# Voice of the Haw





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



# Into the Woods - Trails Along the Haw



Social distancing? No problem! People find health and vitality on the many trails along the Haw. Photo by Elaine Chiosso.

"And into the woods I go, to lose my mind and find my soul." – John Muir Get outdoors and explore the trails along the Haw River, Jordan Lake and many of the creeks and lakes throughout our watershed. You can find our comprehensive list of all the public trails in our watershed on our website at http://hawriver.org/aboutthe-river/recreation/ under Hiking Trails. During this time of "social distancing", taking a hike along our beautiful river, lakes and creeks is a balm to the soul, and a wonderful activity to do by yourself, with a partner, or with your family. Just make sure to keep a safe 6 ft. distance from others.

Our list of trails, by county, takes you from the headwater trails north of Greensboro in the Haw River State Park, to trails along the river and old mills towns in Alamance, and the rocky white waters in Chatham in the Lower Haw River State Natural Area. You can hike the American Tobacco Trail through Durham, Wake and Chatham counties, and many trails along creeks in towns and cities in our watershed. There are many miles of trails at Jordan Lake to enjoy – always a favorite with birders. Check them out – and let us know if we left out any favorites – send a message to info@hawriver.org.

Some facilities such as restrooms and playgrounds are closed at parks – but most trails are still open. Check the park website on the city or state link we provided, to confirm the park is open. And please consider bringing a trash bag along on your hike, so you can leave nature a little happier.

# Letter from the Executive Director, in the time of Coronavirus

Elaine Chiosso, April 2, 2020

Dear Readers: These are unprecedented times, and there is no road map for what's ahead. Unlike natural disasters, we cannot do what we most want, to come together with hugs and mutual hands-on support to repair what is broken. So, we must help each other by staying apart and staying home, and finding ways to support those who are in the greatest need. In America, this pandemic has made inequities in wealth and health care painfully clear, as fault lines open up between wealthy people fleeing to second homes – and the brave, and mostly underpaid, workers who are on the front lines making sure we still have food to eat, hospitals to care for us, repairs and deliveries made. We must make sure all members of society, including the homeless and undocumented, have our help getting through this.

Although the air is cleaner now, with less cars on the road, water pollution has not stopped. It has been exacerbated by sewer systems overloaded with handwipes and other paper that shouldn't ever be flushed (don't do it – regardless of what the packaging says). New building construction has not stopped, and will continue to be a source of sediment pollution in our waters. And worse yet, with the EPA directive that industries will not be punished for polluting if it is related to the coronavirus, we may see an uptick in toxins and contaminants, and environmental injustice for continued on page 2



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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 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.

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#### Letter from the Executive Director, continued from page 1

those who live near the source of the pollution. With virtually no leadership at the federal level, we must depend on best decisions from state and local governments.

At the Haw River Assembly, the immediate impact is that our office is closed, although we have plenty of work to do as we continue to advocate for clean water, and to build new resources. We have cancelled our spring events. We



have postponed or cancelled what would have been our 30th year of the Haw River Festival, on May 2 in Saxapahaw. Spring festivals and Earth Day events have been cancelled everywhere, as we all do what we can to stop the spread of Covid-19. These cancellations mean we are losing funding resources as well, so your support as members is appreciated more than ever. The new federal CARES Act allows donors who do not itemize on charitable donations to take an above the line deduction for up to \$300 for the 2020 tax year. For donors who itemize, the legislation lifts the cap on annual giving from 60% to 100% of adjusted gross income. We also realize many people are facing reduced income and must reduce their giving. Our families and communities have many needs for us to support, to get through this together.

We are offering lots of online resources for at home viewing. See the "Learn About the Haw River" box (page 6 of this newsletter) to explore our website for all kinds of information about the Haw River, including pollution issues, cultural and natural history. We're also developing on-line demonstrations and tutorials on a range of subjects, from stream monitoring and construction sediment watch-dogging, to educational demos for students. If you haven't already, you can sign up for our E-newsletter using the form on the front page of our website www.hawriver.org, to get updated info about our watershed, and action alerts on pollution issues.

We hope you can keep your spirits up by getting outside as spring comes into bloom. Plant a garden – as author Margaret Atwater said in Bluebeard's Egg, "In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt." Ramble outside through the forests and appreciate the trees. Even trees on a city or suburban block are always giving us the gift of their oxygen and beauty. Use our list of watershed trails to explore some new places along our rivers, lakes, and streams.

