

**Think Globally, Act Locally: Changing the World from Our Own Backyard
The Waccamaw RIVERKEEPER® Program of Winyah Rivers Foundation**

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Waccamaw RIVERKEEPER®**

The Waccamaw RIVERKEEPER® Program is a program of Winyah Rivers Foundation, a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization whose mission is to protect, preserve, monitor and revitalize the health of the lands and waters of the greater Winyah Bay watershed, focusing on local activism through the Waccamaw RIVERKEEPER® Program.

As a licensed member of the WATERKEEPER® ALLIANCE, a grassroots advocacy organization with 177 local Waterkeeper programs and growing, we are dedicated to preserving and protecting YOUR water from polluters.

From its creation in 2001, Winyah Rivers Foundation sought to protect the coastal plain portion of the five rivers that discharge into Winyah Bay near Georgetown, SC. The Foundation sought and achieved licensing for a RIVERKEEPER® program, a proven model for grassroots education and advocacy for the protection of local waterbodies. Due to the rapidly expanding growth in the Grand Strand area, the Foundation initially focused its efforts on the Waccamaw River.

The Waccamaw River watershed is part of the Pee Dee Basin that encompasses portions of Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina. The Waccamaw River watershed lies entirely in the coastal plain in southeastern North Carolina and northeastern South Carolina. It is a significant watershed within the Cape Fear Arch, a unique geological feature of uplifted sand & limestone that gives rise to unique natural communities and a diversity of plants and animals, including 22 plant and 19 animal species endemic to the region.

The Waccamaw River watershed has its headwaters in the wetlands surrounding Lake Waccamaw, a Carolina Bay that remains permanently inundated and neutralized by a natural limestone bluff along its northern border. Lake Waccamaw State Park encompasses both the Lake and land along its southeastern border. A check dam maintains water level in the Lake and marks the start of the Waccamaw River. Waters from the surrounding wetlands flow into the river, creating a black water river system due in part to the presence of organic materials that leach out from the wetlands and surrounding vegetation. The river meanders south into South Carolina and joins with the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway near Bucksport, SC before it discharges into Winyah Bay near Georgetown, SC. Winyah Bay is the third largest estuary on the eastern seaboard and important biologically and historically.

The Waccamaw RIVERKEEPER® Program was established to watch over the watershed and to be an advocate for its protection. The Riverkeeper works to engage citizens in the stewardship of our watershed. Our work includes educating the public; recruiting, training and maintaining a motivated volunteer network to serve as the “eyes and ears” of their local communities; maintaining an on-the-river presence to investigate pollution sources and support monitoring efforts; and coordinating with volunteers and other organizations to stay abreast of actions affecting the watershed.

Included in our education and advocacy work are the following projects and programs:

- Waccamaw River Volunteer Monitoring Project
 - A volunteer monitoring effort involving 12 sites in SC, 10 water quality parameters, 35+ volunteers; currently working on expansion into NC
- Waccamaw Conference
 - An annual gathering of scientists and the public to report on the current state of our rivers and actions necessary to protect them
- Coastal Waccamaw Stormwater Education Consortium
 - Acting as an Education Provider to assist local municipalities in public education and involvement in stormwater pollution prevention
- River Events
 - River cleanups and other events to educate and involve citizens in stewardship of their rivers and watersheds
- Advocacy
 - Participation in public hearings, government decision-making, public comment on issues and projects that have the potential to impact a clean and ample water supply and the traditional beneficial uses our rivers support
- Neighborhood Environmental Watch
 - Training citizens to become stewards of their local watershed

Through local education and advocacy, we can protect our river and its riches. If we each protect our own backyard, then cumulatively we will protect the nation’s natural resources.