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THREAT: OUTDATED WATER SUPPLY MANAGEMENT**Summary**

The Catawba-Wataree River has served communities in the Southeast for thousands of years. This regional treasure was home to some of the first Native American tribes encountered by Europeans in the United States. The river now provides drinking water to millions, supports a myriad of local industries, and sustains the high quality of life residents enjoy. However, under this rich exterior, the Catawba-Wataree River is being drained away by water mismanagement and explosive population growth. These threats, combined with predictions of more frequent droughts due to global warming, impair the river's health and its ability to provide for residents in the future is at risk. North Carolina and South Carolina have a

choice: they can continue to demonstrate ineffectual river management and move toward a future of water scarcity and uncertainty, or embrace river protection and sustainable water use to ensure a thriving economy and high quality of life for years to come.

The River

The Catawba River originates in the fabled Blue Ridge Mountains of western North Carolina and flows through the Charlotte metropolitan area before reaching South Carolina, where its name changes to the Wataree River. It eventually reaches its confluence with the Congaree River southeast of the city of Columbia. The river supplies drinking water to 1.3 million people on its heavily populated lower reaches, including

the towns of Morganton, Hickory and Charlotte, North Carolina, and Rock Hill, Lancaster and Camden, South Carolina. The basin is home to threatened and endangered species such as the shortnose sturgeon, robust redhorse, Schweinitz's sunflower and the Carolina heelsplitter mussel. The Catawba-Wataree River sustains the world's second-

CATAWBA-WATEREE RIVER AT-A-GLANCE**RIVER LENGTH:** 300 miles**WATERSHED AREA:** 5,665 square miles**LARGEST CITY IN THE WATERSHED:** Charlotte, NC (pop. 695,995)**DID YOU KNOW?** The Catawba-Wataree River watershed is the most populated in North Carolina.



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Tribal connections to the Catawba-Wataree River run deep. The river has been central to local Native American communities for thousands of years.

largest population of the rare rocky shoals spider lily. Each spring, residents and visitors flock to see the lilies blanket the river with their showy white blossoms. The river's fish, wildlife, beauty and serenity attract 10 million visitors from across the region annually. Boating, swimming, fishing and hiking along the river generate more than \$95 million for local communities every year and provide 1,700 jobs in recreation-based businesses.

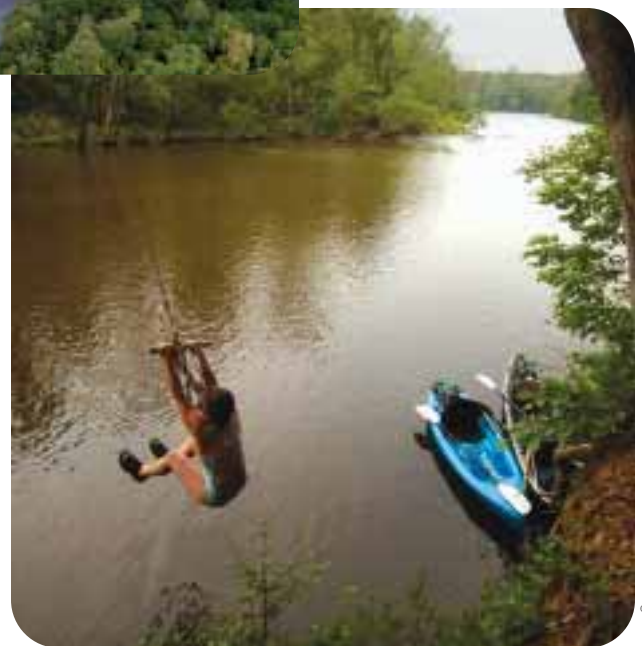
The Catawba-Wataree basin has supported human communities for thousands of years. The river was originally home to the Catawba Indian Tribe, self-identified "people of the river" and the Wataree Tribe, whose name comes from a Catawban word meaning "to float on the water." The Catawba-Wataree River was and is central to tribal identity.

In modern times, the river also has been heavily developed for energy production and impounded by 11 hydropower dams. Four

coal and two nuclear power plants as well as paper, chemical and textile manufacturing plants depend on the river for water supply. These industries and others that depend on the Catawba-Wataree River provide thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in revenue to local communities.



