

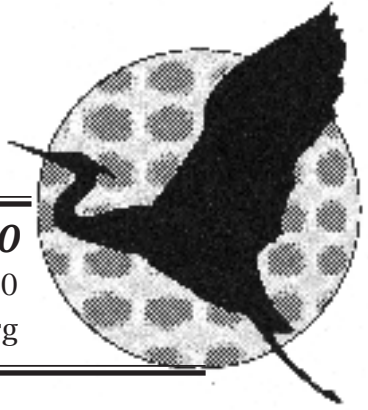
# Voice of the Haw



The Haw River Assembly *December 2020*

P.O. Box 187 · Bynum, NC 27228 · (919) 542-5790

email: [info@hawriver.org](mailto:info@hawriver.org) · [www.hawriver.org](http://www.hawriver.org)



*We're wishing everyone a healthy and safe holiday season.*

*May the coming year bring better days ahead,  
and for peace, flowing like a river.*

## Finally – Action on Industrial Chemicals in the Haw

After years of raising concerns, our warnings about the high levels of industrial contaminants in the Haw River are finally being heard. First steps are being taken to address this threat to drinking water supplies and the river ecosystem. These include the new agreement with Burlington, a public hearing on Greensboro's discharges of 1,4-dioxane into the river, new studies and recommendations concerning Pittsboro's contaminated drinking water and proposed new state standards. We urge that no more time is wasted in protecting all people, including children and pregnant women, who are being exposed to these chemicals every day.

### ***City of Burlington Signs Agreement to Investigate PFAS and 1,4-dioxane***

The City of Burlington has now signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC), on behalf of Haw River Assembly, to investigate the industrial sources of per- and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) chemicals and 1,4-dioxane in the city's wastewater discharges. Burlington's wastewater treatment plants accept waste from many industrial users, and does not remove the PFAS and 1,4-dioxane before discharging the waste into the Haw River. In addition, contaminated sludge is spread on pastures and fields, and runoff enters nearby creeks during storms. Downstream communities who draw their drinking water from the Haw River, tributaries, and Jordan Lake, are impacted by these chemicals. We notified Burlington last year of our intent to sue the city for its PFAS and 1,4-dioxane pollution unless they took action, and with SELC we have since been in negotiations. This Agreement with Burlington includes a sampling plan at over 20 locations to identify the industries responsible. Once identified we expect the city to take steps to stop this pollution.

*continued on page 6*

### ***Watch the VIRTUAL Haw River Learning Celebration!***

COVID-19 meant we couldn't do it in person this fall, so we brought the Learning Celebration to the schools online! Six fun video episodes explore the activities fourth-graders take part in during our annual field trip, including water monitoring, solutions to pollution, art, animals and plants of the Haw. HRA produced this with videographer Fred Tutman, staff and volunteer presenters, and our naturalist guide, Chris Carter. Episodes are enlivened by animation from Tim King, music by Jonathan Henderson, and the magic of fantastic puppets from Paperhand Puppet Intervention. Episodes are 12 to 18 minutes each in length, and are fun for *all* ages. Get the links at: <http://hawriver.org/the-virtual-haw-river-learning-celebration-now-online>



*The river! the sun! the rabbit! the raccoons! the great blue heron! the turtle! the fox! the humans! are all part of the our virtual Learning Celebration this year!*

## HRA Board of Directors

**Chris Carter**, President, *Alamance County*  
**John Wagner**, Vice-President, *Chatham County*  
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**Sharon Garbutt**, *Chatham County*  
**David Jester**, *Chatham County*  
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**Ayo Wilson**, *Durham*  
  
**Mac Jordan**, Emeritus Member, *Saxapahaw*  
**Omega Wilson**, *Environmental Justice Advisor, Mebane*

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**Kyleene Rooks**, *Event & Outreach Coordinator*  
**Emily Sutton**, *HAW RIVERKEEPER®*  
**Kathy Buck**, *Office Manager*  
**Cynthia Crossen**, *Newsletter Editor*

Thanks to **Jan Burger** for art throughout this newsletter: Climate Action Logo, Plastics Campaign Logo, ACP/MVP graphic, and River Watch Heron.

