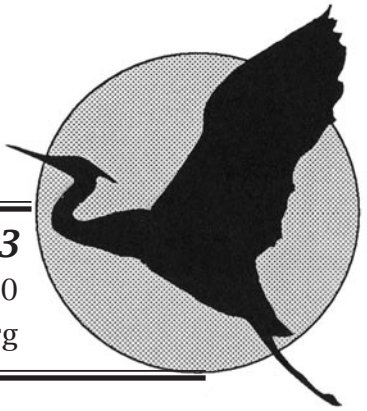


Voice of the Haw



The Haw River Assembly *Summer/Fall 2023*

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

email: info@hawriver.org · www.hawriver.org

HRA and Burlington Reach Final Settlement on PFAS Pollution!

Haw River Assembly, represented by Southern Environmental Law Center, has been working with the City of Burlington to address the levels of PFAS in the Haw since our Notice of Intent to Sue was sent in November 2019. **This July, we reached a robust settlement with the City, following a lengthy, first-of-its-kind investigation to identify the sources of PFAS into the City's sewer system.** Unlike areas across the country tackling a single industrial polluter, we have had to work with scientists at Duke University and the City of Burlington to investigate the City's sewer system to find hot spots within the system. This led to further investigations and analysis to identify which of the City's hundreds of industrial sources contributed to those hot spots and ultimately to the PFAS in the City's biosolids and wastewater discharge to the Haw.

Through the investigation, we identified three industrial facilities as the major sources of PFAS to the City's wastewater treatment plant: UniChem, Shawmut Fabrics, and Elevate Textiles. Leachate sent to

the treatment plant from two landfills also contributes to the PFAS in the City's wastewater. UniChem has ceased production in their North Carolina facility. Shawmut Febrics and Elevate Textiles have both decreased their PFAS discharges and will be implementing additional measures to achieve further reductions, as will the landfills. We have memorialized these measures, as well as additional steps to be taken by the City to prevent its PFAS discharges, in a settlement agreement with the City. After settlement, Haw River Assembly will continue to analyze samples from the City's sewer system and discharge, to monitor and confirm PFAS reductions.

This is a huge win for downstream drinking water and recreation users of the Haw, and all of the plants and animal life that depend on this river.

2023

From Chatham to Alamance to Guilford county over 3 weeks!

HAW RIVER LEARNING CELEBRATION

✓ **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!!** →

September 24th - October 13th

STEEL STRING BREWERY
and Pluck Farm presents...

Summer Celebration with the Haw River Assembly

SUNDAY, AUGUST 27 4-7PM

Join Steel String Brewery and the Haw River Assembly as we celebrate the release of a special beer in honor of Haw River Assembly. Made with spicebush and mulberry, the beer pays tribute to North Carolina's native plants and acknowledges Haw River Assembly's continued environmental efforts in the Haw River Watershed.

**LIVE MUSIC
FOOD & DRINKS
AND MORE!**

For more information
www.hawriver.org

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Hannah Welborn-Lewis, *Events & Volunteer Coordinator*
Anita Moore, *Communications Manager*
Mike Wallace, *Water Quality Specialist*
Carolyn Paden, *Office Manager*
Cynthia Crossen, *Newsletter Editor*

Thanks to **Jan Burger** for art throughout this newsletter: Climate Action Logo, River Watch Heron, Haw River Festival Heron, Learning Celebration logo, and Haw River Ramble.

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.

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

Elaine Chiosso, Executive Director



Our long struggle to get the City of Burlington to agree to investigate the sources of PFAS in its wastewater, and to take action, was only possible because Haw River Assembly has put fighting pollution at the forefront of our work for 41 years. We are proud of all the work we do, which includes educational and volunteer programs that get people connected to the river to care about it through river cleanups, stream monitoring, and teaching children. All these programs strengthen our core work of protecting our waters from pollution, and the goal that all people have the right to clean water for drinking, swimming, and fishing. It is truly a never-ending effort and it is YOUR support, as members of the Haw River Assembly, that keeps us going.

Climate Action Now!