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The Threat

The Catawba-Wataree River basin is experiencing unprecedented demand for clean water due to exponential population growth of the Charlotte metropolitan area, which spans several counties in both North and South Carolina. The heart of the city is in Mecklenburg County, one of two North Carolina counties that rank among the ten fastest-growing counties in the nation. The city is expected to grow by 40 percent over the next decade.

On top of this pressure, the Carolinas are experiencing one of the most severe droughts in recorded history and, despite spring rains, drier than average conditions are expected to continue. Climate scientists predict devastating droughts like this one will become more frequent and severe with global warming. Lack of rain and over-tapped water supplies are combining to create a

dangerous situation for North and South Carolina communities.

In the midst of 21st-century progress, Southeast residents are still burdened by a 19th-century approach to water supply. North and South Carolina are not prepared to manage their water resources under current conditions, let alone deal with the new long-term consequences and effects of global warming. Most local leaders call for water use reductions only after the onset of drought. In the absence of adequate planning, communities are forced during these periods to make desperate grabs for clean water, which only serve to reinforce their wasteful habits. One recent example is the permitted transfer of 10 million gallons per day from the Catawba-Wataree River to the cities of Concord and Kannapolis, North Carolina, located in the Yadkin-Pee Dee River basin. Robbing water from the Catawba-Wataree and rerouting it to a separate watershed will deprive downstream human and natural communities of a vital flow of water. Moreover, some of this water will go to support wasteful uses such as a new water park in the city of Concord. Siphoning off the Catawba-Wataree River will only lead to even lower water levels, poorer water quality, and decreased recreational access and industrial productivity. If the states continue to squander their water resources, the river will not be able to sustain the communities, fish and wildlife that depend on it.

What's At Stake

The Catawba-Wataree River is the epicenter in the collision between limited water supply and unchecked development in the Southeast. Already, South Carolina and North Carolina are battling for control over more water from the Catawba-Wataree basin in the U.S. Supreme Court. If both states don't substantially improve river resource management, the ecological, industrial and



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recreational values of the river will be drained away.

The current drought, combined with water supply mismanagement and over-allocation, has dewatered thousands of acres of aquatic habitat, left muddy shorelines devoid of vegetation, and eliminated boating access in many rivers throughout the Southeast.

Without adequate river flows, utility companies, mills, and manufacturing facilities that depend on the Catawba-Wataree River will founder, the region's robust recreation industry will crumble, quality of life will diminish, and plant and wildlife populations will suffer.

What Can Be Done

Implementation of sensible water supply and efficiency policies throughout the Catawba-Wataree River basin and passage of effective state-wide water withdrawal regulations in North Carolina and South Carolina could put this high-speed train to water scarcity onto a smarter course.

North Carolina and South Carolina must develop and adopt progressive state water efficiency plans that empha-



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Rapid development in the Catawba-Wataree River basin threatens to drain away the river's ecological, industrial and recreational values.



The Catawba-Wateree and Global Warming

Removing more water to fuel poorly planned development would further reduce water levels and inhibit the river's ability to adapt to global warming. Already, recent droughts have produced record low water flows in tributary streams and reservoirs on the river. Water efficiency and conservation planning can help meet current demands without sacrificing the Catawba-Wateree River or the communities and wildlife that rely on it.



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size conserving water year-round rather than only when drought has already arrived.

These plans must direct funding towards infrastructure upgrades and distribution of water-saving appliances to users at reduced cost. Industries and municipalities must be required to utilize proven water efficiency technologies. Such policies will enable communities to live within realistic "water budgets" and maintain healthy water resources, eliminating the need for future interbasin transfers from the Catawba-Wateree River and others.

As a necessary first step towards maintaining healthy flows, North Carolina and South Carolina must track the amount of surface water each user withdraws and establish enforceable guidelines

regarding maximum withdrawals. The South Carolina Legislature must enact new surface water laws that estab-

lish withdrawal regulations and guarantee that enough clean water remains in rivers and lakes to fully support all users including anglers, boaters and wildlife. The goal should be to maximize community

health — not water withdrawals. The North Carolina Legislature should update current surface water regulations during the 2009 legislative session, which begins in January. This update must include water flow requirements that adequately protect the ecological, recreational and economic values of the state's rivers.



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