

Scientists Question Effects of Fish Kill

BY ERIN MASSENGILL
STAFF WRITER

While state officials now claim that a 10-mile stretch of the Neuse River poses no health risks to consumers, scientists are now examining the environmental impact and the stability of the state's waterways.

Concern over the sudden death of thousands of fish along a 10-mile stretch of the Neuse River led to a two-week ban prohibiting fishing along the stretch and concern about the environmental status of the state. The ban was removed last Saturday. Signs of the dead fish appeared five weeks ago.

Earlier this summer, the number of dead fish floating in the Neuse increased significantly. These fish had open sores, some as large as a dime and were reported from New Bern as far south as Minesott Beach.

The fish deaths have raised environmental concerns about the amount of nutrients used on land. Hans Paerl, a Kenan professor of marine and environmental science at a UNC facility in Morehead City, said he saw the problem as one which could easily reoccur anytime in the future.

"I think it's possible that it could happen again next summer," he said. "We need to deal with excess nutrients within the basin, and we can't manipulate Mother

Nature."

The excess nutrients that cause the abundance of algae growth are attributed to several "non-point sources." These sources include runoff from lawns, parking lots, atmospheric deposition, automobile exhaust, industrial and agricultural emissions, sewage and animal wastes.

Paerl said he did not see the situation becoming better for a while. "I would think that conditions would not be able to improve until later this fall when the cold water helps to flush it out," he said.

Concerns have not only been raised about the environmental significance of the ban but also about the economic effects that will be felt around the Neuse, particularly in New Bern.

Jerry Schill, the executive director of the N.C. Fisheries Association, a trade group that represents commercial fisheries, pointed to these economic effects. Schill said about three dozen full-time commercial fishermen were closed during the ban and about the same number of part-time fishermen either closed down or moved to other areas not included under the ban.

More importantly, Schill pointed to the effects of negative press on local businesses along the Neuse. "The perception was such that it negatively affected their (seafood restaurants) business. On a larger scale, we

were concerned what it would do to the nation's perception," he said.

Dot Fuss, the director of the New Bern Visitor Center, said she had not received any complaints from visitors. "To date, we've heard of no complaints. I think it would be a bigger deal if it was highly publicized. I'm not comfortable with it, but we're not experiencing any backlash here," Fuss said.

N.C. Sen. Charles Albertson, D-Duplin, and chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources, said he saw the problem as one that the state needed to address. "I want us to look at scientific facts. We need to take a look at it," he said.

Scientists speculate that the fish died because of an opportunistic bacteria called pfiesteria. The bacteria attacked the fish after their immune systems had been weakened by a lack of oxygen in the water. The oxygen levels were low because of an increase in algae growth prompted by a combination of excess rainfall and excess nutrients from runoff.

The levels of pfiesteria found within the stretch of the river were eight times the lethal limit for the fish. The majority of the fish killed were Atlantic Menhaden, fish that are extremely sensitive to low oxygen levels and that travel in large, tight schools.

OLGA

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which he criticized opponents Nelson and Randy Marshall for supporting legislation for domestic partners registration.

"We felt that domestic partner legislation was an odd issue to put to voters as central to the race and that this reflects negatively on Riggsbee's stance toward the

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to get a degree, they are going to be saying 'Would you like fries with your Happy Meal?'"

Citing courses such as "Unnatural Acts and Split Britches" at Brown University and "Housing and Feeding the Homeless" at Cornell University as examples, the Young America's Foundation said traditional scholarship had been replaced with ideological pursuits.

"These courses promote an ideology, which is not legitimate in a traditional setting," Flynn said. "The professors are indoctrinating and not educating."

Flynn criticized the theory of multicultural training in universities as simply cosmetic. Flynn said the Young America's Foundation proposed that schools go back to basics in their curricula and had plans for reform. "The only way to reform is by getting at the universities' purse strings," Flynn said.

issues that interest us," Ferguson said.

Riggsbee said Tuesday the letter was meant only to show differences between himself and the two other candidates. "To say that is gay-baiting is the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard," he said.

OLGA's statement also mentioned reports that door-to-door Riggsbee supporters had been telling residents not to vote for Nelson because he is openly gay. But

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people to the polls," Nelson said. "We're going to have difficulty just alerting people where their poll sites are."

Student government members are exploring several options in voter mobilization. Having students transported to poll sites in donated or rented vans is one possibility. Members also plan to contact the

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synergy instead of wasted energy."

Crowell said she was excited about working with a student in this capacity because students had shown dedication to the mission of the BCC. "The students have shown a very concerted effort of working," Crowell said. "I mean rolling up your sleeves and working."

Lancaster said although the fund-raising efforts had fallen short thus far, efforts to raise money were progressing.

Riggsbee said Tuesday he was unaware of such statements or campaign activities.

"I don't have any campaign workers out in the neighborhoods but myself," he said. "Some people may know that I'm opposed to domestic partnership, and that may become for them a reason to support me, but I don't have any volunteers (that) I'm aware of telling people not to vote for Mike Nelson for that reason."

University's Department of Transportation to ask if students could be transported in Point-2-Point vans. Organizers plan to meet later this week to finalize plans.

Students should look for tables set up in the Pit, near the Student Recreation Center and at other central campus locations Tuesday for information on where to vote. Fliers also will be posted before next Tuesday's election informing students about polling sites.

"The grassroots fund raising going on is raising smaller donations but raising lots of support, and that's going to be the catalyst in getting larger donations," Lancaster said.

Interim Provost Dick Richardson said he was hopeful that a student intern would spur more involvement.

"I don't know for certain if it will increase fund raising. It's something certainly worth trying," he said.

Applications for the BCC fund-raising internship are available at the BCC, the Black Student Movement office, the Campus Y and the Union Desk, Johnson said.

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