Since our beginnings in 1982, the issue of fossil fuel driven climate change has gone from theory to reality. In this year of massive floods, wildfires, and lethal heat waves, we have come to see these extreme weather events as the “new normal”. I believe 2023 is the year when humans are finally acknowledging that we have altered our climate and are paying the price. We now need to create the momentum for climate action – not acceptance.

The Haw River Assembly has responded to this planetary crisis through our Climate Action Campaign. We are looking at what we can do within our own watershed, educating ourselves and advocating for solutions with our elected leaders. We can push for strong immediate action at the local level, demanding changes with county and city leaders to: reduce fossil fuel use in transportation and buildings; protect existing forests and biodiversity; strengthen flooding and stormwater protections, and ensure that low wealth and elderly populations are safeguarded during extreme heat and weather events. Municipal elections will be held this fall throughout our watershed. Attend candidate forums in your town or city and ask them questions about climate change and what they plan to do about it. Does your county or city have a climate change advisory board? If so, find out what they are doing. Check out our website for more information at <https://hawriver.org/home/climate-action-campaign/>.



HRA Annual Meeting Sunday November 12

Save the Date! Join us for our Annual HRA Membership Meeting:

Sunday, November 12, 2023, 12 noon to 4 pm, at the Lake Macintosh Clubhouse, 2704 Huffman Mill Road, Burlington, NC 27215.

We're holding our Annual Meeting this year at the Lake Macintosh Clubhouse which overlooks the scenic lake. Come enjoy a hike and lunch first (with kayaks available to rent, depending on the weather). We'll have updates and highlights from Haw River Assembly's work this year, and a report from Haw Riverkeeper Emily Sutton on current issues such as PFAS, MVP, and more, and time for Q & A. We'll also be holding elections for our 2024 Board of Directors. Not a member yet? You're welcome to come and join us and learn more about how your membership supports our work for clean water!



Issues in the Watershed

from Emily Sutton, HAW RIVERKEEPER®

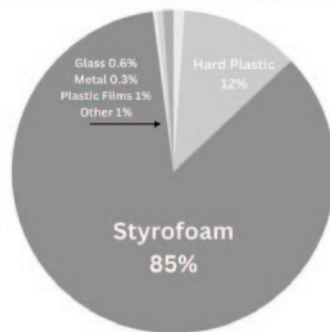
More on Industrial Contaminants in the Haw River

- Though we are celebrating our huge success in tracking, identifying sources, and minimizing toxic levels of PFAS in Burlington, we continue to track sources from Reidsville and Greensboro. During a statewide sampling project with Waterkeepers Carolina, we discovered extremely high levels of PFAS coming into a small tributary draining the White Street Landfill in Greensboro.
- NC Department of Environmental Quality presented to the Environmental Management commission last month to announce its plan to move forward on setting standards for PFAS in surface water in the coming years. A subset of PFAS will be selected for regulations, and we expect to see a draft of these proposals in early 2025 in time for the next Triennial Review of water quality standards.
- NC Department of Environmental Quality has also laid out its plan for regulating 1,4-dioxane through discharge permits. Greensboro and Reidsville have worked hard to pressure the agency to set weak limits based on what the levels in the river will be by the time it reaches a drinking water intake, rather than what the level at the point of discharge is. This is not safe enough for our communities, people that swim or paddle in the river, or aquatic life. When the public hearings take place on those permits (TBD), let's show the state how many people would be impacted by this decision to put profits first.

Trash Traps at Work!

We have installed three litter traps throughout the watershed, with three more coming shortly! Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and Durham have Trash Trap volunteer teams cleaning out and categorizing litter once per month. We have taken that data from their litter collection to the Environmental Advisory Board for City of Durham to encourage them to enact policies to eliminate the most significant type of litter in our collections: styrofoam. We have also traced some sources of litter in Durham and are moving forward with actions to minimize the trash that ends up in Third Fork Creek.

