**Environmental Racism – North Carolina**

**Classic Examples**

**1985: Pollution from Hog Farming:**

Over the past decade, the number of hog producers in the state of North Carolina has fallen from 23,000 to 8,000, but the number of hogs in the state has nearly tripled. North Carolina went from fifteenth to second in hog production in the United States between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s (http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/121-a182/). Large hog farming corporations came into N.C. and bought out smaller family farms, or integrated with the smaller farms by providing hogs and materials in exchange for the use of the farmer's land. A population of 7 million hogs has invaded and taken over the land and lives of residents of nearby towns, while polluting both the water and the air. The majority of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) are located in the eastern half of the state, in the so-called Black Belt, a crescent-shaped band throughout the South where slaves worked on plantations and now, a century later, black residents of this region still experience high rates of poverty, poor health care, low educational attainment, unemployment, and substandard housing. One North Carolina study reported nine times more hog CAFOs in areas where there was more poverty and higher percentages of nonwhite people even after adjusting for population density as a measure of rural location and cheaper land( [https://ejatlas.org/conflict/pollution-from-hog-farming-cafos-usa#](https://ejatlas.org/conflict/pollution-from-hog-farming-cafos-usa)). Access to additional information: <http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/121-a182/>

The city of Kenansville and the surrounding Duplin County area is a major hub of hog processing in the form of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations. In 2007 alone the county processed 2,274,524 hogs. CAFO operations are disproportionately located near low income African American and Hispanic communities. One study found that CAFOs were nine times more likely to be sited in areas with high poverty and a large minority community even controlling for population density. Waste from the CAFOs is stored untreated in large lagoons and then applied to the land. These lagoons of waste contain harmful pathogens, insecticides, antibiotics and other pharmaceuticals as well as nitrogen and phosphorus. The waste leaches into the surrounding ground and over overflows during times of heavy rainfall contaminating local watersheds. Pollution and odor also travel through the air in fine particles that coat outside surfaces. Testing in the area has found high levels of hydrogen sulfide, endotoxin, coarse particulate matter, and semi-volatile compounds. Local residents have complained of respiratory problems, irritated skin, and eyes, and nausea.

In 2007 a moratorium on new hog CAFOs became law. However, regulations on existing hog operations remains weak. After some legislative victories in 2011 the General Assembly passed an act S.L. 2011-118. SB 501 which allows hog farms to update their facilities without updated the safety technology in their waste lagoons. Some have objected that this counters previous agreements to implement the best environmental technology, (<https://ejatlas.org/conflict/pollution-from-hog-farming-cafos-usa>).

Click here to access a detailed 2013 article on this topic: <http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/121-a182/>

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| **1973: Warren County, NC**  **PCBs**  This was one of the first cases of environmental justice in the United States and is considered an emblematic struggle. In 1973, Ward Transformers Company dumped 31,000 gallons of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) along more than 220 miles of roadways of 14 counties of the state of North Carolina. PCBs are highly toxic persistent organic pollutants, whose production has been banned by the US Congress since 1979 and by the Stockholm Convention in 2001. High concentrations of these pollutants are associated with the development of skin conditions, ocular lesions, lower immune responses and cancer. The State of North Carolina responded to the dumping of PCBs by building a landfill to deposit the contaminated soil. The location chosen for the landfill was Shocco, a rural town in Warren County without a mayor or a city council, whose population was 75% African American. Warren County was one of the poorest counties (ranked 97 out of the 100 counties in the state, in GDP).   Afraid of the possibility of toxic materials contaminating their groundwater supplies, in 1979 local residents formed Warren County Citizens Concerned About PCBs to fight the siting and construction of the landfill. Residents held rallies and protests of the landfill. More than 50 out of the 500 protesters were arrested by State Highway Patrol the day the first truckloads of contaminated soils started to arrive. The protests and arrests (523 people) continued for the next six weeks as the contaminated soil arrived. These protests attracted support from the civil rights movement across the nation. Media began to relate this environmental conflict to larger issues of institutionalized environmental racism. After weeks of protests, North Carolina Governor James Hunt promised to detoxify the landfill as much as possible. Three months after capping the landfill in 1982, gas leakages started to occur and the state proposed to construct a drainage system to remove the contaminated water. After more than two decades, efforts to detoxify the dump began in June 2001 and lasted until December 2003. The detoxification and neutralization work at the landfill had a total cost of $18 million, paid by state and federal sources. <https://ejatlas.org/conflict/pcb-contamination-in-warren-county-usa> |