

# Southern Environmental Law Center Announces South's Top 10 Endangered Areas

By Staff Reports on 1 February 2010

Appomattox Area News-- A New View On Local News In Appomattox and Central Virginia

<http://www.appomattoxnews.com/2010/southern-environmental-law-center-announces-souths-top-10-endangered-areas.html> accessed 2/2/2010

The Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC), the largest environmental advocacy organization dedicated solely to protecting the Southeast, today announced the top ten places in the South that face immediate, potentially irreparable threats in 2010.

Southeast region leads the country in contributing disproportionately to rising levels of carbon dioxide; South could suffer most from global warming, with low-lying coastal zone the hardest hit. Two endangered areas, in South Carolina and Alabama, gain needed protection and drop off list.

"The major environmental threats we face in this country are playing out in the Southeast," said Jeff Gleason, SELC's Deputy Director. "Our region is contributing disproportionately to global warming, and in fact, our six southeastern states, if viewed as a single country, would be the world's seventh largest source of heat-trapping carbon dioxide emissions."

Gleason pointed out that "Common themes on this year's list include uncontrolled growth, flawed energy policy, and lax environmental enforcement, particularly as it relates to our heavy reliance on coal to produce electricity. Specifically, this year's list shows that the South's waterways and wetlands — critical areas that protect and define the South — are experiencing some of the most negative impacts from these trends."

As the Senate gears up to tackle climate change legislation and the EPA moves to mitigate GHG emissions through enforcement of the Clean Air Act, Gleason points out that the South stands to suffer most from the resulting effects of global warming. "As ice melts and sea levels rise, it's the South's low-lying coastal zone that will be the hardest hit," he said. "We hope that our Top 10 list will serve as a wake-up call — a powerful reminder of what we stand to lose."

## Top Ten Endangered Areas in the South for 2010

These endangered areas were chosen among hundreds that are impacted by SELC's law and policy work throughout the six states of Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama.

1. Right Whale Calving Waters, GA: The last 300 right whales left on Earth are threatened by a U.S. Navy plan for a 500 square-mile undersea training range.

2. Blackwater Streams (Washington County), GA: Air and water are threatened by conventional coal plant that would increase mercury pollution in two rivers and increase global warming emissions.
  3. Chesapeake Bay, VA: The largest estuary in the U.S. is getting hit from all sides: air, land and water. A proposed conventional coal plant for nearby Surry County threatens to add even more mercury and nitrogen pollution to bay waters
  4. Roanoke River Basin, VA: Drinking water supplies are threatened by uranium mining, and the possibility that Virginia's Piedmont countryside could open up to even more large-scale mining projects.
  5. Southern Appalachian Mountains, VA/TN: Weak laws on mountaintop removal coal mining threaten headwater streams, wildlife, communities, and scenic beauty.
  6. Black Warrior River, AL: Two proposed strip mines would dump polluted wastewater into the river, threatening drinking water supplies and aquatic life.
  7. Cape Fear Wetlands, NC: 1,000 acres of wetlands are threatened by proposed Titan cement plant, which would also send toxic mercury into the already-polluted Cape Fear River.
  8. Catawba-Wateree Basin, NC/SC: Threats include a low-flow scheme for hydroelectric dams that would restrict the flow of water essential to a healthy river system, and the lack of an overarching and coherent plan to protect the ecological integrity of the river from over allocation.
  9. Freshwater Wetlands, SC: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers wrongly determined that the Pine Hill tract northwest of Charleston falls outside the scope of Clean Water Act protection. If allowed to stand, this ruling would put thousands of acres of wetlands and hundreds of miles of streams in the state's coastal plain at risk of development or destruction.
  10. Ocoee Region, TN: A string of unnecessary four-lane highways would devastate wildlife habitat, and bring traffic and polluted runoff to forests, recreation and wilderness areas.
- "Two areas on our 2009 list fell off after resounding victories: The Great Pee Dee River in South Carolina, and Weeks Bay in Alabama," noted Gleason.

Victory #1: The Great Pee Dee River in South Carolina was saved when Santee Cooper suspended its plans for the 1,320-megawatt facility, an old-style, coal-fired plant which would have pumped out more than 10 million tons of heat-trapping carbon dioxide each year, as well as toxic mercury pollution and other harmful emissions. SELC and its partners had battled against this plant for many years.

