments stating opposition to the MVP Southgate project during NCDEQ's 401 comment period. For talking points, visit out MVP Southgate webpage at www.hawriver.org/mvpsouthgate. The comment deadline is Friday, December 20 at 5 pm.

Chatham Park

Bulldozers are turning forest into red clay for the building of the Chatham Park "Mosaic" project along Hwy 15-501. We are still waiting for Chatham Park developers to submit their plan for North Village – which is all the rest of their land north of the Hwy 64 Bypass, including areas along the Haw River. The Development Agreement with the Town of Pittsboro has also not been finalized. We will continue to be watchdogs on this project, and on its impact on our waters and environment. We have "Speak for the Trees" yard signs available again. Email



We had an amazing turnout of folks speaking out against the MVP Southgate pipeline at the NCDEQ 401 public hearing on November 19. Photo by Emily Sutton

us if you want a yard sign, or if you want to be part of our list-serve with Chatham Park updates. We'll announce opportunities for public comment, or for being a stream monitoring or Muddy Water Watch volunteer as this massive development is built. Contact info@hawriver.org for more information on how you can help.

New EPA Rules Would Harm Clean Air and Water Rules by Limiting Scientific Data

EPA – the Environmental Pollution Agency? According to a NY Times report on 11/11/2019, the Trump administration is preparing to significantly limit the scientific and medical research that the government can use to determine public health regulations. This overrides protests from scientists and physicians who say the new rule would undermine the scientific underpinnings of government policymaking. A new draft of the EPA proposal, titled "Strengthening Transparency in Regulatory Science," would require scientists to disclose all of their raw data, including confidential medical records, before the agency could consider an academic study's conclusions. Data with personal health information is usually gathered confidentially, so this new rule could make it very difficult to enact new rules to protect human health from pollution. It could even apply retroactively to rules already in place, such as rules that protect children from lead and mercury.

30 Years of the "Best Field Trip Ever!"

Photos by Milada Vachudova

from Kyleene Rooks (at left), Outreach & Event Coordinator (919) 542-5790; krooks@hawriver.org

This year was extra special, as it was the 30th Annual Haw River Learning Celebration (LC) – a true milestone year for bringing children to the river! Both a big thank you and congratulations to the volunteers and staff who have made it possible to have such a fabulous, longstanding event, often regarded as "THE BEST FIELD TRIP EVER!" In all we hosted over 1,100 children for day-long field trips on the river.

The LC kicked off in Bynum at the beautiful Lower Haw State Natural Area. We were lucky to have a strong group of veteran

volunteers to welcome and share the LC spirit with new volunteers and staff. As a part of celebrating the accomplishment of 30 years, Wednesday nights were for potluck dinners shared with past volunteers and friends of the Haw River Assembly, and telling stories of the previous Learning Celebrations. The weather was hot and sunny,





and low water levels made it easy for kids to explore for macroinvertebrates amongst the rocks each day. In the afternoons, the volunteer crew spent lots of time swimming to keep us cooled off! By the end of the week, many folks stayed to help pack up and get us out of Bynum before dark so we could begin the following week in Saxapahaw. Many of the volunteers from the first week stayed in the remaining two weeks. As a new staff member, I was in awe of their hard work and dedication.

For the second week of the Learning Celebration we moved upriver where Lea Clayton and Donovan Zimmerman, along with many neighbors, graciously hosted us on their property along the river in Alamance County. The set-up crew went above and beyond in clearing the trails from last year's hurricane debris and constructing metal stairs off the bank of the river for easy access. There have been many years where volunteers and staff have had to carve out sand stairs and improvise as the week went on to get children down on the

river rocks, but this year's metal stairs look like they may be here to stay! Temperatures in Saxapahaw were as high as 98°, but that didn't stop the volunteers or students. We all managed to stay cool and hydrated in the shade of the trails during the day and swam in the pond during the afternoons. We had the unfortunate mishap this year of having a school cancel, and while we were disappointed



there wouldn't be any kids joining us for the day, staff and volunteers managed to rile up the troops and spend the day kayaking. Camp life was lively with campfire songs, storytelling and the famous tradition of the Thursday Night Talent Show. It was encouraging to see families with young kids who would one day share the same desire to protect the land and river as we do. While hot, we were grateful for another rain-free week, and packed up in what felt like record time.