**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.*

**(919) 542-5790    [www.hawriver.org](http://www.hawriver.org)**

## Notes from the Haw

It's been a beautiful autumn, and as the leaves fall, we can see the landscape through the winter trees. This is a great time of year to get outdoors on the many beautiful trails in the Haw River watershed. Have you been to the Iron Belt Access Trail at Haw River State Park, north of Greensboro, or the many river trails and the Cane Creek Mountains Natural Area in Alamance, and the Lower Haw River State Natural Area in Chatham County? Take a look at our webpage to find a trail to explore!  
<http://hawriver.org/about-the-river/recreation/>



We held our Annual Membership Meeting online on November 14, for Covid safety, but we really missed seeing everyone in person. Kudos to Kyleene Rooks, our Outreach and Event Coordinator, for organizing our Zoom meeting! Thank you to Board President, Chris Carter, for leading the meeting; and to guest presenter Jason "Crazy Bear" Campos Keck for our beautifully led opening and closing ceremonies, inspiring us to honor and respect the spirit of the earth and water. Our Keynote Speaker, Crystal Cavalier Keck, a member of the Oconechee Band of the Saponi Nation, shed some light on environmental injustices in the watershed, and we heard staff updates on HRA, and a Haw Riverkeeper report from Emily Sutton. We were excited to hear about the new Environmental Justice mapping tool that our UNC-CH intern, Lucy Gray, created this fall on our website, with support from our Environmental Justice committee. See all about it on pages 4-5 in this newsletter. You can watch a recording of the meeting at <https://vimeo.com/479322077>

We re-elected four of our current Board members, for new terms: Chris Carter, Lynn Featherstone, Nicole Gaines, and Janet MacFall. We are so thankful for their ongoing efforts to support HRA and to protect clean water! We also elected two new people to the Board – Rufus King and Kate Fulbright. Rufus lives in Alamance County and has been a major part of our Learning Celebration for most of his life. He currently works with Piedmont Wildlife Center, and is pursuing an undergraduate degree. Kate lives in Durham, works with the NC Conservation Network, and enjoys hiking, paddling and building community. We welcome both of these new members to our Board of Directors!

*For the river,*  
*Elaine Chiosso,*  
Executive Director



*Welcome to the HRA Board,*  
*Rufus King!*



*Welcome to the HRA Board,*  
*Kate Fulbright!*





# HAW RIVERKEEPER®

## *Issues in the Watershed*

*from Emily Sutton, HAW RIVERKEEPER®*

### ***Microplastics in Our Waters***

Haw River Assembly is part of a network of Waterkeepers in North Carolina (Waterkeepers Carolina), and we collectively received a grant for \$188,000 from the Attorney General Environmental Enhancement Program. This grant will allow us to continue to sample for microplastics throughout each watershed in the state. We will be collecting surface water samples and soil samples, and using this data to prioritize locations for in-stream litter collection devices. Data will be collected before and after these litter collection devices are installed, and we will conduct litter surveys when cleaning out the litter collection devices. These surveys will inform our advocacy around single-use plastic reduction in each area of our watershed.

Our intern Ashley Joyner has been processing microplastic samples since January, and has found some concerning levels of microplastics in many samples around Jordan Lake. We will be publishing all the data we have collected in early January. This preliminary research will inform our next project with Waterkeepers Carolina.

### ***MVP Southgate On Hold Again***

The Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) Southgate project is on hold after North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) has denied the 401 permit which would allow the project to cross streams. Without this permit, which the state has the ultimate authority over, the project can not move forward. The permit was denied outright, without permission to reapply or submit additional information. This is a huge win for the groups and communities who have been fighting this project since April 2018. The permit was denied for several reasons, but most notably, NCDEQ cites the probability of the MVP mainline to never be completed. The MVP mainline project in Virginia and West Virginia has been delayed by several legal challenges and water quality violations. This project is currently \$3 billion over budget, which means the expected cost has doubled since the project was initially proposed. This project is also three years behind schedule. As delays continue, the project becomes less feasible for investors to get a return on their investments, and MVP mainline is likely to meet the same fate of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP). That pipeline project was cancelled in late summer of 2020.

MVP Southgate representatives have appealed NCDEQ's decision to deny the 401 permit, and Southern Environmental Law Center has intervened on our behalf to defend NCDEQ's decision.