Litter Collected in Third Fork Creek



Mountain Valley Pipeline – Not Dead Yet

The MVP Southgate proposal has resurrected itself from the dead. Earlier this summer, the MVP mainline was pushed through by the federal government as part of the Debt Ceiling agreement. Though there are several pending court cases that have resulted in pauses in construction, this action was enough to encourage MVP Southgate representatives to request an extension from FERC. This extension of their Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity would grant MVP Southgate the ability to use eminent domain to push through their proj-

ect for an additional three years. We have worked with legislators on the state and federal levels, including Governor Cooper, to submit comments to FERC requesting that they deny this extension request. If the extension is granted, we expect to see a new state stream crossing permit application in September. This will start the process from the beginning: there will be public hearings and comment periods, and we'll need the help of all of our watershed community to stop this unnecessary project.



Haw Riverkeeper Emily Sutton speaks at the July NO MVP event in Saxapahaw.

Public Hearing on Stericycle Medical Waste Incinerator

The N.C. Department of Environmental Quality's Division of Air Quality (DAQ) will hold a public hearing on the draft Title V air quality permit renewal for Stericycle, Inc. on Tuesday August 22 from 6-8 pm at the Alamance Community College auditorium at 1247 Jimmie Kerr Road, Graham, NC. Stericycle operates incinerators for the disposal of hospital, medical, and infectious waste in Town of Haw River. Between 2019 and June 2023, Stericycle's air emissions bypassed its pollution control equipment 17 times, allowing pollution to enter the atmosphere directly. Stericycle entered into a Special Order by Consent with DAQ in December 2022 to resolve multiple violations, and agreed to pay a \$65,000 penalty and to make upgrades to the facility equipment. HRA has serious concerns about environmental justice and the impact of these pollutants on the neighboring communities, including lower income people, children, and the elderly, as well as the contributions of greenhouse gases. Written comments will be accepted by DAQ until 5 pm Friday August 25 at DAQ.publiccomments@deq.nc.gov with the subject line "Stericycle.21A", or by voice mail at 919-707-8714. The draft permit and more info is online at: <https://www.deq.nc.gov/news/events/public-hearing-preliminary-determination-air-quality-permit-application-stericycle>.



Standing in the Stream

Project News from Hannah Welborn-Lewis, Events and Volunteer Coordinator (919) 542-5790; events@hawriver.org

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

On June 10th, we hosted a River Watch Training in Pittsboro and had several new participants join us to learn about collecting macroinvertebrates and additional data collection measures. We added two new teams that will monitor around parts of Pokeberry Creek and Little Alamance Creek!

If you are interested in our River Watch Program, please email events@hawriver.org or sign up for our next River Watch training, scheduled on September 16, 2023, from the link at hawriver.org, saturdays-on-the-haw/ under the Events tab.

Dispatch from Hwy 64 Bridge team leader Maja Kricker's June 30 River Watch report: "We had a film of sediment covering nearly every rock, even as we had strong river flow. Clearly sediment was coming down from upstream pretty continuously. This level of sediment is atypical for this site. Chatham Park? Water quality was 'good' but note the absence of stoneflies, dragonflies and crane flies as well as crayfish, the usual denizens of the Haw at our location."



A member of the new Pokeberry Creek River Watch Teams searches for macroinvertebrates at the June Training Session.



Daphne Vogelsang locates a crayfish at the June River Watch Training held in Pittsboro.

Our 2023 T-Shirt — Snake!!

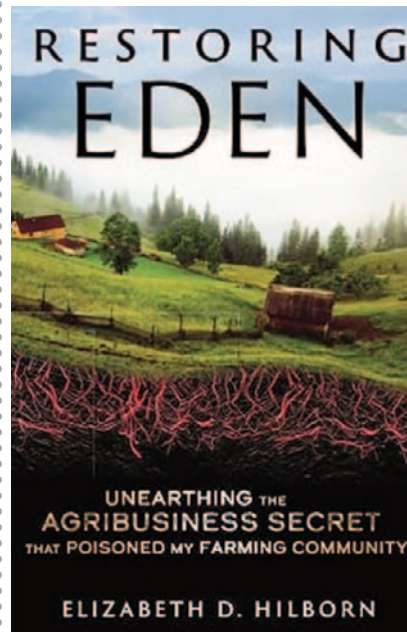
Artwork by Clyde Jones from 1991, this colorful snake on a soft green organic cotton T-shirt is produced by T.S. Designs of Burlington using their unique environmentally-friendly dye process.



