

# RAPID RIVER MAGAZINE Arts & Culture



## LOCAL INSPIRING LOCAL STORIES ON THE HEROES OF OUR RIVERS

What if we could smell our local rivers long before we could see them? What if our legacy was dead streams, poisonous water and a dying ecosystem? This was the story of our community not very long ago. Mark Twain remarked that our rivers were “too thin to plow but too thick to drink” and that describes the French Broad River, the Pigeon, the Swannanoa, the Mills and the Green and many other regional waterways just a couple of decades ago.

Industry brought better paying jobs to our community but they also brought pollution so toxic that it killed the fish, the cows and in some cases, the community where cancer rates were off the charts. Many people grew up believing that all rivers were supposed to be

brown and smelly and distasteful. But enter the River Heroes who said NO to the destruction. People like Wilma Dykeman in WNC and East Tennessee, Marjory Stoneman Douglas in Florida, the Upper French Broad Defense Association in NC and the Dead Pigeon River Council in Tennessee.

Their passion, their activism and their call to save our waterways awoke our communities to the need for river stewardship. Their call still echoes today in the environmental efforts, land conservancies, river keepers, green businesses and engaged communities who are working to be the stewards nature is asking us to be

. The Center for Cultural Preservation, WNC’s History and Documentary Film Center, is proud

to announce the release of award-winning film director David Weintraub’s new film on the ordinary people who did extraordinary things to protect southern rivers and streams. Guardians of Our Troubled Waters, is the Center’s sixth feature film that connects people to their rich cultural and natural history.

Guardians chronicles these stories and the early heroes who stood up against the destruction fighting against toxic pollution from factories, rampant draining of wetlands and the damming of tributaries that would have forced thousands of farmers from their ancestral land. The film focuses on three communities: Western North Carolina, East Tennessee and South Florida as well as the heroes who stood up