



Environmental Injustice

Environmental injustice is widespread in the Cape Fear River Basin and while many Americans might assume this injustice should be trending downward, recent actions taken by the NC General Assembly suggests that, in fact, it may be increasing. CFRW is committed to fighting for environmental justice wherever people lack access to clean water, wherever they do not receive the same protections from environmental harm as others, and wherever there is a systematic effort to take away their access to equal legal protection under the law.

CFRW is also committed to providing environmental education opportunities to marginalized groups in order to begin to correct the systematic disenfranchisement of these people. For instance, over half of our summer and intersession school-aged campers receive full scholarships that we raise from our membership. Another important piece of this work is continuing to change the way our organization looks. We are working to bring more people of color into the organization's membership and leadership.

CFRW's work on [CAFO](#) pollution has many strong ties to constituencies who are engaged in the fight for environmental justice. We work closely with people of color in Duplin, Sampson, and Bladen Counties to fight against the abuses of the factory farm industry. This fight has taken several forms in the past, allowing time to build strong and lasting relationships and trust. CFRW took legal action against the state, with the NC Environmental Justice Network (NCEJN) and REACH as co-plaintiffs when NC DEQ inspectors refused to take our complaints of waste management violations seriously. Together we won that case and changed the way NC DEQ responds across North Carolina to credible complaints. CFRW has fought alongside NCEJN and REACH to oppose bills like H 467 and S 711, two shameful bills crafted by industry friendly legislators following the filing of hundreds of legitimate nuisance suits by impacted neighbors of factory farms in rural North Carolina. In the coming years, CFRW expects to challenge these bills in court as unconstitutional and we look forward to standing strong alongside our friends from NCEJN and REACH in the courtroom. Additionally, as part of settlement agreements reached between NCEJN, REACH, Waterkeeper Alliance and the US EPA surrounding a civil rights case, CFRW will be working with REACH to conduct additional sampling of key waterways in Duplin County to assess the impact on water quality from swine farms.

CFRW partnered recently with US EPA on an Environmental Justice Grant, our second environmental justice grant from the federal agency, to assess fish consumption by sustenance anglers in the Northeast Cape Fear sub-basin. By and large, these communities are predominantly working class and people of color communities. The first stage of this work, a large survey effort, focuses on low income residences in the survey area. Our paid canvassers were majority African American and Latino and spent months discovering the consumption habits of residents. The second stage of the program transitioned our canvassers to lay health educators who returned to our target communities to disperse health information and consumption guidelines to individuals who rely on fish from the river to feed themselves and their family. The project culminated in a Fish Smart Celebration, providing resources on what fish are safest to catch, and demonstrations and a recipe book with ideas on healthy ways to prepare locally caught fish.