



Snakes help more than harm in our Fayetteville backyards

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Officials are flooding dams to help fish

Gareth McGrath
USA TODAY NETWORK

Seeing locks and dams on the Cape Fear River submerged might normally raise some eyebrows and worries about massive flooding heading downstream toward Wilmington, say from historic rainfalls from hurricanes like Matthew and Florence.

But officials hope putting the structures underwater might be one of the best ways to help the river's native fish species that struggle to get upstream to spawn.

"It's a blip compared to what the fish would normally experience if the dams weren't there," said Dr. Julie DeMeester, water program director with The Nature Conservancy's North Carolina chapter, of the impacts from the targeted water releases from Jordan Lake. "They're not perfect, but they are another tool in our toolbox, and they work."

Running into a roadblock

Before dams were built along the Cape Fear, anadromous fish like shad, striped bass and two species of endangered sturgeon had free passage up the river from the Atlantic, where they spent most of their lives, to the shallows and small tributaries inland where they spawned.

Then in the early 20th century officials built the three locks and dams between Wilmington and Fayetteville to help improve vessel navigation, develop trade, and promote North Carolina industries, a move that didn't prove to be entirely successful since the dams were built just as rail and road became the transport mode of choice.

Today, the three structures – all in Bladen County – handle very little boat

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Aerial view of Lock and Dam No. 1 and the rock arch rapids built to help migratory fish get around the structure. KEN BLEVINS/STARNEWS



Myron B. Pitts
Opinion Editor
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BR King mentored a generation of leaders

Billy King brought his work home with him when it came to politics, and that would surprise no one who knew the former Cumberland County commissioner.

"Sometimes he was happy," when he came home, says his wife, Margaret. "Sometimes he was upset."

The votes mattered because the issues mattered to King, who grew up in rural Wilson County and moved to Fayetteville in 1975.

Margaret King, his wife of nearly 52 years, said he became involved in student government at the school where he finished two years ahead of her. The school was all-Black in the era of segregation. She and King were not dating then, said Margaret King, interviewed June 4 at their home in north Fayetteville.

They reconnected when she was with a friend in the McDonald's parking lot, and King pulled in beside them. When they went in, he followed and struck up a conversation with Margaret. He found reasons to stay in touch and see her.

"I say he wore me out," Margaret King, a retired schoolteacher, says with a smile. "I guess I gave in."

When Billy King made up his mind, he followed through, and it was a quality that kept him in good stead during his political career. He served on the Board of Commissioners from 1990 until 2014, which included stints as

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Residents push for 'slow down' on data center plans

Coral Aponte
Fayetteville Observer
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The debate over data centers grew heated at the Fayetteville City Council public forum on June 1, with residents from Fayetteville and surrounding communities voicing strong opinions and

one attendee being escorted out.

In April, the council voted on a 120-day pause to gather information on data centers, temporarily halting discussions about moving forward with a public hearing during those four months, Mayor Mitch Colvin said during Monday's meeting.

Council member Shaun McMillan

submitted a formal request, ahead of the public forum, asking the council to direct staff to draft a possible moratorium ordinance on data centers. The motion died for lack of a second.

Despite the council not seeming ready to explore a moratorium, residents who oppose data centers came out in force. In total, 38 people signed up

to speak during public comment, with the majority of them speaking in favor of a data center moratorium. Colvin attributed the public turnout at the forum to McMillan's agenda request.

"Once the agenda went out and it had data centers, it brought people who had

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