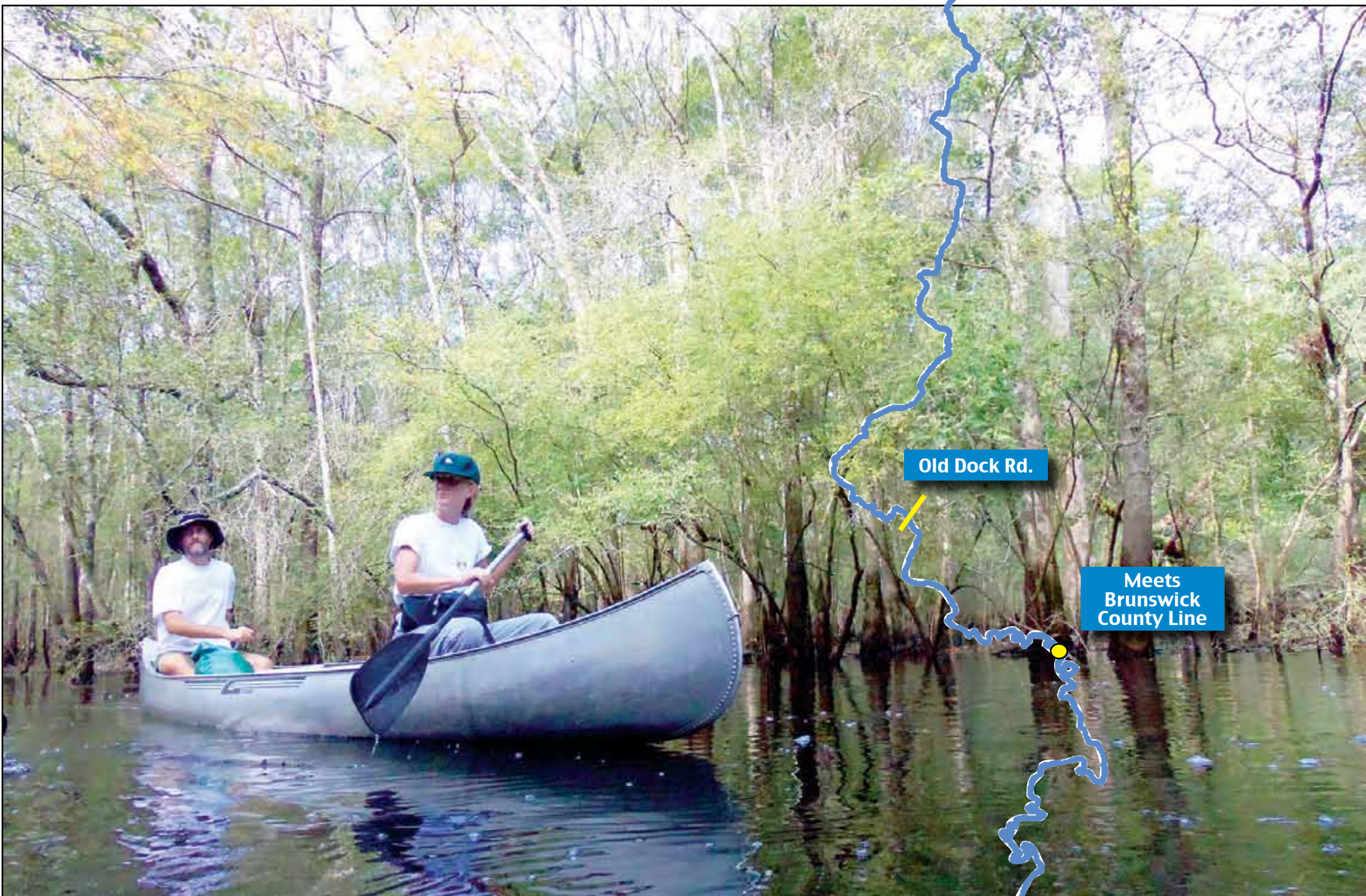


## The Waccamaw River Blueway?

### Efforts made to include Columbus portion in national designation



Paddlers on a recent trip down the Waccamaw River near Old Dock consider how a Blue Trail designation would impact the North Carolina portion of the river.

By **MARK GILCHRIST**  
Chief Photographer

Buoyed by recent federal attention on the importance of the Waccamaw River floodplain, representatives from the N.C. Department of Natural Resources, Columbus County and South Carolina paddled down a portion of the river along the Brunswick County line last month.

Organized by Christine Ellis, the Riverkeeper for the Waccamaw Watershed, the dozen paddlers put in at a private landing north of the county line and toured about 10 miles to the bridge at New Britton Hwy.

Ellis invited people from Lake Waccamaw State Park, N.C. Land Trust, the

Winyah Rivers Foundation, DENR and Waccamaw Canoe and Kayak, a new outfitter near the New Britton bridge.

DENR Assistant Director David Knight took his first trip on the Waccamaw that day, and left the river impressed.

"The big thing that comes across is the lack of development and change made by man along the river," Knight said afterward. "That really makes it pristine and unique."

A goal of this group is to designate the 48 miles of river in North Carolina as a "blueway" or "blue trail" river, which provides access points for recreational use, but also protections against overuse. With the cooperation of government

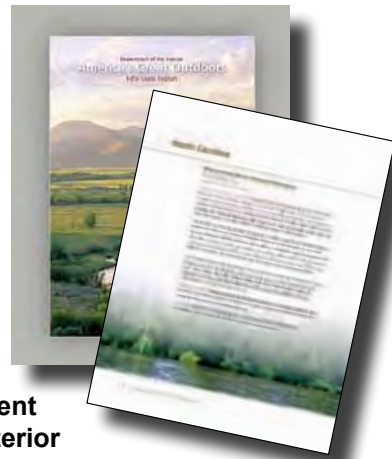
and private organizations, the 100 miles of the South Carolina portion of the Waccamaw has been a Blue Trail since 2009, and a report by the U.S. Department of the Interior is encouraging many to complete the trail for the entire river and protect the whole watershed.

"It's absolutely something we need to save here in our community," said Doug Smith, who works at International Paper and lives on the river near Old Dock. "It is our finest resource in Columbus County, besides the lake itself. The Waccamaw has taken hits over the last several years, with droughts and everything else, and it's time we start looking after our river."

See today's main section for an article with more information on this effort.

New Britton Hwy.

The U.S. Department of the Interior declared the Waccamaw River as one of two areas in North Carolina with great potential.



Waccamaw Riverkeeper Christine Ellis appears in a video on the Waccamaw River made by Southeastern Community College students.



DENR Asst. Secretary David Knight, above, took his first swim in the Waccamaw River, then, right, enjoyed lunch on the river bank with the group, including Lake Waccamaw State Park Ranger Jonathan Short, center, and Winyah Bay Foundation board member Doug Smith, right.

With federal recognition, the Waccamaw may soon be better protected and more accessible than ever.

Swamp Fox Hwy.



Accessing the Waccamaw river by kayak or canoe may be easier if it is a Blueway.



One of several wood duck houses provided by an area hunters group.

South Carolina line

Atlantic Ocean  
108.6 miles

Lake Waccamaw  
48.5 miles



The group at Babson's Landing



Knight and Christine Ellis round one of the many bends in the winding Columbus County portion of the Waccamaw River.