

ANN AND WAYNE BRADDY, interviewed by Glenn Blackburn on October 20, 2010. Ann and Wayne live on Pungo Creek near Belhaven. They were deeply involved in the peat mining conflict on the Albemarle-Pamlico peninsula in 1982-84, with Ann often speaking at regulatory hearings in behalf of the fishing community. Today, Ann continues to crab. Wayne works on the Bayview-Aurora ferry and crabs on a regular basis when he is not scheduled to work on the ferry.

In 1982-83, Ann was crabbing and taking care of children, but she also devoted many hours to knocking on doors to alert fishermen around Belhaven to the dangers of the proposed peat mining project. At that time, Wayne was working on a tug, two weeks on and two weeks off, but when he was off he was doing some crabbing and also speaking out against the peat mining. They are convinced that the pollution from peat mining would have destroyed the livelihood of fishermen.

They said that it was difficult to get the fishermen actively involved in the campaign against peat mining. Fishermen are very independent-minded, accustomed to working by themselves, and resist being organized for any purpose. Also, most of the fishermen thought they had to keep on fishing to make a living and did not have time to get involved in a long campaign against the peat mining. But, it made a difference, Ann and Wayne said, when the crab houses realized what was happening and they began to support the campaign. They employed a lot of people.

Early on, Ann ran across Todd Miller's name on a flyer, and she called him. They said that Todd and Derb Carter were crucial in leading the fight against peat mining. They plus the local fishermen really got the fight going. Todd and Derb helped local people learn how to speak out. Furthermore, Todd understood all the rules and regulations and knew how to use the regulatory system. Derb knew the legalities, what they could and could not do. Derb, they said, was particularly good at making people realize that the peat mining would hit them in their pocketbook. Wayne commented that "being local helps;" it helped that both Todd and Derb knew the coast well.

At the various hearings, the local people did most of the talking, but Todd and Derb were always available to answer technical or legal questions. Ann and Wayne stressed that both the outraged local fishermen and the people who knew the technical/legal information were needed in order for the campaign to be successful. It was also important that the news media got involved.

Ann and Wayne said further that some of the hostility toward the peat mining was fueled by the knowledge that high-powered Washington politicians, backed by federal subsidies, were major investors in the peat mining project. In the end, the planned peat mining project was stopped when the federal subsidy ran out.

When asked about fishing around Belhaven today, Ann and Wayne said that fishing on Pungo Creek is not nearly as good as it used to be. The root problem, they believe, is fish kills caused by pollution from stormwater runoff. Depending on what is happening on the land, polluted runoff kills fish when it rains, they said. Many traditional fishing communities are gone now. In particular, there are many

fewer full-time crabbers than there were a few decades ago. Among other things, imported crabmeat is much cheaper than what can be produced in this country.

In general, Ann and Wayne sounded pessimistic about the future of commercial fishing in North Carolina. They believe that a way of life is being wiped out. Wayne said that the commercial fishermen on the coast have been “stepped on” over and over in recent decades.

Ann and Wayne stressed that outside developers were taking over the coast. Coastal development has been slowed down some by the recession, they said, but developers have already destroyed a lot of marshland.

When asked what most needs to be done to protect the coast now, Ann and Wayne said that runoff needs to be controlled better. Depending on what is happening on the land, polluted runoff kills fish whenever it rains. The only times fishing is good now is when it has been dry for a while. Also, we need to better protect marshlands. Swamps and marshlands filter out pollution. Too much marshland has been destroyed by development, they said.

According to Ann and Wayne, the Coastal Federation needs to insist that whenever a fish kill occurs we find out what caused the kill. The Federation should insist that the source of the problem be identified.

Finally, on the question of the connection between people’s religious beliefs and their environmental concerns, Ann said that her view is that God has entrusted the world to us, but we are destroying it. She said that there is some discussion in her Sunday School class that there is too much greed in the world.