Shirts are available in styles for:

- Adults (S, M, L, XL), for \$25;
- Women (S, M, L, XL), for \$25; and
- Youth (L, XL) for \$20;

Check our website to order (www.hawriver.org) or come by our office in Bynum (email info@hawriver.org or call first to check our hours, 919-542-5790).



Elizabeth Hilborn has published a new book, "Restoring Eden: Unearthing the Agribusiness Secret That Poisoned My Farming Community", from Chicago Review Press. She tells the story of how the floodplain and wetlands above her farm were poisoned by agricultural chemicals, and her investigation to find out what killed the insects and wildlife that had lived there. LIBRARY JOURNAL: "A beautifully descriptive, lyrical immersion in the natural world that's coupled with a detective story, reminiscent of Rachel Carson's Silent Spring." It can be ordered online, but is also available through local bookstores, where she will be doing readings in August.

Monitoring Haw River Water Quality

by Mike Wallace, HRA Field Technician, mike@hawriver.org

I've been spending many hours this year monitoring sediment pollution in streams, and reporting site violations to state and county agencies. This work is critical to protecting our waterways, as our region is experiencing rapid population growth and urbanization.



Chatham Park – Successful Enforcement Through Local Action

Most recently, our team investigated a complaint from a community member whose land abuts the Chatham Park Mellot subdivision development, that Haven Creek had turned orange and muddy after a rain event.

Following the stream to the source revealed insufficient and failing sediment and erosion control measures at the job site, resulting in a release of hundreds of pounds of red clay sediment into the creek and surrounding land. These issues were reported to staff with the Chatham County Erosion and Sedimentation Control Program, who inspected the site and swiftly moved to issue a Notice of Violation to Chatham Park, and revoked their Stormwater & Erosion Control permit, halting construction until the issues with sediment are addressed.

Alamance County – A Local Sediment & Erosion Control Program Is Needed Now

The instance above underscores the necessity of local sediment and erosion control programs. Without responsive regulatory staff at the county and municipal levels, oversight of a staggering number of construction sites falls to the state, which does not have sufficient staff and resources. This is unfortunately the current situation in Alamance County, which lacks a local sediment and erosion control program to monitor its roughly 250,000 acres (outside of Burlington's program). This means that work plan reviews, site inspections, and addressing violations falls to the NCDEQ office in Winston-Salem. HRA has spent over 120 hours just since March 2023 documenting insufficient control measures at job sites, several of which have remained out of compliance for multiple months or have completely lacked required stormwater and sediment control plans. We will be making this information available to the public and presenting it to the county commissioners, to push for the creation of a local sediment and erosion program in Alamance County.

VinFast – A Massive Project that Needs More Oversight From State

Another concern has been the sediment in streams as construction proceeds at the 2,000 acre VinFast manufacturing complex in Chatham County near Moncure. The State requires that turbidity in receiving waters not exceed 50 NTUs in non-trout streams. Our readings for Shaddox and Gulf Creeks were regularly 100 to 400 NTUs in the months of monitoring. Thanks our partners at Southwings, in May we were able to photograph and document by air the sediment moving from the VinFast site into adjacent wetlands. We sent this documentation to the state, which has oversight over this project instead of the Chatham County local program,

because VinFast received state incentive funding. Construction has continued despite the project still waiting for 401/404 permits. Stream conditions have not improved since the last inspection, and new phases of construction appear to be underway. We will continue to monitor stream sedimentation in the field and by air. More robust control measures, enforcement of violations by the state, and transparency of the permitting process are needed. The environmental impact from this massive project is widespread and ongoing.

Your eyes on our waters can be critical – let us know when you see excessive sediment in a stream or the river by emailing mike@hawriver.org or emily@hawriver.org. Check out more information on sediment erosion and how to become part of our Muddy Water Watch volunteer program, at <https://hawriver.org/projects/mww/>.

