

ALLIE SHEFFIELD, interviewed by Glenn Blackburn on June 27, 2014. Allie is President of PenderWatch & Conservancy, which has focused on conservation issues in Pender County for nearly 30 years. She represents PenderWatch in the STAN coalition (Stop Titan Action Network) and has been very active in the anti-Titan campaign. She has also served on the Coastal Federation's Board of Directors for the last several years. Allie grew up in Warsaw, N. C. and now lives in Surf City on Topsail Island. She practiced law, primarily as a very successful defense attorney, for thirty years in Washington, D. C.

Allie stressed that the anti-Titan campaign is very personal for her, because she is a "child" of the Cape Fear river basin. Her family has been in the Cape Fear region (near Chinquapin originally) for over 250 years and has a long relationship with coastal waters. She grew up in Warsaw near the Northeast Cape Fear River, and her family often vacationed on Topsail Island. So, loving and wanting to protect the coastal landscape and environment has very deep roots for her.

Allie noted that the place where she grew up – Warsaw and Duplin County – has suffered greatly from air and water contamination from hog and poultry farms. There are two-three million hogs in the county; she pointed out that there are more hogs in Duplin and Sampson counties than in any other place in the world. The hog wastes, stored in so-called "lagoons," are contaminating water all over the county. She said that people who can afford bottled water no longer drink from county water or wells. Only the poor have to drink from wells that are subject to contamination. Allie added that she is on the board of an organization that tries to help people affected by the hog farms.

Allie represents PenderWatch in the Stop Titan coalition. The PenderWatch Board voted to join the coalition a few weeks after the April, 2008 meeting when the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners voted to give \$4.2 million in incentives to Titan. Allie said that the meeting with its quick vote and giving away of taxpayer money looked very suspicious, and many people quickly came to distrust Titan. Later, STAN used Freedom of Information requests to find out that Titan officials had been meeting secretly with several of the commissioners for 3-4 years before 2008.

Allie said that PenderWatch was very concerned about the proposed cement plant, because it would be located on the Pender-New Hanover county line. Pender would get much of the air pollution from the plant, and water pollution would directly affect the Northeast Cape Fear River which flows through the county. She pointed out that there are many poor people in Pender County, and they eat fish out of the river. Any pollution will contaminate what they eat. This is environmental injustice. Also, many people in the county get their water from wells, which could easily be contaminated by the cement plant's operations. The possible impact of the proposed plant on public health is a big issue in Pender County.

Pender County is now fairly solid against Titan, according to Allie. She noted that the Pender Board of Commissioners has voted to prohibit cement kilns in the county.

Allie believes that the impact of a Titan cement plant would be extremely bad, just as bad as the effects of hog and poultry farms in Duplin and Sampson counties. She also commented on people's

distrust of the state's environmental agencies and Titan. In her words, "The state's legal responsibility is to protect its citizens by requiring Titan to use the best available technology to limit toxic emissions from its proposed cement plant. For all Titan's claims that it will build the cleanest possible cement plant, it has instead continuously done everything possible to weaken or defeat the regulations for cement plants."

Allie also pointed out that Titan planned to burn coal to burn out all the metals in the limestone, so there would be a double burning that would be a major source of air pollution. Building the Titan plant would be a "catastrophic" event, she said, so we have to fight it off.

According to Allie, the driving forces in the first weeks of the anti-Titan effort included Joel Bourne, Kelly Stryker and the Friends of the Lower Cape Fear. Joel was a key figure because he understood the full implications and potential impact of a cement plant. Kelly was a "voice of reason," but always relentless and a fabulous researcher. Doug Springer, the Cape Fear River Keeper, was also very active early on. And the Coastal Federation – Mike Giles – got into the fight very quickly. The Friends of the Lower Cape Fear were very active the first two years, but dissolved after that.

The anti-Titan campaign faces opponents who are accustomed to getting their way. Titan, she said, thinks the people in eastern North Carolina are uneducated and can be overwhelmed. In Wilmington the people who support Titan are mostly the same people who have controlled Wilmington for decades. Allie thinks that the Titan fight has changed Wilmington by showing people that they can fight back against this traditional leadership group.

Allie said that she has attended most of the public hearings on Titan and makes a lot of presentations to groups, but the most important thing she has done involved the EPA's new regulations on cement kilns. Before 2010 there were no effective national regulations on cement kilns, but the EPA approved a new set of regulations in 2010. The Republican House that came to power in 2011 proposed legislation that would have destroyed the new regulations. Allie pointed out that she knew Washington well, so in 2011 she spent four months in Washington lobbying to save the regulations. She in effect worked as STAN's unpaid lobbyist in Washington. Among other things, she got Rep. Mike McIntyre to support Stop Titan and also worked on panels that introduced congressional staffs to the issue of cement kilns. In the end, the EPA regulations were saved.

When asked what it is about Titan that worries people the most, Allie said the biggest problem is the water. The proposed plant would use 10-15 million gallons of water every day from the aquifer. What will happen to all this waste-water? This point resonates with the public. And the wells in northern New Hanover County and Pender County could well be contaminated. Another point is that Titan is a Greek-owned corporation that was originally a Middle Eastern operation. They are largely unknown to people around here, so people find them to be mysterious.

As for the Coastal Federation's role in the Titan fight, Allie said that the Federation handles the money so that gives the organization the leadership in the Stop Titan coalition. She noted that STAN had no money in the early days, but there was a lot of passion driving the movement. The Federation is important to STAN because it has a good reputation in the community. She believes that in the long run

the Titan fight will be very important for the Federation, because the fight is so central to the life of Wilmington and the most heavily populated part of the coast (New Hanover, Pender, and Brunswick counties).

The Federation also helps hold STAN together by hosting meetings of the Executive Committee. The Committee is composed of representatives of the major components of Stop Titan – Cape Fear River Watch, the Sierra Club, PenderWatch, Kayne’s group of Citizens Against Titan, the Federation, Kelly Stryker although Friends of the Lower Cape Fear has disbanded, the Duke Environment Law Clinic, and SELC. They meet several times a year. Allie noted that she and Kemp Burdette are the only members of the Executive Committee who are actually from the Cape Fear area.

Asked if members of Stop Titan think of themselves as “environmentalists,” Allie said they are environmentalists but they are certainly not extremists. They are ordinary people; a group picture looks like a picture of a P. T. A. She said that she was a criminal lawyer, not an “environmentalist” before the Titan issue came up. She went on to add that people in eastern North Carolina don’t want to be extreme. Todd Miller, for example, is not an extremist and doesn’t particularly like lawsuits. But, Allie said, there are some people you can’t trust and work with. Titan needs to be out of the area completely.

Finally, Allie had a brief comment on her time on the Federation’s Board. She noted in particular that the Board had changed significantly in recent years, in that there are now more women on the Board and this has changed the atmosphere at Board meetings.

She then added a strong statement about why she is glad to serve on the Board and help protect the coast. “During World War II, Topsail Island was a Department of Defense missile testing site and was closed to the public. There was no development at all, just a few very primitive fishing shacks. After the war, when the DOD withdrew from the island, there was some rudimentary development (a pontoon bridge and a couple of roads), and my family who loved to fish built one of the first (5th or 6th) cottages on the island. That was in 1949. I grew up spending every minute I could outside on the island, running, fishing, crabbing etc. with my sisters, cousins and friends. It was still almost all maritime forest until the 70s. It was truly undeveloped then and I loved everything about it. I treasure those memories and that’s why I am passionate about preserving as much as we can of the NC coast for future generations.”