### ***The Poultry Industry is Growing in NC – and So is the Waste***

The poultry industry is growing in North Carolina. The unregulated poultry industry in North Carolina is burgeoning, with the number of chickens and turkeys increasing 17 percent in just the last 7 years to a total of more than 538 million. This is a problem for the

state's waterways because all those birds produce nearly 5 million tons of waste – and no one knows where it goes. We are working with Riverkeepers in North Carolina to advocate for transparency and regulations on the spread of poultry litter. Currently, these piles are often left exposed to wind and rain and seated directly adjacent to streams. The law should require poultry facilities to submit to the state the nutrient utilization plans they're already required to develop. These plans should be digitized and certified, reviewed, and approved. This will allow state agencies, and the public, to know where poultry waste winds up. As the Department of Environmental Quality has noted, when "the locations of dry litter poultry operations and the disposal of their waste are not known to environmental regulators" it is "difficult to form a complete picture of possible non-point source contributions within a specific watershed." Transparency is a key step to understanding and solving this problem.

Fortunately, there are so many farmers in the Haw River watershed that prioritize providing an alternative to the CAFO model. These farmers follow practices that protect water quality. We have a long list of farmers to recommend, and we urge you to consider supporting these farmers when purchasing meat for your holiday meals this year. You can find the list on our website (see below for the link).



### **Choose Sustainable Meat This Holiday Season!**

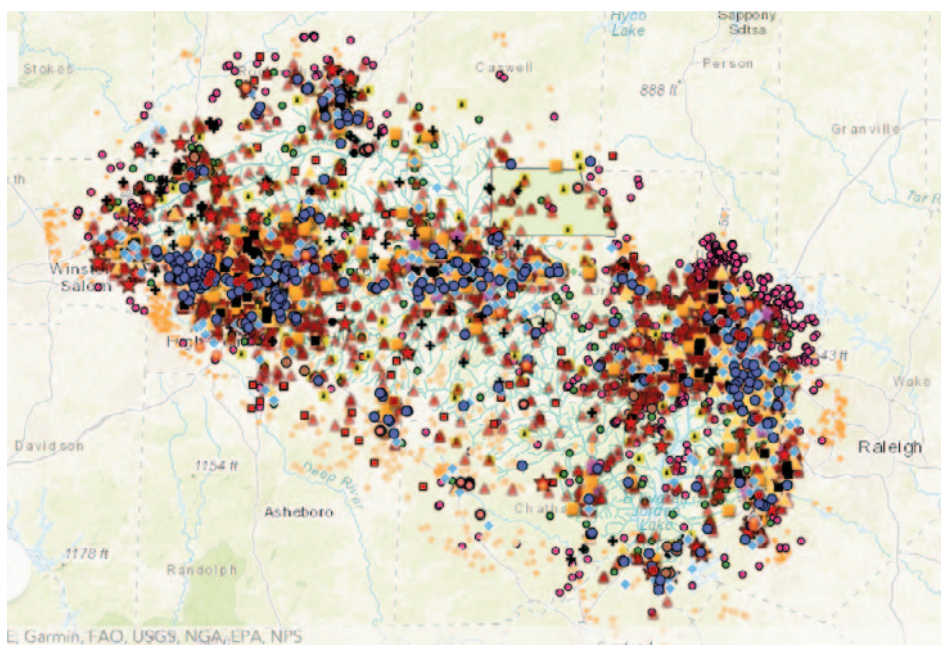
Farmers throughout the Tar Heel state who are striving to provide high-quality meat without harming their local communities deserve our thanks and our business.

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](http://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!

# Mapping Environmental Justice Issues in the Haw River Watershed

The Haw River Assembly works for environmental justice and equality in our watershed and supports communities fighting disproportionate burdens of pollution. This fall, Lucy Gray (at right), a UNC-CH intern, worked with our HRA Environmental Justice (EJ) committee to build an interactive mapping tool to display environmental justice issues within the watershed. We invite you to explore our new Storymap at [www.hawriver.org](http://www.hawriver.org). Use the “Program” tab and choose “Environmental Justice” in the dropdown box. You’ll also see in-depth information on specific issues, and Community Spotlight interviews with leaders in our watershed who are combatting environmental inequities and racism. HRA has tremendous appreciation to Lucy for this tool that will allow us to better address issues of environmental injustice.



Haw River Watershed Interactive Map

## The Interactive Map

Potential and existing sources of pollution are overlaid with demographic data to show the primary communities that are being affected. You can type in your address and click on the legend icon to identify potential pollutant sources or industrial sites.

## Single Issue Maps

The Landfills map below, and the Poultry Operations map on the next page, are examples of maps focusing on single pollution issues on the webpage.