Swim Guide 2023 –

Is it Safe to Swim in the Haw?

Each summer we test favorite swimming sites along the Haw River and Jordan Lake to see if levels of E-coli are safe to swim in or not, and publish the results in our online Swim Guide. We have had weekends when all sites were safe, but 6 locations have failed at least once so far this summer. Chicken Bridge has had safe

levels this year, unlike what we saw last summer. Our data provides a snapshot of water conditions, and helps us zero in on potential contamination sources on the river. Go to

<https://hawriver.org/swim-guide/> to get the app and learn more. We also have a new toll-free hotline, (833) 982-0147, for weekly results and information in English and Spanish. This number will be displayed on new signs at our Swim Guide testing sites where possible.



**SAFE
SWIMMING
SITES**



**SWIM SITES
NOT SAFE FOR
SWIMMING**

The May 6th Haw River Festival Was a Blast!



On May 6, we hosted our 33rd Annual Haw River Festival and kicked off Saturdays in Saxapahaw, on one of the rare Saturdays in spring that it did not rain! Live music included performances from Saludos Compay, Honey Magpie, and Jasme Kelly, and festival-goers also enjoyed river activities and the wonderful farmers market. We raffled off a Perception 9.5 Kayak courtesy of Great Outdoor Provision to a lucky winner, and raised some funds for HRA with a silent auction of wonderful arts, crafts, and event tickets. Much gratitude to Joe Jacobs and staff from Haw River Canoe and Kayak Co. and other volunteers, for giving canoe rides to kids on Saxapahaw Lake! Special thanks to Paperhand Puppet for leading a fun parade around Saxapahaw, and to Nick Harper for an informative nature walk on Saxapahaw Island. We're so grateful to all those



who donated items and contributed to our silent auction. We would also like to give our appreciation for staff from Haw River Ballroom and Saturdays in Saxapahaw, including Heather, Anna, and Malik. We are deeply thankful to all our partners, volunteers, and HRA Board members and staff who helped make this event a success! It was a wonderful day!

HRA Out and About



HRA took part in the “No MVP” Community Event in Saxapahaw on July 16, organized by 7 Directions of Service, along with other groups fighting Mountain Valley Pipeline mainline and the Southgate extension.



HRA had a booth at the Juneteenth Celebration in Chatham County, with HRA president Nicole Gaines and Executive Director Elaine Chiosso talking with folks about our work for environmental justice.



“Not on This Land: The Fight Against The Atlantic Coast Pipeline” film screening was held June 15 at the Paramount Theater in Burlington, followed by a panel of people in the path of ACP and MVP, and the community fight against those pipelines. *Pictured from left to right: (Haw Riverkeeper) Emily Sutton, Perry Slade, Nancy Rosborough, Marvin Winstead, Donna Chavis*

Saturdays on the Haw

(Mostly) Saturdays on the Haw are monthly events, and opportunities for volunteers. Here's our lineup for the coming months! ➔ To register for an event: sign up from the link at hawriver.org, saturdays-on-the-haw/ under the Events tab, or contact Hannah at events@hawriver.org.

August Join us on **Sunday**, August 20 as we paddle at Lake Brandt in Greensboro from 10 am to noon. Some prior experience needed. Participants can bring their own boats or borrow one free, courtesy of Get Outdoors. There's a \$6 launch fee for the park. Registration is limited; advance registration required.

September Looking to start a River Watch team? Join us for our quarterly scheduled training on Saturday, September 16, from 10 am to noon. New teams require training – existing teams can also take part! Sign up at our website.

October Join us for a Jordan Lake Paddle on Saturday, October 7. Participants are responsible for bringing their own paddling boats, or can rent boats from Frog Hollow Outdoors for the event. Advance registration is required.

November Join us on Saturday, November 4 for an Advocacy Training: learn how to write effective comment letters, how to get involved in local issues, and how to make sure your voice is heard by local and state officials. Advance registration is required.

December Join us for the first annual Haw River Assembly “State of the River” on Saturday, December 2. More details to be released, so stay tuned!