For our final week of the LC we moved even further upstream, near the headwaters, to Camp Guilrock in Reidsville. After two long, hot weeks of fun, we were blessed with cooler weather. We had a great opening and closing ceremony at the springs and spent the evenings making s'mores by the campfire. Volunteer groups are traditionally smaller at Guilrock, but this

year was nothing short of an amazing turnout. One 4th-grade teacher made it a point to comment on what an outstanding job we did: "This year's stations, layout, content, staff, and schedule were the best ever! All of my visits have been fun and meaningful for my students, but kudos to you all for outdoing yourselves! I'm also sending a shout out to the band! They have gotten better and better! Their skill and enthusiasm enhanced the excellent narrator and wonderful cast!!"

We Couldn't Have Done it Without You!

For the 30th year in a row, the Haw River Learning Celebration brought together a community that shares a love and passion for protecting the river. The staff and volunteers are rich in knowledge and history of the Haw River, making it easy to see how such a program could thrive year after year. We are so grateful for the volunteers, teachers, community members, and local businesses that

Awesome duo Lawrence and Rufus

make the Learning Celebration possible. And I am grateful to be a part of such an experience. We would like to thank the following people and organizations that make the LC possible!

- ◆ All of our volunteers that shared their time, knowledge and energy with our local 4th-graders;
- ◆ Executive Director Elaine Chiosso for her guidance, leadership and passion for the LC;
- ◆ Safety and Logistics Coordinator Lawrence Peterson for his hard work tying up loose ends, ensuring the program sites were safe, and keeping children and adults calm when incidents occurred;
- ◆ Assistant Coordinator Rufus King for his non-stop hard work and leadership during all three weeks, and intern Sutton King for her help with volunteer registration;

◆ The Learning Celebration Steering Committee for going above and beyond in the prep work for the Learning Celebration, as well as preparing for our annual thank you party;

- ◆ Maja Kricker, CC King, and Martha Pentecost for their dedication to teaching and leading all three weeks of the Learning Celebration;
- ◆ The teachers, chaperones, and bus drivers who juggle the many details of getting hundreds of children out to the river;
- ♦ Our Crowdfunder Donors, the Jester Group of Baird Financial, and the Alamance Community Foundation, who helped us in raising money for the Learning Celebration;
- ◆ Cynthia Crossen for her beautiful music, band leadership, and passion for the traditions of the Learning Celebration;
- ◆ Martha Pentecost for her narration and dedication to the puppet show;
- ◆ Chris Carter for securing the metal stairs in Saxapahaw, and his instrumental role in all aspects of the Learning Celebration;





- ◆ Sam Berryhill and Lynn Featherstone for helping us haul equipment between sites;
- ◆ NC State Parks for hosting us at the Lower Haw River State Natural Area;
- ◆ Clyde Jones for his years of support and assistance leading buses to the learning site each morning;
- ◆ Shakori Hills Grassroots Festival for renting us the big top tent and helping us set it up;
- Emily Sutton for her dedication to assisting in Stream Watch alongside her traditional Riverkeeper duties;
- Camp Guilrock for hosting us in Rockingham County;
- Wanda Sundermann for hosting our fabulous thank you party;
- ◆ Libby Searles-Bohs, Maja Kricker, and Sutton King for creating beautiful frames for our volunteer thank you's;
- Ken Crossen for his hard work and dedication as "Master Chef" in Guilrock, Phyllis Chiosso Liu as Kitchen Queen in Bynum, and Chad Bryant and Lea Clayton in Saxapahaw;



- ♦ Milada Vachudova for capturing incredible memories and moments in her photography;
- ◆ Landowners Lea Clayton, Donovan Zimmerman, Elizabeth England and Yolanda Lujan, the Burke family, and Janet and James McFall for giving our program site in Saxapahaw a happy home;
- ◆ Root Cellar, Angelina's Kitchen, Reverence Farms, the Saxapahaw General Store, Carrburritos, and Med Deli for their meal donations, as well as all of the amazing volunteer cooks that donated meals to our hungry crew.



