



Save Our Saluda

2015 Annual Report

SOS had a great 2015! Here are some highlights...

Duke Coal Ash Agreement

With the help of *Southern Environmental Law Center* and in partnership with *Upstate Forever*, SOS finalized agreements with Duke Energy for safe removal and storage of over 3 million tons of toxic coal ash from unlined pits on the banks of the Saluda River at the Lee Steam Station near Williamston.



North Saluda Fish Kill

SOS responded to a fish kill on the North Saluda River that was deadly enough to kill at least ten species of fish, including two kinds of redhorse suckers, which are priority species. A dead juvenile blue heron was also discovered. The suspected cause of the kill was acute toxicity from agricultural chemicals.

River Sweep

We teamed up with Foothills Paddling Club again this year to clean up sections of the North and Middle Saluda Rivers. Together we removed several truckloads of trash, over 40 tires, 2 sofas, and a baby stroller. **Way to go team Saluda!!!**



Advocacy: SOS engaged in local and state water issues with various regulatory and conservation groups.

Water Withdrawal

- SOS offered an opinion piece on a bill (H3564) that would have closed the loophole in the state surface water withdrawal law that currently allows mega-farms to take all of the water out of our rivers for a significant portion of the year and to have the right to do so in perpetuity.

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/opinion/contributors/2015/06/20/states-water-law-significant-loophole/28995761/>

Despite the unanimous subcommittee vote to adjourn the bill, this issue remains a priority and SOS will continue to engage with *South Carolina Rivers Forever* and the *Conservation Voters of South Carolina* to work on water withdrawal issues for the future of our state's rivers.

- In 2014, the *South Carolina Law Project*, on behalf of riparian landowners across the state, including SOS board members, filed a motion against the taking of riparian property rights through the Surface Water Withdrawal Act's agricultural registrations (which are exempt from permitting) seeking to enjoin SCDHEC from issuing any new registrations. The ruling was against riparian landowners and a final order from DHEC is forthcoming.
- SOS developed a fact sheet on the water withdrawal act that included graphs of all USGS gaging stations in the Saluda River Watershed showing river flows and "safe yield," which as defined by the flawed law, is simply **not present in most rivers for over half of the time** and will lead to over-allocation of surface water resources.

Challenge to Navigability of Blythe Shoals

- In 2013, an LLC initiated a lawsuit in state court to find a section of the South Fork of the Saluda River known as Blythe Shoals as being non-navigable. This section of river is a whitewater run, and the case could impact the rights of paddlers and others to enjoy this and other legally navigable waters. The case awaits trial.

Saluda Basin Water Modeling and Water Allocation Planning

SCDNR and SCDHEC have developed a surface-water model for the Saluda River Basin to simulate water levels of major reservoirs and flows in major and minor rivers and streams, quantify water availability at withdrawal and discharge sites, and to be used as a decision-support tool for SCDHEC's surface-water permitting program and SCDNR's water policy and water planning work. SOS shared concerns regarding the modeling effort, which was significantly underfunded. The model is a simplistic spreadsheet model that is not a hydrologic simulation model, is not spatially (GIS) based, has very limited data inputs (no data inputs for climate, soils, topography, or land use), is not process based, and has no function for hydrologic routing. Calibration of the model is limited by the small number of USGS gaging stations and the lack of field verification in ungaged areas. SOS will continue to engage in future river basin and water resources planning initiatives for the Saluda River Basin.

Saluda River Blue Trail

SOS continues to support safe and legal access to our rivers and development of the Saluda River and its three primary tributaries as a Blue Trails System and has engaged in mapping, access and portage initiatives.

Stormwater

SOS engaged in meetings with regional environmental leaders on matters related to local stormwater policy and management. We developed draft policy fact sheets in cooperation with *Friends of the Reedy River*.

Monitoring: SOS actively monitored six sites across the South, Middle, and North Saluda Rivers. Data summaries can be found at <http://www.georgiaadoptastream.com/db/index.html>. SOS receives support for monitoring from *Anderson & Pickens Counties Stormwater Partners* and from *Anderson University, Clemson University Extension Service, Southern Wesleyan University, USC Upstate Watershed Ecology Center, and Upstate Forever* for training and certification.

Education: In 2015 SOS developed an online interactive mapping tool for viewing and querying watershed information (<http://gcloud.northwind-it.com/saveoursaluda>). The map can be used to help further public awareness, education, and conservation efforts of SOS and others. This application allows users to navigate through the Saluda River Watershed to identify various water and land use features. We will be looking to further develop map layers and expand its functionality as resources become available.

saveoursaluda.org

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