

#4 LITTLE RIVER

NORTH CAROLINA

THREAT: NEW DAM

Summary

The Little River, home to an abundance of fish and wildlife, provides drinking water, irrigation, and recreational opportunities to the surrounding communities. A proposed water supply dam would not only cost taxpayers millions, it would severely harm the river's health. American Rivers proposes better, more reliable, and cost-effective solutions to meet the area's water supply needs, including comprehensive water efficiency measures, and expanding existing water supply reservoirs. Raleigh and Wake County should pursue these smarter and cheaper alternatives, and protect the valuable resources of the Little River.

The River

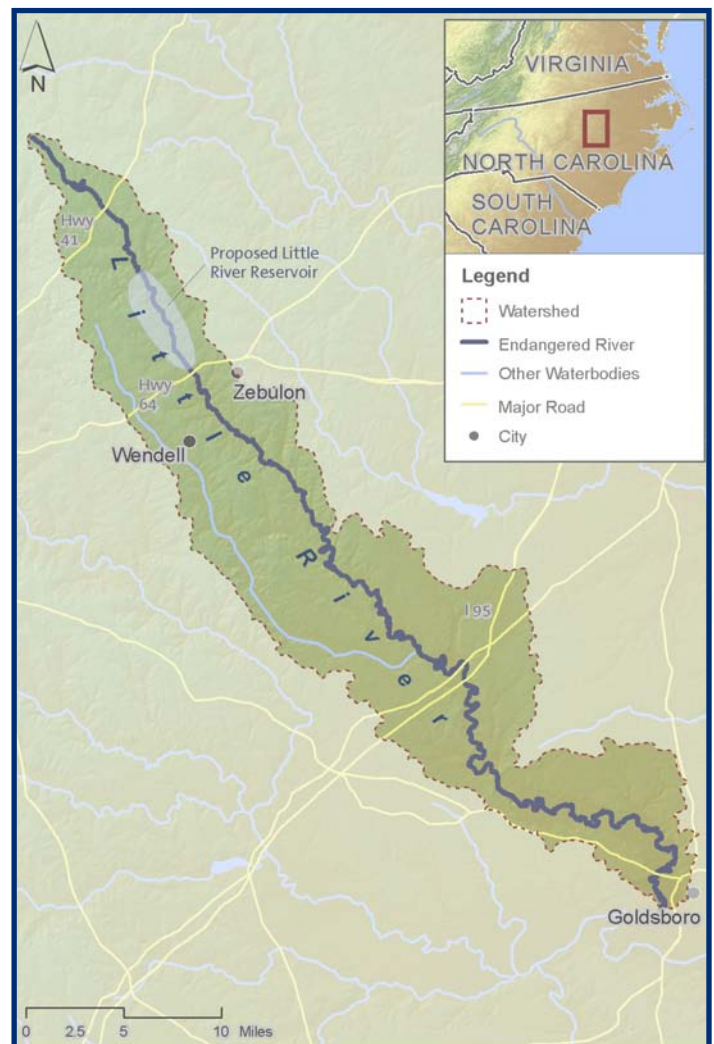
The Little River is one of the healthiest in the Southeast region, and serves as a drinking water source for over 50,000 people in five municipalities (including Franklin, Zebulon, Wendell, Kenly, and Goldsboro). The river also provides irrigation for a number of farms, and is used extensively for fishing and paddling.

The Little River has benefitted from a number of restoration efforts that have improved habitat for fish and wildlife. The removal of three dams has successfully restored 130 stream miles for six different kinds of fish. In addition, the river is home to several rare and endangered species of fish and mussels.

The Threat

In 1993, Wake County identified the Little River as a feasible place to build a new water supply dam. Then in 2006, the water utilities in the county merged under the City of Raleigh, giving the project critical momentum. The daily water demand for the service area is projected to almost double by 2040 (from 55 mgd up to 101.8 mgd). However, the dam is estimated to provide only a fraction (13.7 mgd) of the projected water demand, and cost \$250 million to construct.

The proposed impoundment would cover 1,150 acres and store more than 3.7 billion gallons of water. The dam would destroy all of the restoration work completed for migratory fish, and inundate hundreds of acres of wetlands that provide clean water and natural flood protection benefits. Furthermore, this antiquated approach to water supply is not reliable during droughts and reduces the perceived need for efficiency.



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www.americanrivers.org
1101 14th Street NW, Suite 1400, Washington, DC 20005
(202) 347-7500



PHOTOS: NC DIVISION OF WATER RESOURCES



Taxpayer dollars would be better spent on water efficiency and other more cost-effective measures. In the report "Hidden Reservoir," American Rivers documented how Raleigh could save over \$60 million and nearly 40 percent of its water supply, by embracing water efficiency solutions like stopping leaks and upgrading old buildings. This water savings could provide water for 80,000 to 120,000 new residents.

Taking Action

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed reservoir is currently under development and is expected to be out for a 30-day public comment period in September 2010. Instead of em-

bracing the outdated approach of building a costly dam, Wake County should choose the proposed alternatives including expanding water supply allocation within Falls Lake reservoir and implementing a rigorous water efficiency program. This approach will not only save taxpayer dollars, but it will ultimately provide more water supply for the area.

Contact Info:

American Rivers
Lynnette Batt
(919) 682-3197
lbatt@americanrivers.org

Upper Neuse Riverkeeper
Alissa Bierma
(919) 856-1180
alissa@neuseriver.org

