

What Is the Yadkin Riverkeeper ???

February 13 , 2011

A lot of HRLA Members have asked many questions about the Yadkin Riverkeeper Inc. (YR) organization, including questions about who chartered the group, who supports it, and does it have any authority. Considering the fact that the YR and its lawyers have been very active in lobbying for State take-over of High Rock Lake and the other lakes in the Yadkin Project, these questions deserve an answer.

An attorney in Charlotte chartered the organization; Ms. Zoe Gamble Hanes, with the law firm of Blanco Tackaberry Combs & Matamorus. Ms. Hanes serves as President of the YR, according to information filed with the NC Secretary of State.

According to latest information on file with the NC Secretary of State, 80% of financial support for the YR in 2009 (latest available) came from four (4) sources:

- Nancy McFarlane in Raleigh \$15,000.00
- Uwharrie Capital Corporation \$15,851.00
- Robertson Foundation in Salisbury \$10,000.00
- Smith-Reynolds Foundation \$30,000.00

McFarlane is a Raleigh City Councilor, and served for a while as President of NC Water Rights Committee, a group (?) sponsored by Roger Dick in Stanly County. Roger Dick is President/CEO of Uwharrie Capital Corp. Mr. Dick has been a very active and outspoken promoter of State take-over of the Yadkin Project.

The YR claims to be affiliated with the Waterkeeper Alliance, founded in 1999 by environmental attorney and activist Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.. This appears to be an organization whose primary mission is initiating litigation in the name of environmental concern.

On the question of authority, many people have been misled by the YR into believing the YR organization is some kind of an organization with the authority to order people or companies to do something. The YR has no more authority than any private citizen.

The IRS has granted the YR status as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. 501(c)(3) organizations are prohibited by IRS regulations from significant participation in legislative lobbying. Nonetheless, the executive director of the YR registered with the NC Secretary of State as a lobbyist, and has actively promoted the idea of legislation enabling State take-over of the Yadkin Project.

Many people have suggested to the YR that water quality in High Rock Lake, and downstream lakes including Tuckertown, Badin, and Lake Tillery would benefit greatly from detailed examination of pollution sources in the watershed upstream of High Rock; but to date the YR has displayed little or no interest in any issue except litigation with a goal of State take-over of the lakes.

The HRLA has concluded the Yadkin Riverkeeper Inc.'s primary mission is the generation of litigation under the guise of "environmental concern". Other than a couple of press releases about Thomasville's sewage spill, we've seen no evidence of any concern for water quality improvements in the Yadkin River or High Rock Lake. Quite to the contrary, the YR has assisted Roger Dick and others in Stanly County in delaying implementation of benefits we will gain at High Rock under terms of the Relicensing Settlement Agreement.