Standing in the Stream

Project News from Emily Sutton, HAW RIVERKEEPER® (919) 542-5790; emily@hawriver.org

River Watch & Muddy Water Watch

We had a River Watch training earlier in the fall and welcomed one new team to our River Watch program in Greensboro. Thanks to everyone who participated. George Wissmiller will be monitoring two sections of Buffalo Creek with a team of Boy Scouts. The next monitoring day is the weekend of December 21st. We will also be scheduling a Muddy Water Watch training in Chatham County in February, so look for updates! We'll be focusing on monitoring any sedimentation issues as Chatham Park progresses.

Testing for Plastics

We have begun working with a lab at UNC Chapel Hill to start testing our surface waters for microplastics. Our sample locations will isolate microplastics draining from Durham, Chapel Hill/Carrboro, Greensboro, Reidsville, Burlington, and will include a cohesive look at the basin by sampling at the base of Jordan Lake. This will inform our future advocacy work to encourage businesses to cut single use plastics in the Haw River basin.

Creek Week in the Haw Watershed

Multiple counties along the Haw River Watershed are holding their Annual Creek Week events, sharing their love of their local water with week-long activities promoting environmental awareness, stewardship, and fun! HRA staff will be taking part as well – check out these creek week websites for more information about the festivities:

Durham County Creek Week: March 14 - 21; https://keepdurhambeautiful.org/creek-week Guilford County Creek Week: March 28 - April 4; http://www.guilfordcreekweek.org Alamance County Creek Week: March 28 - April 4; https://alamancecreekweek.wordpress.com



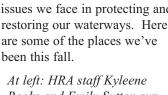
Emily tests for microplastics.

Education and Outreach in Our Watershed

The Haw River Assembly shows up throughout the watershed to promote clean water and to educate folks about the issues we face in protecting and

are some of the places we've been this fall.

At left: HRA staff Kyleene Rooks and Emily Sutton support the Greensboro kickoff of "No Straws November."





Above: Kids enjoyed making "rain" for the stormwater demonstration at the Pittsboro Street Fair, October 26 with Elaine Chiosso. Lots of folks stopped by the booth to talk about the industrial pollutants in Pittsboro's water supply. Photo by Jo Sanders.



At right: Crystal Cavalier, new HRA Board member, and Omega Wilson, HRA's Environmental Justice Advisor, presented at the annual West End Revitalization Association dinner, which focused on pipeline impacts on sacred spaces.





Our 30th Annual Haw River Clean-Up Will Be Saturday March 21, 2020!

Since 1991, our amazing volunteers have been getting trash out of the Haw River from Guilford County down to Jordan Lake at our annual March river clean-up! Since that time, 5,866 volunteers have removed 10,257 bags of trash, 1841 tires, and tons of car parts, appliances, furniture, and even a kitchen sink! The clean-up is organized by teams that work along sections of the Haw River, a creek, or lake within the watershed. Last year we had 30 teams! You can join one of our existing teams, or start one of your own, if you know of a trashy spot that needs attention. To help with our new efforts on reducing single use plastics, we will be asking teams to estimate what percentage of the trash they pick up are plastics.

Local business sponsors have supported this event for many years, and we welcome new sponsors. For more information, and to sign up to volunteer or to be a sponsor, contact Kyleene Rooks at krooks@hawriver.org, or call 919-542-5790. Be part of the solution and help us get the trash out!



Choose Sustainable Meat This Holiday Season!