We hope all of us will be safe and healthy through this, and keep our connections to community strong. We don't know where and when we will get back to some kind of normal, but I hope we will have woken up to the need for a more equitable society and the need for a health care system that provides for all. We must see the urgent crisis of climate change through a new lens, and use a newly wakened sense of global consciousness to take action now. We *can* mobilize quickly to save our planet, if we want to. We may each need to be the leaders, and wait no longer for those at the top.

For the river,
Elaine Chiosso,
Executive Director



Redbuds grace the spring woods with color and beauty. Photo by Cynthia Crossen

# Haw River Assembly's March Clean-Up-A-Thon Cancelled

On March 21st we had everything geared up and ready to go for our 30th year of cleaning up the Haw River and its tributaries. However, due to growing precautions to stop the spread of the Covid-19 virus, we decided we had to cancel our annual clean-up. We had almost 400 volunteers signed up for this event, so it was a very hard decision.

Some families, small groups, and individuals have decided to use this social distancing time to go out on their own and clean-up trash along the waters anyway – including at Pittsboro's Town Lake Park, Pokeberry Creek, and Dry Creek. We encourage all our members and volunteers to get out and hike the beautiful trails along the Haw River and Jordan Lake during this stressful time. Bring a trash bag with you – if we all pick up a little trash, it adds up to a lot, and keeps it out of our waters. Send us photos if you bag some trash, too! To further encourage this self-directed project, HRA has left a box of orange trash bags and puncture proof gloves outside of our office on our porch that faces Bynum Hill. (See directions to office at http://hawriver.org/about-us/contact-us/). There's no need to return supplies this year, just make sure you dispose of your trash so it doesn't end up back in the river. Thanks!

## Thanks to these Sponsors!

Thanks to our local business sponsors, whose donations will help us protect the river all year round. We especially appreciate this support during these hard times, and encourage you to support them in return.

**AbunDance Healing Arts** with Kim Calhoun, 224 East St., Pittsboro, abundancehealingarts.com

Auto Pro, 5522 Hwy 15-501 N, Pittsboro, (919) 542-0964

Benjamin Vineyards, Saxapahaw, benjaminvineyards.com

**Crosswinds Boating Center**, full service marina at Jordan Lake, crosswindsboating.com

**Fair Game Beverage Company**, 192 Lorax Lane, Pittsboro, fairgamebeverage.com

Frog Hollow Outdoors, paddle guides and rentals, froghollowoutdoors.com

**Fullsteam Brewery**, 726 Riggsbee Avenue, Durham, fullsteam.ag **Furniture Lab**, creative commercial dining spaces, Carrboro, furniturelab.com

Green City Goods, 607B S Elm St., Greensboro, greencitygoods.com Hempsmith Clothing Co., 198A Lorax Ln. Pittsboro, hempsmith.co Hobbs Architects, Pittsboro (919) 545-2004, hobbsarchitects.com Left Bank Butchery, 1729 Saxapahaw-Bethlehem Church Road, Saxapahaw, leftbankbutchery.com

Mellow Marsh Farm, wholesale native plants and seeds, Chatham Co., mellowmarshfarm.com

**Pittsboro Toys**, 15 Hillsboro St., Pittsboro, (919) 545-1546, pittsborotoys.com

Reverence Farms, 6956 NC-87, Graham, reverencefarmsbbq.com Saxapahaw General Store, 1735 Saxapahaw-Bethlehem Church Rd., Saxapahaw, saxgenstore.com



Bynum residents Emma Skurnick, Jan Burger (who took this photo), and their daughter Nico, are one of several families and individuals who have been picking up trash along the river, after our big event was cancelled.

# Wild and Scenic Film Festival

Presented by the Haw River Assembly

Thursday, August 20, 2020

at The Varsity Theater,

123 East Franklin Street, Chapel Hill

Films To Be Announced

Doors Open 6:30 pm, Show Starts 7 pm

Beer, Wine, and Snacks for Sale

Ticket Sales to be Posted Online Soon





# HAW RIVERKEEPER® Issues in the Watershed

from Emily Sutton, HAW RIVERKEEPER®

#### Industrial Contaminants in the Haw

Actor Mark Ruffalo visited the HRA office in Bynum on February 19 to discuss PFAS in the Haw River and in Pittsboro's drinking water, with Haw Riverkeeper Emily Sutton, Pittsboro Commissioner John Bonitz, and town resident Katie Bryant. Ruffalo is the star (and producer) of the new movie "Dark Waters", about a West Virginia community poisoned by the industrial chemical PFAS in their drinking water. He was on a tour of North Carolina, talking with impacted residents and elected officials in the Cape Fear Basin, including Wilmington, about the health impacts of PFAS, and laws to keep it out of our waters. We took a walk to the Bynum Bridge, looking upriver to Pittsboro's water intake above the Bynum dam, which pulls water contaminated with industrial chemicals from upstream industries, especially in Burlington. Ruffalo continued on to Raleigh to talk to government leaders and legislators about this issue, and a film screening for them of "Dark Waters".



