



On behalf of its members, Congaree Riverkeeper works to protect and improve water quality, wildlife habitat, and recreation on the Congaree, Lower Saluda and Lower Broad Rivers through advocacy, education and enforcement of environmental laws.

River Watch

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River Rocks is our fundraiser featuring great music, paddling races, food and craft vendors. Buy your tickets [online!](#)

Thanks Again to all our Founding Members

Within each of our January, February and March newsletters, we recognized those who generously contributed \$100 or more to Congaree Riverkeeper through December 2010. Each newsletter contained a partial list of our founding members, but cumulatively, we believe we have listed all of these fine folks. If your name was not listed in either of the past three newsletters, please let us know and we will make sure you receive your due in our next newsletter. Thanks again, Founding Members, and

Ni America Seeks to Buy Alpine Utilities

In March, [Ni America](#), a private wastewater utility based in Houston, Texas, announced that its subsidiary, Palmetto Wastewater Reclamation (PWR), is seeking to purchase Alpine Utilities and Woodland Utilities for \$1.5 million dollars. These utilities are located along the Lower Saluda River and as we all know, the Lower Saluda's water quality has suffered due to Alpine Utilities' chronic wastewater overflows over the past few years. Although we still think that consolidation of small private wastewater utilities into the City of Columbia's system is the best long-term solution, Congaree Riverkeeper believes that this sale of Alpine could have lasting, positive impacts to the health of the Lower Saluda River. To understand the issues associated with this significant turn of events, Congaree Riverkeeper has reviewed PWR's application to the Public Service Commission (PSC) for approval of this sale, talked with the Office of Regulatory Staff and DHEC about this proposed sale, and personally met with the Ni America leadership. We are impressed with Ni America. One of Ni America's business strategies is to acquire troubled wastewater utilities and invest in them to resolve prior problems, deficiencies and compliance issues. We are encouraged by Ni America's recently stated intent to make capital improvements to the Alpine Utilities system that will lead to reduced wastewater overflows. Congaree Riverkeeper will remain engaged as this sale moves forward, and will seek to hold Ni America accountable to improving the Alpine system. We will have more to report as this issue progresses.

SCE&G Awaits New Hydropower License for Saluda Project

SCE&G's application for a new hydropower license for Lake Murray (Saluda Project), along with its corresponding settlement agreement proposing license terms, is pending before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Congaree Riverkeeper believes the proposed license terms will benefit the Lower Saluda. Under the old license, SCE&G was not required to release a minimum flow downstream to the Lower Saluda; but voluntarily released a minimum of 180 cfs under an informal agreement with DHEC. In contrast, the new license will require seasonal minimum releases: from January 1 to March 31: 700 cfs; from April 1 to May 10: a range from approximately 1,000 cfs to 2,700 to enhance striped bass spawning in the Congaree River; from May 11 to May 31: 1,000 cfs; and from June 1 to December 31: 700 cfs. Drought conditions would require reductions in these flow amounts. In addition to these improved downstream releases, under the new hydropower license, SCE&G will continue its efforts to improve the problem of releasing water with low dissolved oxygen (DO), which causes harm to fish and other aquatic life. From 1989 to 1998, data showed that the DO concentrations in the Saluda dam tailwaters were below the 4 mg/L minimum water quality standard about 70% of the time and below the 5mg/L minimum monthly average about 82% of the time. After several operational changes and installment of turbine vents, DO concentrations in the Saluda dam tailwaters dropped below 5 mg/L only 6% of the time and below 4 mg/L about 4% of the time. In the new license, SCE&G proposes to install new runners of modern design that offer higher efficiencies,

please continue to support Congaree Riverkeeper!

Calling All Photographers

We are looking for beautiful photos of our rivers to use in our newsletters. If interested in sharing your photos, send us an [email](#).

KUDOS CORNER: Great Job Rebecca Haynes!

We respect many public servants because we know what a tough job they do day after day. Rebecca Haynes, watershed manager at DHEC, has earned more than our respect. She has gone above and beyond the call of duty to provide Congaree Riverkeeper with information and answer our questions. Rebecca been a great resource and teacher for Congaree Riverkeeper, which has made us a better advocate. Rebecca has accepted a position with American Rivers. So, while she will still be involved in the river scene, we will miss her at DHEC. Well done Rebecca, and we wish you success at American Rivers.

Do you know of a person, business or organization that should be recognized for making a positive impact on water quality in the Midlands? Email your nomination for KUDOS CORNER to [Stuart Greeter](#).

output, and DO uptake. We applaud SCE&G's successful efforts to reduce the low DO problem, and its goal to achieve 100% support of the Lower Saluda DO standards within 3 to 11 years after license issuance. Meanwhile, the new FERC license is delayed due to unanswered questions about the impact of Shortnose Sturgeon in the Congaree. Read more about sturgeon in the article below.

Endangered Sturgeon Alive and Well in the Congaree River

Looking more like a creature out of Spielberg's Jurassic Park than a modern fish, the ancient shortnose sturgeon, with its pointed head and rows of bony plates, has made the Congaree River its home for much of the year. Shortnose sturgeon spend most of their time in estuarine waters but migrate far up river to spawn in fast moving freshwater in February and March. The shortnose sturgeon can reach up to four feet long and weigh up to 50 pounds. It is one of the longest living fish, with males surviving for 30 years and females known to live for over 65 years. These fish are rarely caught by anglers. But when they are, it is important to know that this is a federal endangered species and needs to be released unharmed. Habitat destruction, blocked passage by dams, and water pollution continue to jeopardize this species by disrupting the fish's spawning needs.

In South Carolina, shortnose sturgeon are found in the Pee Dee-Waccamaw River system, Edisto River, Savannah River, and the Santee Cooper River system. The most unique of these may be the population in the Santee Cooper River system. A viable population of sturgeon have been studied in the Cooper River below Lake Moultrie for a long time. Studies conducted in the past thirteen years clearly document the occurrence of shortnose sturgeon in Lakes Marion and Moultrie and the importance of the Congaree River to their success. In studies conducted by S.C. Department of Natural Resources, transmitters were attached to sturgeon and stationary data-loggers located throughout the river system recorded their movements. These studies not only found that shortnose sturgeon migrate over 40 miles up the Congaree River to spawn but also confirmed, by collecting fertilized eggs, that the gravel bar near the I-77 Bridge near Columbia is a successful spawning ground. Almost half of the fish tagged in the Santee Cooper Lakes moved up the Congaree River as far as the I-77 Bridge and about a third made it as far as the Granby Lock and Dam above the Rosewood Landing. Only one fish was found further upstream. While all migrations to Columbia occurred during the February and March spawning period, several sturgeon returned to the lower Congaree River and remained throughout the summer and fall before moving back into Lake Marion for the winter.

The presence of shortnose sturgeon in the Congaree River is special and reason to celebrate. Their successful reproduction in the Santee River Basin is dependent on maintaining suitable spawning habitat in the Congaree River.

Please visit our website at <http://www.congareeriverkeeper.org>.
Donate to our cause at <http://congareeriverkeeper.org/become-member-help-clean-our-waterways>.