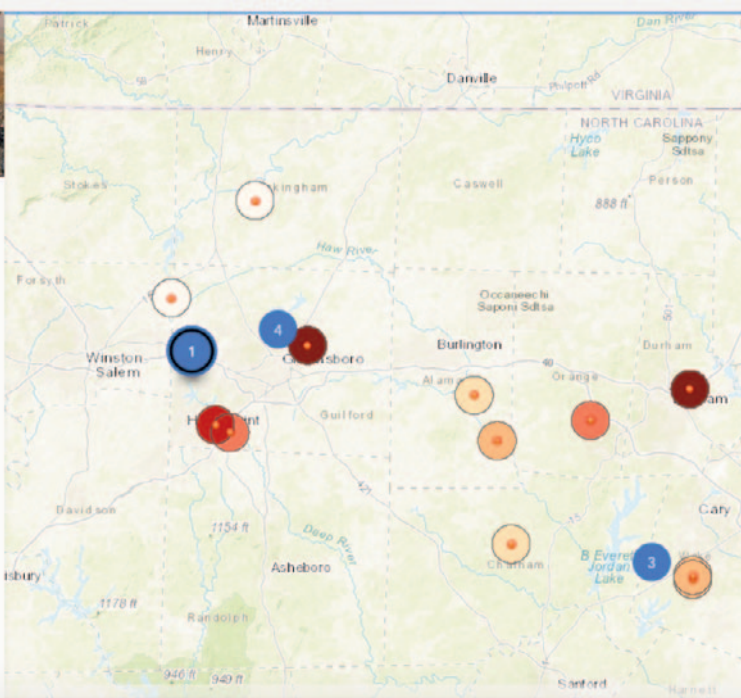
## Infographs on Pollution

The NC Pipelines infographic on the next page is an example of information on the impacts of various issues.



## Landfills

In 2019, the U.S. Census estimated that North Carolina's population is 30% minority. As you can see from the buffers on this map and the legend in the second photo above, the majority of the landfills in the watershed are located in areas with a higher proportion of minority residents living within 3 miles of the landfill site. This illustrates the pervasiveness of racial discrimination in landfill placement.

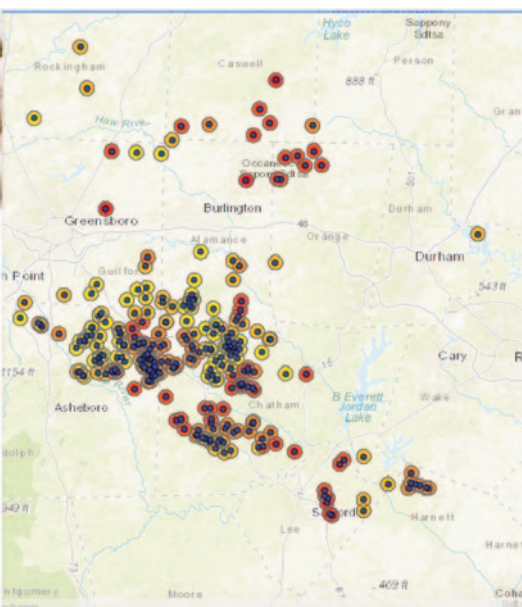






## Poultry Operations

In 2019, it was reported that poultry operations cause even more nitrogen and phosphorous pollution in North Carolina than hog farming. This type of pollution can contaminate groundwater, create algal blooms, and have even been linked to health effects.



## *The Fight for the Right to Basic Amenities: Community Leader Spotlight*

### *Omega and Brenda Wilson*

In 1994, Omega and Brenda Wilson co-founded the West End Revitalization Association (WERA) in Mebane, NC to fight for access to basic infrastructure including paved roads, sewage treatment, and safe drinking water. WERA created a research paradigm in 2000 called community-owned and managed research, which is now the gold standard for community-driven public health research.



## *Intersections of Justice: Community Leader Spotlight*

### *Crystal Cavalier Keck*

Crystal Cavalier Keck, from Mebane, NC, is a member of the Oconeechee Band of the Saponi Nation. She works on issues for clean water and environmental justice in her community, and sits on the Board of the Haw River Assembly and the NAACP Environmental Justice Board. She co-founded Seven Directions of Service, with her husband, Jason Crazy Bear Keck, to promote community service opportunities in Native communities.