Mark Ruffalo on Bynum Bridge, discusses PFAS contamination with Haw Riverkeeper Emily Sutton, Pittsboro Commisioner John Bonitz and Pittsboro resident Katie Bryant.

As we reported earlier, the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) sent the City of Burlington a "Notice of Intent" (NOI) letter in November, on HRA's behalf, telling them we intend to sue if they do not stop discharging PFAS (and 1,4-dioxane) into the Haw River and its tributaries, through their wastewater treatment plant and land application of sludge. In that letter, we described the City of Burlington's violations of the Clean Water Act and the Resource Conservation Recovery Act for these illegal discharges of harmful industrial chemicals, known to be harmful to human health. The chemicals are likely sent through the sewer system to Burlington's WWTP by a number of unidentified factories, who use PFAS chemicals for textile and paper coatings, metal plating, and other manufacturing processes. The City recognizes that it is discharging PFAS into the Haw River from the wastewater effluent. We are continuing discussions with Burlington as they take steps to identify and address the sources of this industrial pollution into the Haw River. Our goal is to stop this pollution, and we remain prepared to sue the City of Burlington if necessary.

An article about our case was featured in the National Law Review with this quote: "The Burlington NOI should give any participant in an industrial pretreatment program pause. To date, government regulators have not often brought enforcement actions against wastewater handlers for PFAS discharges, despite the likelihood that many have discharged the contaminants for years. The Burlington NOI provides a road map for regulators who are inclined to do so, whether or not their states have passed legislation that that specifically targets PFAS compounds."

Haw River Assembly continues to work with scientists at North Carolina State University, Duke University, East Carolina University, and Region 4 EPA staff to understand all sources of PFAS into the Haw and find solutions for downstream drinking water users, including Pittsboro. Emily Sutton, Haw Riverkeeper, was appointed to Pittsboro's Water Quality Task Force, looking at urgent solutions to the ongoing drinking water contamination for the town.

#### MVP Southgate Permit Delay

The Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) Southgate project is awaiting approval from North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) for the 401 permit to allow stream crossings. The state alone has the ability to approve or deny this permit, and NCDEQ has denied the permit once. MVP Southgate has provided more information in response to a request from NCDEQ. The Final Environmental Impact Statement from the Federal Energy Regulatory Committee has also been released. We are currently looking over these documents to build our own comments to urge NCDEQ to deny the 401 permit for this project, or continue to ask for more information. Due to the state of emergency caused by COVID-19, we have also urged NCDEQ and Governor Cooper to suspend MVP Southgate permitting procedures and actions until the coronavirus emergency declaration has been lifted. Governor Cooper and NCDEQ should be taking all necessary steps to ensure that the public, and especially the most affected communities, can exercise their full legal right to submit comments on this permit.

#### Support Sustainable Farmers

The COVID-19 emergency has started to begin to hit our local farmers who have committed to raising livestock in a way that protects water quality. We have been working with other non-profit partners in the agricultural community to get resources out to farmers and consumers about how to safely support these families and their livelihoods. One of those ways is to attend farmers markets, which are being deemed as "essential businesses," and are practicing safe-distancing and other measures to protect buyers. Many farms are now offering pre-order sales for pick-up from their farms – see a current list at Carolina Farm Stewardship Association: https://www.carolinafarmstewards.org/on-farm-pickups/. It can make a world of difference to our farmers who have meat, dairy, eggs and produce that will otherwise expire.

We have also been working with small scale direct market farmers to finalize a list of practices that direct market farmers can use to protect water quality. This list can be found on our website (under the River Issues tab for CAFO), as well as the list of direct market farmers in our basin who follow these practices.

We have seen a slight increase in new industrial poultry operations due to the new processing facility in Siler City. We are working with Waterkeeper Alliance and the state agencies to do aerial monitoring and surface water monitoring above and below these sites to ensure that impacts to water quality are minimized.

#### Jordan Lake Rules – Again

The Jordan Lake Rules readoption process begins this year, and we are currently a stakeholder of that process through the Agricultural Rules on the Watershed Oversight Committee and the Integrated Water Management workgroup on the Jordan Lake One Water coalition. This process will aim to wrap up in 2023, when the rules go to the Rules Review Committee for adoption. The original rules, waylaid by the NC General Assembly, were first adopted in 2009.

