

Sierra Club of South Carolina Bill of Water Rights and Responsibilities

Access to clean, abundant water is the right of every South Carolinian. Our waters belong in the public trust, and therefore we have a duty to pass them on in as good or better condition than we inherited them. Right now, our state is failing that public trust.

We, the members of the Sierra Club of South Carolina, call on our elected officials and state agencies to fulfill their responsibilities under the Clean Water Act by ensuring that South Carolinians have access to clean, abundant water.

1. Stop unpermitted discharges. They pollute the water and add to benthic pollution levels.
2. Implement septic drain field regulations that meet or exceed EPA requirements. South Carolina septic systems are unregulated, unreliable, and are contributing to fecal contamination in our waters.
3. Stop toxic discharges from smoke stacks. Coal-fired power plants are the source of 40 percent of man-made mercury emissions in the United States. South Carolina has 12 old-style coal plants, our own "dirty dozen."
4. Implement bacteria source tracking. Right now, our regulatory agency DHEC tracks pollutants but does not know where they come from.
5. Enforce Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for polluted waterways. Too many water bodies in South Carolina exceed their TMDL, which is the maximum amount of a pollutant that a water body can receive and still safely meet water quality standards.
6. Implement the EPA's 1986 directive that states monitor *E.coli* contamination. The presence of *E.coli* in our waters is a more accurate indicator of health threats than fecal coliform and should form the basis of our water quality assessments.
7. Test South Carolinians for unsafe mercury levels. A recent series in the *Post and Courier* discovered high levels of mercury among people who eat fish caught from rivers in the Pee Dee region.
8. Reign in reckless development that threatens our watersheds and contributes to stormwater runoff and soil erosion. Unregulated growth and destruction of our forested watersheds is destroying our lakes and rivers.
9. Protect our freshwater wetlands. Our state's "isolated" wetlands (wetlands not connected to a major river or lake) absorb and hold floodwaters, recharge groundwater, diminish water pollution and provide critical habitat for endangered plants and animals. But they are under threat from development and not adequately protected by DHEC regulations.
10. Regulate withdrawals from our surface waters in a way that respects the chemical, biological, and physical integrity of our surface waters. Currently South Carolina industrial and agricultural users do not even have to report how much they take. We will not be able to ensure water for the future, or negotiate regional water agreements with neighboring states, until we have strong water permitting legislation.

Sincerely,

Printed Name: _____ Signature: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Please send completed forms to:

Sierra Club of South Carolina

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