## *Community Advocate: Community Leader Spotlight*

### *Nicole Gaines*

Nicole Gaines is a community advocacy leader in Greensboro.

“When we look at community organizing, you are beginning with the people who are most affected. You are beginning with the people who live in those communities and they are living the harm, and you help them, or they help you figure out what’s best for us.”



## Climate Action Campaign

The Climate Action Committee has been working hard to collaborate with like-minded organizations across the watershed to share information about Climate Action happening in our watershed. With resources like the NC Climate Science Report and NC Climate Risk Assessment and Resilience Plan, we've compiled Piedmont-specific research and shared it with you on our website. Now that the elections are behind us, our next goal as a committee will be to call our newly-elected leaders to action for urgent policy and regulatory changes, and to support an economic recovery that puts climate solutions and climate justice at the forefront. We invite you to join our Climate Action E-Newsletter listserv on our website, and to join us in our efforts through our How To Take Action section on our website. As our society safely opens up, we hope to have your help with in person events to expand this work.

<http://hawriver.org/home/climate-action-campaign/>



## Plastics Campaign

Last fall we began working with a lab at UNC Chapel Hill to start testing our surface waters for microplastics so that we could share our data with you as consumers and with local businesses, in hopes that this rising concern would pressure them to move their business platforms in the direction of eliminating single use plastics (and eventually plastics all together!). As we continue sampling and partnering with businesses in the watershed, we encourage you to show us how you eliminate plastic waste at home. Tag us on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter with the #PlasticFreeHaw and earn yourself a free “We Love Our River” sticker!



Photo by Cynthia Crossen

### Industrial Contaminants, continued from page 1

#### Greensboro and 1,4-Dioxane

Urged by HRA and our supporters, NC Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) will hold a remote public hearing Dec. 9 about a Special Order of Consent to correct the City of Greensboro's illegal discharges of the toxic compound 1,4-Dioxane into the Haw River and downstream drinking water supplies, from the T. Z. Osborne Wastewater Treatment Plant. 1,4-dioxane is used for a wide variety of industrial and manufacturing purposes and is dangerous to human health.

#### Duke PFAS Exposure Study for Pittsboro

Dr. Heather Stapleton, Duke University, hosted a virtual Town Hall to present the data from their ongoing PFAS sampling of surface water, drinking water, and blood serum in the Pittsboro community. The median levels of types of PFAS were higher in the blood of Pittsboro residents than in the blood of Wilmington residents, who have also long been exposed to PFAS. Further results of the study, can be found at <https://sites.nicholas.duke.edu/pfas/pfas-research-in-pittsboro-nc/pfas-study-results/>.

The Town of Pittsboro Water Quality Taskforce has submitted their final report to the Town Board on industrial contaminants in the town's drinking water (sourced from the Haw River) and major recommendations for solutions. Read the

report at <http://hawriver.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Pittsboro-Water-Quality-Task-Force-Final-Report.pdf>. The Town Board has continued to postpone hearing the final recommendations from this committee, and has not committed yet to any new actions.

#### State Proposed New Standards

The NC Department of Water Resources is proposing a new groundwater standard of 70 ppt total for PFOA and PFOS. Haw Riverkeeper is pressing for a lower 10 ppt standard, and to include additional PFAS compounds. There will be a public comment period in January. 1,4-dioxane standards for surface water are being proposed in the upcoming Triennial Review for 35ug/L for water supply watersheds and 80 ug/L for non-water supply watersheds. We're pushing for lower standards to limit what's being discharged into the Haw River. New standards give the state teeth to enforce reducing toxic pollution.

**More Studies Ahead:** HRA will be working with Dr. Jane Hoppin of NC State University for additional human health sampling in Pittsboro early next year, and with Dr. Detlef Knappe, NCSU, to monitor wells near Burlington's sludge application sites. Dr. Mei Sun, UNC Charlotte, will monitor surface water near sludge fields, and Dr. Scott Belcher will be monitoring PFAS in fish samples in the Haw River and Jordan Lake. (We'll be looking for volunteers who like to fish to help with this study.)



## ***The 31st Annual Haw River Clean-Up-A-Thon March 21, 2021***

As we roll out the red carpet for the upcoming year we wanted to share that we are planning to host our 31st Annual Haw River Clean-Up-A-Thon! So start scouting your clean-up spots along the river, because we'll have bags and gloves ready for you on Saturday, March 21, 2021. Of course, the event



is subject to change, but we will continue to abide by CDC Guidelines & Recommendations when it comes to managing group sizes and other safety concerns for outdoor events. Until then, 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.