#### Chatham Park Updates

Construction is underway on Chatham Park's commercial development "Mosaic" north of Pittsboro off 15-501, and a housing development "The Vineyards" and private school on the north side of Thompson Street. The Mosaic had its Land Disturbance Permit revoked on January 10, 2020 by Chatham County's program for Sedimentation and Erosion Control, after a worker drove heavy equipment through a stream on the property (see photo at right, taken by staff from Chatham County).

Chatham Park will require Pittsboro to greatly increase its wastewater treatment capacity. The Town wants to build a new major sewer line to pump its wastewater to Sanford, but the state wants more information on how that would impact the environment. The NC Division of Water Resources is asking Pittsboro to include secondary and cumulative impacts of development, including Chatham Park, in the Environmental Information Document because of concerns raised by US Fish and Wildlife. These are impacts to the environment from all



new development that would result from Pittsboro's greater wastewater capacity.

#### Plastic Free Haw River Campaign!

Haw River Assembly is working with local businesses to limit single use plastic pollution in our watershed. The service industry is a major contributor to the plastic pollution that ends up in our rivers and local waters. Reduced markets for plastic recycling has made this situation worse. Single-use plastics break down into very small microplastics, which later make their way into the food we eat and our drinking water, and into the food chain for wildlife. Microplastics are any type of plastic fragment less than five millimeters in length. At past river clean-ups, plastic bottles and other single use plastics make up a large portion of the trash we find. Through a partnership with UNC Chapel Hill, we've collected samples from streams below Greensboro, Burlington, Durham, Chapel Hill, and Apex to be analyzed for quantities of microplastics. This data will help us to understand which cities have the biggest load of microplastics coming into the Haw River basin, and therefore which areas we can best target our advocacy for the biggest impact. Many local shops are voluntarily removing single-use plastics from their businesses. Our goal with this campaign is to increase the number of businesses that ban single-use plastics from their front of house, and give these businesses the recognition they deserve for being eco-warriors in their own right. Find our list of partners online, and please support them to thank them for their commitment to protecting our watershed.



## HRA Outreach and Watershed Education



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

### Haw River Learning Celebration - Calling All Volunteers!

With every hope that events will be allowed to take place by autumn, we are making plans for the 31st year of the Learning Celebration! Once again our wonderful river program for schools will sprout up along the banks of the Haw River, moving from Chatham to Alamance to Guilford counties over the course of 3 weeks. Since 1990 we have been putting on this unique program that gets 4th grade students outside into nature, and inspires them to be the next generation of conservationists. Our volunteer guides use nature as the classroom, and for many children this is their first experience ever hiking through a forest and along a river.

#### What do Volunteers do?

❖ **Program Guides:** Learning Celebration volunteers guide small groups of 4th-graders through activities that explore the woods and

river through hands-on experiences at this field trip to the river. Volunteers can stay for the day or camp overnight, with meals provided. You'll have an amazing time being part of this river community!

- ♦ Meal Providers: Do you love to cook? How about cooking a lunch or dinner for our volunteer crew of about 25 people? Your meal will be greatly appreciated and we can help with ideas, expenses, or delivery to the site, if needed. We hope you will stay to share the meal with us!
- **Set-up and Movers:** We always need help setting up our camp infrastructure at each site (Saturday afternoons and Sundays) and helping us breakdown and moving our camp supplies on Friday afternoons.

Volunteer for the Learning Celebration!

Bynum: Sept. 26 - Oct 2
Saxapahaw: Oct 3 - Oct 9
Camp Guilrock: Oct 11 - Oct 16

School program days are Tuesday through Friday each week. Saturdays, Sundays, and Mondays are for set-up and volunteer training. Contact me if you'd like to help and I'll give you more information: krooks@hawriver.org, 919-542-5790.



**Learn About the Haw River!** We offer an extensive array of information on our website about the river, pollution issues, history, geology, and much more. From the front page, www.hawriver.org, use the tabs on the top menu bar:

**About the River** - The History page provides a historical overview of our watershed, plus specific articles on the 19th century textile mills, the Underground Railroad, the Sissipahaw people, geography, and geology. Check out several Maps of our watershed, and use the Recreation page to find out about hiking, paddling, and outfitters.

**River Issues** - Find out the latest on issues and our Haw Riverkeeper's advocacy work. Use the dropdown menu to learn about industrial contaminants in the Haw, MVP Southgate, sustainable agriculture, Jordan Lake, Chatham Park and more.

**Programs** - The River Watch page shows you where our current volunteer teams are monitoring, and includes info and tutorials on our methods. Learn how to evaluate water quality by identifying the water insects and other aquatic life in a creek near you! Muddy Water Watch teaches volunteers how to identify and report construction sediment and erosion control violations using a smart phone app. Swim Guide is our summer season weekly report on how safe it is for swimming at 8 sites on the Haw and Jordan Lake, based on E-coli monitoring. Sign up for the Learning Celebration here.