PAPERHAND
AUG 4 THRU SEPT 17
FOREST THEATRE
CHAPEL HILL
EVERY FRI SAT SUN AND LABOR DAY
7:00 WITH A 6:20 PRE SHOW
MATINEES SEPT 10 & 17 AT 3:00 WITH A 2:20 PRE SHOW
FEATURING NNENNA & PIERCE FREELON
SEPT 22 23&24
NORTH CAROLINA MUSEUM OF ART
RALEIGH
GIANT PUPPETS STILT WALKERS LIVE MUSIC & CARDBOARD TRICKERY
WHERE OUR SPIRITS RESIDE
FOR E-TICKETS AND INFO GO TO PAPERHAND.ORG

Volunteer for the Haw River Learning Celebration This Fall!

The Haw River Learning Celebration (LC) is a field trip to the Haw River for fourth-graders each fall over three weeks, with about 1,000 children taking part at three sites along the river. Volunteers guide fourth-graders through the forest and along the river to explore and discover the wonders of their own watershed, inspiring them to be the next generation of conservationists. Students come from schools in Guilford, Rockingham, Alamance, Orange, Durham, and Chatham counties. Our volunteers use nature as the classroom, and for many children this is their first experience ever hiking through a forest and along a river.

Over the years, hundreds of volunteers have given their hearts and hands to the continual creation of the Haw River Learning Celebration. Some come for a day, others join our “river camp” and set up a tent for the week. We have connected over 48,000 fourth-grade students to our beautiful river with the help of these amazing volunteers. Students observe, explore, and discover the life of the river and forest; learn how to protect the river; and use art and science to observe the natural world.

Come join us as a volunteer guide – we provide the training! We also need volunteers to help with weekend field site set-ups and break-downs (Friday afternoon through Sunday afternoon), and to cook meals for the volunteers. You can also help by making a donation to support our Crowdfunder for this wonderful program (see our website, hawriver.org, for details).

For details and to volunteer, go to our website at <https://hawriver.org/projects/learning-celebration/>. While you're there, check out our whimsical “Virtual Learning Celebration” short videos from 2020 to see what the program offers.

2023 Learning Celebration Sites and Dates:

Bynum: September 23-29 ✱ **Saxapahaw:** September 30-October 6 ✱ **Camp Guilrock:** October 8-13



Hannah Welborn-Lewis is coordinating this year's Learning Celebration and hopes you'll volunteer! Her email address is events@hawriver.org.

Upcoming 2023 HRA Events

Sunday August 20, 10 am - noon, HRA Greensboro Paddle at Lake Brandt in Greensboro. Advance registration required, see page 7.

Sunday August 27, 4 pm - 7 pm, HRA Summer Celebration at Pluck Farm, by Steel String Brewery. See page 1.

Saturday, September 16, 10 am - noon, Haw River Watch Training. Advance registration required; see page 4.

Tuesday, August 22, 6 pm, Alamance Community College Stericycle Public Hearing. See page 3.

September 23-24, Haw River Watch Quarterly Stream Monitoring by current volunteer teams.

September 23 - October 13, Haw River Learning Celebration. Haw River Learning Celebration in Bynum, Saxapahaw, and Camp Guilrock. See more on page 7.

Saturday October 7, 10 am - noon, HRA Jordan Lake Paddle. Advance registration required, see page 7.

Saturday November 4, 10 am - noon, HRA Advocacy Training. Advance registration required, see page 7.

Sunday November 12, 12 noon - 4 pm, HRA Annual Membership Meeting at Lake Macintosh in Burlington. See page 2.

Saturday December 2, 10 am - noon, First Annual Haw River Assembly “State of the River” presentation. More details to come.

December 16-17, Haw River Watch Quarterly Stream Monitoring by current volunteer teams.

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

Get our E-newsletter: We often announce new activities in our weekly online newsletter. Subscribe to it using the form on the front page of our website: www.hawriver.org.

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.



Sign up for the
Learning Celebration
Sept. 23 - Oct. 13

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