

# chatham County Line

where all voices are heard



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## The Rocky River needs your help

by Connie Allred and Sonny Keisler

The Rocky River is in danger. The North Carolina Division of Water Resources is proposing to let the new Mountaire Farms chicken slaughterhouse in Siler City release enormous amounts of nitrogen pollution into the Siler City Wastewater Treatment Plant. Because the plant isn't capable of removing nitrogen, most of the pollution will go straight into the already-polluted Rocky River.

The Division of Water Resources has known for years that the Siler City Wastewater Treatment Plant is not capable of removing nitrogen pollution and that its discharge is hurting Loves Creek and the Rocky River. After years of ignoring this basic fact, the agency is finally asking Siler City to upgrade its failing treatment system. However, it is giving Siler City four years to do this. Meanwhile, Mountaire and Siler City will be allowed to release uncontrolled amounts of nitrogen pollution into the Rocky River.

Those who live on and near the Rocky River remember when the Townsends and Pilgrim's Pride chicken slaughterhouses in Siler City were operating. Just like Mountaire, they dumped their waste into our Rocky River. We remember the bank-to-bank mats of algae in the river. After Pilgrim's Pride closed in 2008 and Townsends closed in 2011, the Rocky River began to improve.

Now, the Division of Water Resources is proposing to destroy our river once again. But

### YOU CAN HELP by Asking Local and State Officials to Protect the Rocky River

#### STATE OFFICIALS

- N.C. House of Representatives: Robert Reives, 919-733-4111, Robert.Reives@ncleg.net
- N.C. Senate: Valerie Foushee: 919-733-4111, foushee4nc@gmail.com
- N.C. Division of Water Resources: Mike Templeon, 919-707-3603, mike.templeon@ncdenr.gov

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this time, it will be even worse than it was before. The agency is proposing to allow Siler City and Mountaire to discharge 50 percent more nitrogen into the river than was discharged when Pilgrim's Pride and Townsend were both operating.

And, of course, no one is asking Mountaire to pay for its waste. This is true even though (1) Mountaire had sales in excess of \$2 billion in 2017 and (2) Mountaire has been sued repeatedly in its home state of Delaware for violating the Clean Water Act.

Mountaire Farms, with all of its jobs, is welcomed in Chatham County — provided it cleans up its own mess and protects the Rocky

River. The Division of Water Resources must demand that Siler City require Mountaire to make the necessary investments to clean their waste of nitrogen pollution before they send it to the Siler City Wastewater Treatment Plant. In addition, the Division of Water Resources needs to add immediate, strict nitrogen limits to the Siler City Wastewater Treatment Plant discharge permit that will protect the Rocky River. Otherwise, Chatham County will lose this river and everything we love about it.

*Connie Allred and Sonny Keisler are active in the Rocky River Watch, a Chatham County nonprofit organization whose mission is to protect the Rocky River.*

## In a world full of death, Nature shows the miracle of life

by Joe Jacob

I have often told a caregiving friend that he or she did not read the back of their birth certificate. I jokingly say that on the back is written all the responsibilities that come along with aging parents. When you reach a certain age, it is time to give back all the love and support you were given when growing up. Then, the sad time comes when both parents have died and you realize you have become an orphan. A heavy loneliness takes over your heart.

Time passes and you reach another phase of your life. Your heart is still heavy, but if you are lucky, you realize your parents are still with you, so it is not as bad as when they first passed away. Of course, they are not physically present, but you feel their presence just the same. When you have done something you know they would be proud of, you can feel their approval even if they have been gone for over 20 years.

I have reached that time in my life when friends, in large numbers, are being diagnosed with horrible, life threatening diseases or they are passing away after a prolonged struggle to live. Sure, when I was younger, I experienced the death of a friend or an accident that left another friend with mental and physical disabilities, but I suppose it was a little easier for me then because I did not know them for so long and we had not developed that deep bond that comes with sharing life's experiences. Now, it is different.