Victory #2: By a unanimous vote in May 2009, the Town Council of Magnolia Springs adopted a runoff control ordinance SELC helped draft that is one of the strongest of its kind in Alabama, helping Weeks Bay. The new law promotes low-impact development design and requires effective measures to control erosion during and after construction activity, protecting the Magnolia River, which is one of two rivers that form Weeks Bay, a biologically rich estuary that has been designated an Outstanding Natural Resource Water.

For more detailed descriptions of each endangered area, photographs a list of the top threats by individual state, and video, visit [http://www.southernenvironment.org/topten\\_2010](http://www.southernenvironment.org/topten_2010)

About the Southern Environmental Law Center The exclusive mission of the non-profit Southern Environmental Law Center is to protect the environment and health of the Southeast. For more than 20

years, SELC has worked successfully in all three branches of government, leveraging the power of the law to inform, implement, and enforce environmental safeguards. Their major programs range from global warming and air quality to forest protection, coast and wetland conservation, and preservation of countryside and community character. SELC has approximately 80 staff members and offices in Charlottesville (SELC's headquarters) and Richmond, Virginia; Chapel Hill and Asheville, North Carolina; Charleston, South Carolina; Atlanta, Georgia; and Washington, DC. Visit SELC online at [www.SouthernEnvironment.org](http://www.SouthernEnvironment.org).

*Following from SELC website, accessed 2/2/2010*

*SELC is using the power of the law to defend hundreds of imperiled areas, to ensure clean air and water, and to help chart a new energy future for the Southeast. We have targeted ten special places that are facing immediate, potentially irreversible threats today. Ranging from the Southern Appalachians to the South Atlantic, this year's Top Ten Most Endangered Places list illustrates the ecological, scenic, and cultural riches at stake in the South—and the important actions needed in 2010 to protect our environmental heritage and the legacy we will leave for future generations.*

*Catawba-Wateree Basin, NC/SC*

*WHAT'S AT STAKE?*

*The Catawba-Wateree is a 300-mile-long river that provides essential resources for natural and human communities in the Carolinas.*

*THE THREAT*

*A low-flow scheme for hydroelectric dams that would restrict the flow of water essential to a healthy river system, and the lack of an overarching and coherent plan to protect the ecological integrity of the river and prevent over-allocation of its waters.*

*From the roaring cascades of Linville Gorge to the western suburbs of greater Charlotte, the Catawba River winds from its headwaters in the Blue Ridge across the Piedmont, providing a source of recreation, drinking water, and electrical power for hundreds of thousands of North Carolinians along the way. It continues to share its abundance in South Carolina, where it becomes the Wateree and follows a course that includes the unspoiled natural areas along the recently established Wateree River Blue Trail.*

*The Catawba-Wateree has been shaped and reshaped by natural and human forces for centuries. But new threats have arisen that could severely limit the river's ability to meet the needs of the wildlife and people who depend on it. A prime example is a deal Duke Energy is attempting to strike with South Carolina regulators, in which the state would accept a donation of cash and land as compensation for maintaining harmfully low flows from the company's hydroelectric dams.*

*Meanwhile, North Carolina and South Carolina are battling it out in the U.S. Supreme Court over out-of-basin transfers and how they affect the availability of water downstream. Although legislation has been proposed that could provide a coherent planning and permitting process for allocating water from the Catawba-Wateree and other river basins in North Carolina, the measure has languished in the face of opposition from several large-quantity users. All of these factors point to scenarios that could result in serious disruptions of the river's natural systems and water levels.*

*SELC is defending the river on multiple fronts. Through our work in South Carolina regulatory proceedings, we have kept the Duke hydropower proposal in check. Thanks to our legal action, two North Carolina cities have agreed to significantly scale back water transfers from the Catawba in times of drought and to implement stringent water conservation measures. At the same time, we are promoting sound water management policies that reduce the need for such water diversions and that provide better protection for the Catawba-Wateree and all the great rivers in the Carolinas. To learn more, get the latest news on this issue, or sign up for updates, please [click here](#).*