Corporate-controlled industrial animal operations have long been one of the leading contributors to water pollution across North Carolina, and environ-

mental injustice to the communities that surround them. But there are farmers throughout the Tar Heel state striving to provide high-quality meat without harming their local communities. And they deserve our thanks and our business.

Waterkeepers across North Carolina have compiled a list of farms in their watersheds that feed us without threatening our waters and people. The inventory at these farms varies, but they all have one thing in common: they're trying to do things the right way. For our members who are not vegetarians, we'd like to encourage you to buy your holiday turkey or other meat from one of the farms listed on our website (we recommend calling to reserve now): http://hawriver.org/sustainable-meat-producers/. Go to www.hawriver.org --> River Issues --> CAFO Campaign to find this link.

Please choose to make your holiday meal even more special by purchasing from true family farms—and when you make your purchase, be sure to thank the farmer for taking steps to protect our environment!

* HRA Holiday T-Shirt Sale *

Monday - Friday, 10 am to 4 pm, Monday Dec. 2 through Friday Dec. 20, at the Haw River Assembly office.

Call ahead (919-542-5790). We are in and out during the weekdays, so call before you come to make sure someone is in!

Saturdays December 7 and 14, from 10 am to 2 pm

Come by the HRA office at 143 Bynum Church Road through Dec. 20 for our Holiday T-shirt and Book Sale! We have the newest 2020 Bass Fish design as well as lots of vintage designs (at sale prices) to choose from.

Big Thanks to our Wild and Scenic Film Festival Sponsors!

For the second year, we brought the nationally recognized Wild & Scenic Film Festival to the Carrboro Century Center in September! Despite threatening weather from Tropical Storm Dorian, we had a great crowd who enjoyed films that depict the beauty of the natural world and the challenges facing our planet, especially climate change. We were inspired by the work communities are doing to protect people and the environment.

Special Thanks to all of our local sponsors:

Weaver Street Realty, Great Outdoors Provision Company; The Jester Group of Baird Financial; Fifth Season Gardening Company; Dogwood Alliance; Haw River Canoe and Kayak Co.; Peter Theye Electric; Epting and Hackney, Attorneys at Law; and Townsend Bertram and Company.



Our 2020 T-Shirt is Here!

This year's shirt features a bass fish that is one of the many wonderful critters painted by Clyde Jones

on the foundation of the Haw River Assembly office, with assistance from his neighbor, Carla Lilley. It's a soft green shirt made with 100% organic cotton by T.S. Designs. Map of Haw River on back.



\$25 (adult) S, M, L, XL, XXL \$25 (ladies style) S, M, L, XL \$20 (youth) S, M, XL (sorry, no youth Large)

To order from HRA, send check to HRA, P.O. Box 187, Bynum NC, 27228. Add \$5 per shirt for postage and transaction fee.

Upcoming 2019-20 HRA Events

December 2 - 20, 2019, Annual HRA Holiday Sale at the HRA office in Bynum with T-shirts galore — and books! See details on page 7.

December 14-15, 2019, Haw River Watch Monitoring weekend. Contact Emily at emily@hawriver.org or (919) 542-5790 for more info.

Updates and details can be found at www.hawriver.org, on our Haw River Assembly Facebook page, and from our weekly E-newsletters which you can sign up for at info@hawriver.org.

Saturday, March 21, 2020, Haw River Assembly Annual River Cleanup (Clean-Up-A-Thon). See details on page 7.



Join a Clean-Up-A-Thon team – or start one! – to help clear trash from our waterways at our annual river clean-up on March 21, 2010.

March 14 - April 4, Creek Weeks throughout the watershed. See page 6 for details.

March 21-22, 2020, Haw River Watch Monitoring weekend. Contact Emily at emily@hawriver.org or 919-542-5790 for more info.

April 18, 2020, 11 am to 4 pm, Greensboro's Earth Day, Greensboro Country Park.

Saturday, May 2, 2020, 4 - 8 pm, Haw River Festival in Saxapahaw.

Haw River Clean-Up-A-Thon Sat. March 21, 2020

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