As I look back at my life, I can see that the idea of death and dying have always had a major effect on the directions I have taken. After graduate school, I decided not to go to medical school because I did not think I could handle my patients dying. Seems to me that you cannot be a really good healer if you cannot empathize with what a patient is experiencing or without really caring about their wellbeing. It is funny that I made that decision about medical school when death and dying are facing me with increase intensity as I grow older.

Instead of becoming a doctor, I decided to become a marine biologist/ecologist. The more I learned about sea creatures and their environment, the more I learned how interdependent all life is with their surroundings. It surprises me that most people do not see that connection and either deny or ignore the warnings of trained professionals that we must do something about how we are slowly but surely making the earth less inhabitable. If you had a heart attack would you ignore the advice of the doctor and not start taking better care of yourself? If your roof had a leak in it, would you ignore the advice of a roofer who would tell you the consequences of not dealing with the problem. If your kid's teacher told you that your kid could not read, would you go about as though it did not matter? Why do we not hear the warnings of those who understand how our ecological support system works?

### IN DEPTH: AN ORIGINAL SERIES

## Cannabis Legalization in North Carolina: Part One

by James A. Wood and Randy Voller

In his 1976 hit song, "Legalize It," Jamaican reggae star Peter Tosh defiantly intoned the words, "Legalize it — Don't criticize it — And I will advertise it." Tosh was a Rasta, a devotee of the island's Rastafari movement, and thus a proponent of legalized cannabis. For the Rasta, smoking marijuana was an essential part of music, medicine, and spirituality. Tragically, Tosh was gunned down in a home invasion in 1987, so he did not live to see the emergence of the legalized cannabis industry of 2019. One wonders what he would make of the new reality of legalization.

The question of cannabis legalization stands at a crossroads in the United States today. As of February 2019, 37 states plus the District of Columbia allow doctors and other licensed caregivers to prescribe cannabis products to their patients (so-called medical marijuana). In addition, ten of those 37 states plus DC have legalized the growing and using (in certain private contexts) of recreational cannabis by adults 21 and older. Those ten states account for nearly 25 percent of the US population. Our northern neighbor, Canada, legalized recreational cannabis nationwide in October 2018. The new government that took office in Mexico in December 2018 is likely to make major changes in the area of drug policy, including the decriminalization of cannabis. So, what does all this mean for states like North Carolina, which remain on the outside of this new reality looking in?

In a series of articles written exclusively for Chatham County Line, we want to advance the public dialogue on the question of cannabis legalization in North Carolina. We will describe the current state of the legalization debate, measuring developments here against recent changes around the country. While many things are already happening in NC with regard to cannabis legalization, we

believe the issue deserves greater exposure as a legitimate political and economic issue. Which is not to say that legalization is the most pressing issue facing voters — clearly issues like health care, public education, and immigration reform outweigh cannabis legalization in importance. It is an issue, however, that raises fundamental questions about our liberty, our future economic prosperity, the fairness of our criminal justice system, and the ability of doctors to do what they think is best for their patients.

Without a doubt, the cannabis legalization movement has a growing number of advocates in North Carolina today. Consider, for example, the state's four chapters of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML), new media outlets like Charlotte's *Carolina Cannabis News* (<https://carolinacannabisnews.com/>), and the myriad of small businesses and farmers operating in the emerging hemp and CBD industries (both of which are non-psychoactive products derived from the cannabis plant). In addition, several legislative proposals on medical marijuana have been introduced in the committees of the NC General Assembly over the past few legislative cycles, with a new one due to be introduced later this month. The last such bill was introduced in the 2017 session as House Bill 185 and Senate Bill 648 and a new bi-partisan Senate Bill 168 was filed on February 27, 2019 by State Senators McKissick (D) and Hise (R) that if passed and signed into law will expand the allowable medical uses of CBD oil in North Carolina.

We are not blind to the considerable risks and challenges that arise with legalization. We plan to share our thoughts on that side of

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