

## Kingston Lake Environment Awareness Network (KLEAN) - Update for March 2008

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**Happy St. Patrick's Day** from the Kingston Lake Environment Awareness Network (**KLEAN**)!

About once a month, you will receive an e-update with the latest information about Kingston Lake, Crabtree Swamp, and the Waccamaw River. Let's see what's been happening lately and what's coming up.

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### Events and Announcements

The next meeting of the Conway Water Quality and Drainage Commission will be held on **March 19th at 6 PM**. Commission meetings are held in Conway City Hall on 3rd Avenue and Main Street in the conference room on the first floor. A public input period is always scheduled.

The Horry County Stormwater Advisory Board will hold its next regular meeting on **March 25th at 3 PM** in Multi-purpose Room D of the Horry County Government and Justice Center on 2nd Avenue in Conway. A public input period is always scheduled. For more information, visit <http://www.horrycounty.org/stormwater/index.asp?page=9>.

Please mark **Saturday, March 29th** on your calendars and come out to help the Waccamaw Riverkeeper and volunteers clean up the River around Conway! Local businesses? Boy Scouts? Eagle Scouts? Boaters? City Council? River lover? We really need your help! Let's get serious about protecting the Waccamaw! Meet at the Conway Marina at **9:00 AM** and bring gloves and boats, if you have them. Cleanup will occur along the banks and on the river in boats (not required). Plan for a free lunch of hot dogs, baked beans, and drinks after a morning of hard work. For more information, contact the Waccamaw Riverkeeper, Christine Ellis ([wrk@coastal.edu](mailto:wrk@coastal.edu) or 349-4007), or Rick Rickenbaker (340-6861 or 626-5405 [work]).

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### This Month's Feature – Freshwater Mussels

During a 2007 stream assessment, the S.C. Department of Natural Resources determined that populations of freshwater mussels occur in Crabtree Swamp, a major tributary to Kingston Lake and the Waccamaw River. One of these mussel species, *Toxolasma pullus* or Savannah lilliput, is listed as a species of concern which means that it is rare. More common mussel species of the genus *Elliptio* occur in surprising numbers in Crabtree Swamp. State biologists did not expect the mussels' presence in Crabtree Swamp, which has been highly channelized for drainage and has few features associated with natural blackwater stream systems. Improving water and habitat quality would help to preserve these important stream dwellers.

Freshwater mussels are typically associated with more intact, natural stream systems. They tend to be an indicator of water and habitat quality and the rarest species are not tolerant of poor stream conditions. Mussels are filter feeders and can help to clean the water by filtering particles if present in large numbers. Pollutants, however, clog their gills and habitat degradation stresses the animals. They are typically preyed upon by raccoons and otters. Although mussels are sedentary animals, they have a unique life cycle. When the males and females reproduce, the larvae attach to or are "eaten" by fish. The larvae migrate to the fishes' gills, where they live as parasites for several months. They then metamorphose into miniature versions of the adults and drop off to settle into the stream bed.

One interesting historical fact is that the shiny interior of the mussel shells attracted an industry of button-making in the early 1900s. Small factories manufactured buttons for clothing from the shells, which resulted in overharvesting. Plastic buttons eventually replaced the shell buttons, but most mussel populations are still depressed.

For more information, please see:

<http://www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/southcarolina/press/press1842.html>  
[http://www.ncwildlife.org/pg07\\_WildlifeSpeciesCon/pg7b1a.htm](http://www.ncwildlife.org/pg07_WildlifeSpeciesCon/pg7b1a.htm)

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### **Learn More**

If you are looking for a speaker for your group's next meeting, why not book a presentation about water quality or wetlands? David Fuss and Dr. Susan Libes of Coastal Carolina University are available for presentations geared for citizen groups. For more information, contact David Fuss at 843-349-4023 or [dfuss@coastal.edu](mailto:dfuss@coastal.edu).

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