<http://hawriver.org/river-cleanup/>

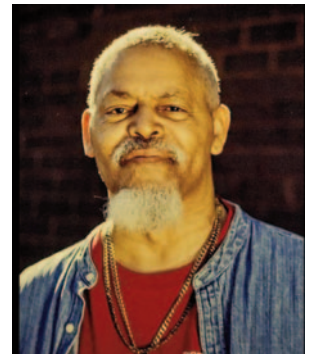
### ***In Memoriam***



It is with great sadness that we pay tribute to, and remember, these three longstanding members of the Haw River Assembly Board of Directors. We will miss them.

Dr. Ruth Lucier (left) passed away in June. She had served on our Board for many years, and in that time was also our Board President and Secretary. She was a tremendous and cheerful supporter of all our work, and a member of the Bynum Clean-Up-A-Thon team. Ruth was a Professor of Philosophy at Bennett College and enjoyed traveling the world in pursuit of knowledge, always returning to her beloved community of Bynum on the Haw River.

Melvin DuBose (right) served on our Board for over a decade, and was our Vice-President until his death in April 2020. We first met him when he lived in Greensboro, as a leader in the fight to stop the re-opening of the White Street Landfill. He later moved to Burlington, and was an active volunteer with us at outreach events. He was on the HRA team that participated in a year long Racial Equity Lab sponsored by Z. Smith Reynolds. His warmth and wisdom will be greatly missed.



Tom Patterson (left) served on our Board and also in the role as Secretary for many years. He lived in Chapel Hill, and worked for many years at NC Central University before retiring. He was an avid paddler in younger days, and a great help at our river clean-ups and the annual Haw River Festival. He passed away last year, and we honor his memory.

### ***Send Some Love to Clyde Jones***

Our dear friend Clyde Jones is now living at The Laurels, in Pittsboro, where he is getting assisted living help due to disabilities that have come with age. He is doing pretty well! You know Clyde if you ever bought one of our HRA T-shirts that he designed, went to Clydefest, or met him in Bynum or beyond! Almost every elementary school in our watershed has a Clyde critter he made with the students. Clyde loves getting cards from everyone – kids and adults alike.

His new address is: The Laurels of Chatham, 72 Chatham Business Park Drive, Room 401-A, Pittsboro, NC 27312.



## Upcoming 2020-21 HRA Events

**December 19-20, 2020, and March 20-21, 2021 Haw River Watch**

**Monitoring weekends.** Our volunteers monitor water quality on creeks or sections of the river, recording changes over time and notifying us of pollution incidents. Find out more on our website at Programs/River Watch, or contact Emily Sutton, Haw Riverkeeper [emily@hawriver.org](mailto:emily@hawriver.org).

**Saturday, March 21, 2021, Haw River Assembly Annual River Clean-Up-aThon.** See details on page 7.

For **paddle trips on the Haw River** contact our partners Haw River Canoe and Kayak Company, [hawrivercanoe.com](http://hawrivercanoe.com), and Frog Hollow Outdoors, [froghollowoutdoors.com](http://froghollowoutdoors.com).

See Upcoming Announcements about **Creek Week** in your County

**Alamance Creek Week:** <https://alamancecreekweek.wordpress.com>

**Durham Creek Week:** <https://keepdurhambeautiful.org/creek-week>

**Guilford Creek Week:** <http://guilfordcreekweek.org>

Updates and details can be found at [www.hawriver.org](http://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](mailto:info@hawriver.org).

### Masking Up! With T. S. Designs

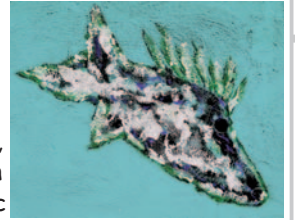
T. S. Designs in Burlington, that makes our beautiful and sustainable T-shirts, is now offering face masks for Covid-19 protection, made from organic cotton T-shirt remnants. Go to

<https://tsdesigns.com/> to see all their options for face masks (including with custom logos), as well as their T-shirt styles and pricing.



### Our 2020 T-Shirt is Available!

NOTE: The 2021 T-shirt will be printed and available next spring. 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 HRA 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.

See Environmental  
Justice Map Inside

Address Service Requested

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