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The Haw River Assembly is a non-profit organization in the Piedmont of North Carolina, working to protect our waters for nearly 40 years. More than ever, urgent action on climate change issues is needed to protect our people, lands and waters.

We have looked at North Carolina research and studies on probable impacts that are (or will be) occurring due to climate change in the Haw River watershed in the Piedmont region of NC.

Our primary sources for this information are two major North Carolina reports that were published in 2020.

- The "[North Carolina Climate Risk Assessment and Resilience Plan](#)" from Governor Cooper's administration
- The "[North Carolina Climate Science Report](#)" by the North Carolina Institute for Climate Studies-- an inter-university project.

We have summarized the findings of these reports specific to the Piedmont region and have made them available on our [website](#). We urge you to read the full published summaries, and to refer to the sourced reports. Briefly, the climate change impacts we summarize are:

Impacts of Climate Change in the Piedmont of NC

Local Climate Change Impacts on Precipitation, Storms and Flooding: It is believed that annual precipitation will likely increase in NC with climate change. Extreme rainfall during storm events has already begun. Three of the 5 biggest floods on the Haw River in the past 25 years have happened since 2018.

Limits on Drinking Water Supply: Drinking water resources stressed by climate change will further be impacted by a growing population in the Haw River watershed. Many municipal and industrial water supplies use surface waters impounded in reservoirs as their primary source. Low stream flows and lake levels resulting from drought can result in poor water quality.

Climate Change Impacts Wastewater Systems: Wastewater treatment is affected by population growth, flooding, and aging infrastructure. Climate change will bring new challenges as more frequent extreme storms overwhelm wastewater treatment systems.

Local Climate Change Impacts on Drought: Severe drought impacts are expected to become more frequent in the future as temperatures rise in North Carolina, including the Piedmont.

Extreme Weather Changes in the Piedmont: Hurricanes, winter weather ,tornadoes and thunderstorms are all anticipated to become more extreme with climate change.

Climate Justice: In North Carolina, structural racism has resulted in many African American, Hispanic and Indigenous communities being pushed to less desirable lands near floodplains, industrial sites and highways where air pollution is high. The impacts of climate change add to centuries of environmental, social, economic, and health burdens placed on these affected communities.

Increased Temperatures: Temperatures have been increasing in the Piedmont since the 1970s, remaining consistently above average since the 1990s.

Impacts of Increased Population and Population Density in the Piedmont of North Carolina: Increases in population exacerbate many impacts of climate change, putting more stress on natural resources, including water supplies. Increased urban density can lead to hotter cities. Population is expected to increase in many counties in the Haw River watershed.

Biodiversity Collapse in the Haw River Watershed: Changes are already being seen in the decline of natural ecosystems and species in the Piedmont. We must act quickly to protect and increase natural areas and habitat.

Climate Change and Agriculture and Forestry: Agriculture and climate change are deeply intertwined. As populations increase, concerns surrounding the effects of global warming on food supply and forests do as well.

Moving Forward

This knowledge can help us reduce greenhouse gases such as carbon and methane, and better prepare for mitigating the impacts to our communities as climate change becomes worse. Even with our best efforts going forward, problems exist that are already too late to alter--we are seeing the effects already. As we move forward in 2021, efforts to decrease greenhouse gases and to mitigate the impacts of climate change, can be the engine to a post Covid-19 economic recovery--launching a wide array of initiatives that will provide new jobs. We hope that you, as a member of Congress, will support the new initiatives announced by President Biden on January 27, 2021 to combat climate change and to create protection and resilience for communities most at risk for climate impacts.

Summary of President Biden's Executive Order "Tackling the Climate Crisis At Home and Abroad"

- 1. The Climate Crisis must be central in U.S. foreign policy and National Security**
- 2. Develop the United States' "nationally determined contribution" – our emission reduction target – under the Paris Agreement.**
- 3. Take a Whole-of-Government Approach to the Climate Crisis**
- 4. Leverage the Federal Government's Buying Power to Lead by Example**

- Direct federal agencies to buy zero-emission vehicles in order to stimulate jobs and industry.
 - Buy American- ensure federally funded jobs are good-paying and union opportunities.
 - Increase climate resilience within federal agencies and facilitate public climate resilience.
 - Pause on entering new oil and natural gas leases on public lands or offshore waters, and review existing fossil fuel leasing and permitting on public lands and waters.
 - Identify steps to double renewable energy production from offshore wind by 2030.
 - Eliminate fossil fuel subsidies and identify new clean energy opportunities.
- 5. Rebuild Our Infrastructure for a Sustainable Economy.** The order catalyzes the creation of jobs in construction, manufacturing, engineering and skilled-trades to combat climate change and accelerate clean energy.
- 6. Advance Conservation, Agriculture, and Reforestation**
- Conserve at least 30 percent of our lands and oceans by 2030.
 - Establish a Civilian Climate Corps Initiative to put a new generation of Americans to work.
 - Encourage adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices that produce verifiable carbon reductions and sequestrations to create new sources of income and jobs for rural Americans.
- 7. Revitalize Energy Communities**
- Establish an interagency working group on coal and power plant communities and economic revitalization.
 - Advance projects to reduce pollution and greenhouse gases including former fossil fuel sites
 - Turn brownfields into new economic hubs
- 8. Secure Environmental Justice and Spur Economic Opportunity**
- Make environmental justice a part of the mission of every agency: establish a White House Environmental Justice Interagency Council and Advisory Council
 - Create a government-wide *Justice40 Initiative* with the goal of delivering 40 percent of the overall benefits of relevant federal investments to disadvantaged communities--creating a Climate and Environmental Justice Screening Tool
- 9. Scientific Integrity: Direct agencies to make evidence-based decisions guided by the best available science and data.**
- 10. Establish the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology.**

In closing, we hope that this information will be useful and provide a framework for tackling the work ahead for climate action. Please feel free to reach out to us if you have questions or would like additional information. We also invite you to sign up [online](#) for our updates on Climate Action to keep informed of new ideas and developments, especially those that impact us here in North Carolina.

Thank you for your service to the people in the Haw River watershed and our state. We believe that solutions can be found to the climate change crisis if we all work together.

Sincerely,

Kyleene Rooks



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