Report a Problem - Use this form to tell us about a pollution problem in our watershed.

**Publications** - All kinds of information, including how to co-exist with beavers, native plantings for our watershed, all about algae, our Stream Steward handbook, archived reports on the river, HRA newsletters, and much more!

You can also follow us on social media where we will begin uploading YouTube videos of demonstrations about water quality and other topics, and activities for students K-12 that you can do with materials you already have at home.

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◆ Facebook: @hawriverassembly ◆ Instagram: @hawriverassembly ◆ Twitter: @HawRiverkeeper



# Standing in the Stream

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



New River Watch team learns how to check the pH reading at New Hope Creek at Hollow Rock Nature Park.

We have had a few teams join our River Watch program, and with the current social distancing situation, more and more people are seeking solace by their streams and looking for proactive ways to protect our natural spaces.

We've had 6 new teams join our program in Durham and Alamance counties since January. The spring scheduled monitoring date was March 19th. HRA Intern Emily Williams (left) and Haw not expect teams to do regularly



During this stay at home order, we do Riverkeeper Emily Sutton sample Jordan Lake.

scheduled monitoring, but hope that our teams can get back to their sites before the Summer Solstice on June 20th. We are spending this time restocking and repairing monitoring equipment and uploading data from teams.

We have updated resources on our website about the monitoring program, including macro invertebrate identification and tips for finding them. If you are interested in joining the program, please take a look at the resources and we'll be ready to schedule group trainings as soon as we can all be together at the river again!

#### Monitoring Booker Creek in Chapel Hill by Emily Williams, HRA Intern

Frequently, rivers and oceans are hailed for their ecological and economic contributions; however, small streams, while often overlooked, are just as significant. These tributaries provide habitat for wildlife and yield critical services to the watershed landscape and downstream waterways, including sediment and nutrient control, and flood protection. Booker Creek has its entire watershed within Chapel Hill, and is impacted by the urbanization and development of the town. There is ample potential for pollution and erosion in this highly developed area, so it is important we are proactive in preventing this degradation. Previously, Booker Creek has been designated an impaired waterway in regards to benthic life, according to NC DEQ in 2018. Many residents have voiced their concerns about the health of the stream, citing an observed lack of aquatic life.

As an Asssessment Intern for HRA, from UNC-CH, I have been monitoring Booker Creek. It runs adjacent to Eastgate shopping center and several neighborhoods, and is in proximity of ongoing construction sites – the perfect recipe for degradation. I have monitored this creek at nine locations using specific measurements (dissolved oxygen, turbidity, temperature, conductivity, etc.) as a proxy for stream health. The data from these field measurements are being compared to historical Booker Creek data, as well as a range of characteristic values for streams in the area, in order to identify possible problem areas.

These efforts are in hopes of demonstrating the need for enhanced stormwater management practices from the town itself. More specifically, erosion and sediment



HRA Intern Emily Williams monitors Booker Creek in Chapel Hill.

control may need to be reevaluated, given the instances of elevated turbidity levels and the frequency of construction in the town. Increased sediment levels can smother and disrupt aquatic life and degrade the overall health of the ecosystem. Booker Creek is no stranger to management evaluation, as The Town of Chapel Hill has performed subwatershed studies in the past. In light of their findings the town has proposed structures to mitigate erosion, and monitoring of bioretention ponds. Looking forward, we would like to see proper consideration for stream quality and effective policy in accordance with the town's continuous growth.

## Upcoming 2020 HRA Events

**POSTPONED** -- HRA's Haw River Festival in Saxapahaw. Watch for rescheduled date.

*June 20-21*, Haw River Watch Monitoring weekend. For info, contact Emily Sutton at emily@hawriver.org, 919-542-5790.

September 26 - October 16, Our 31st Haw River Learning Celebration for 4th-graders. It's not too soon to sign up to volunteer! For more info or to volunteer, contact Kyleene Rooks at krooks@hawriver.org, 919-542-5790; or visit http://hawriver.org/projects/4th-grade-field-trip/.

*Thursday, August 20*, Wild and Scenic Film Festival, Varsity Theater in downtown Chapel Hill. See p. 7 for details.

For **paddle trips on the Haw River** contact our partners Haw River Canoe and Kayak Company, hawrivercanoe.com, and Frog Hollow Outdoors, froghollowoutdoors.com.



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.

#### 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.

A sure sign of spring – when the fiddlehead ferns unfurl down by the creek. Photo by Cynthia Crossen

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