

The Fact Book

Energy and Environment Issues of the South Carolina Region
of the Gullah Geechee Corridor



Gullah Geechee Chamber of Commerce
Makin' Somet'n from Not'n

The Gullah Geechee Energy and Environment Fact Book

In the next few months, the people of the Pee Dee and the Lowcountry will face very important issues about energy, the environment and the future of our community.

The goal of this Fact Book is to 'educate, motivate and activate' people about these important issues so that our voices will be heard and our interest represented.

**Additional copies of this Fact Book can be downloaded
for free from GullahEnviroCon.org
or by calling (843) 318-8644**

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*All of the information contained in The Fact Book is accurate and fully documented.
For more information and details, please see the footnotes on the last page.*

1. Environmental and Energy Issues in Rural Areas

It will come as no surprise to anyone who lives in the small towns and rural areas of coastal South Carolina that when it comes to decision making, usually our voices are not heard or interest represented. Too often, others make the decisions and we are left holding the bag.

- Rural households across the United States spend a disproportionately high share of their income on energy bills — about 40% more than their metropolitan counterparts.ⁱ
- The problem is most glaring in the East and Southeast, and among low-income households across all regions.ⁱⁱ
- Overall, rural households have a median energy burden — the percentage of a household’s income spent on home energy bills for needs such as air conditioning, heating, lighting, appliances, and cooking — of 4.4%, which is one-third higher than the national burden.ⁱⁱⁱ

“African Americans are disproportionately impacted by air pollution, particularly from fossil fuel based energy production processes: 71% of African Americans live in counties in violation of air pollution standards.”

2. Contaminated Rivers and Fish in our Communities

There are many environmental issues that threaten our communities and just one of these is the contamination of the fish in our waterways. This is so important as many people fish not just for sport but to provide food for their families.

According to the 2018 South Carolina Fish Consumption Advisories, virtually all the significant rivers and creeks in coastal areas have some level of dangerous pollution in the fish populations.^{iv}

Statewide Advice for At-risk Women and Children

- Eat only one meal of freshwater fish each week from a waterbody without an advisory.
- Do NOT eat any fish from waterbodies with an advisory.
- Do NOT eat any king mackerel, shark, swordfish, tilefish or cobia.

Source: 2018 SC Fish Consumption Advisories

While everyone loves to catch big fish, older and larger fish have eaten more and have been in the water longer, so there may be more contaminants in their bodies.

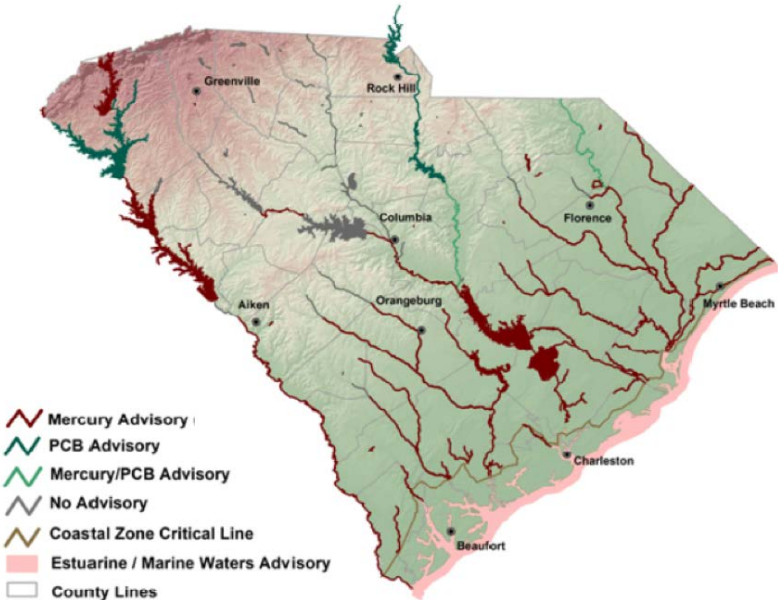
The biggest threat is from mercury and PCBs.

Did you know?

Fish store PCBs and mercury in different parts of their bodies.

PCBs	MERCURY
<p>Stored in the fat</p> <p>PCBs remain in the body for long periods of time--may take several years to be fully removed from the body.</p>	<p>Stored in the muscle</p> <p>May take up to a year to be completely removed from the body, assuming no more mercury is being ingested.</p>
<p>Trimming the fat off the fish can reduce the amount of PCBs by 50 percent.</p>	<p>Trimming the fat will not reduce the amount of mercury since it is found in the protein (meat) of the fish.</p>
<p>It's better to boil, bake or grill. Broiling and frying are not the best ways to reduce PCBs.</p>	<p>Cooking methods will not remove mercury contaminants.</p>
<p>Larger fish have greater amounts of PCBs in them due to age and diet.</p>	<p>Larger fish have greater amounts of mercury in them due to age and diet.</p>

The map below shows where there are high levels of pollution for Mercury and PCBs and / or contaminated fish in the state.√



3. Santee Cooper: Energy and Environmental Costs

Santee Cooper is the predominant energy supplier for the rural South Carolina region of the Gullah Geechee Corridor. Santee Cooper either provides electricity directly to customers or sells electricity to the electric co-ops operating in the Gullah Geechee Corridor Officially known as the South Carolina Public Service Authority, Santee Cooper was created in 1934 as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal to provide electricity to small towns and rural areas in SC. South Carolina. Since then, the energy industry has changed significantly.

As South Carolina and the Gullah Community grapple with preserving our environment while keeping energy costs low, Santee Cooper is confronted with a potential sale stemming in part from the failure of the V.C. Summer nuclear site, which left the utility in over \$4 billion in debt and still reliant on coal as a generation fuel.

The debt will have to be paid back by Santee Cooper's customers, the utility's only source of revenue. Santee Cooper can raise rates without oversight of South Carolina's Public Service Commission, which must approve rate increases for other utilities. Santee Cooper's customers have no protection from being charged for worthless, non-working nuclear plant.

At the same time, questions have arisen about Santee Cooper's ability to address pressing environmental needs. A September, 2019 report by the Southern Environmental Law Center^{vi} said it best - Fossil Fuel Path for Santee Cooper is Most Expensive for Customers. The report found:

- A Santee Cooper future based on additional fossil-fuel power will saddle customers with hundreds of millions of dollars in higher costs in the future compared to other energy options.
- A gas-based plan could cost customers an extra \$1 billion if gas prices rise.

4. The Choice for the Future

As a result of the recent abandonment of the construction at the V.C. Summer nuclear plant, and its growing debt and other big financial issues facing Santee Cooper, the state of South Carolina is now considering what to do with Santee Cooper. In January 2020, recommendations will be made to the Legislature about three possible options:

- 1. Let Santee Cooper continue operating as is with a new business plan**
- 2. Require new management to continue operating Santee Cooper**
- 3. Sell Santee Cooper to another utility**

This issue effects the Gullah community's energy bills and the environment we wish to leave our children. We must make our voices heard as the state decides what to do with Santee Cooper.

5. It's Time to ACT ... NOW!

The three goals of the Gullah Geechee Chamber of Commerce and all of our activities are:

- 1. Educate**
- 2. Motivate**
- 3. Activate**

With this Fact Book, our conferences and other activities – the ultimate goal is ACTIVATE. We need people to get involved and make their voices heard. There are lots of ways YOU and get involved and have a real impact. You can:

- Speak to you church or community organization about these issues.
- Write a letter to the editor or column for your local newspaper.
- Visit, call or write you elected officials, especially those in the legislature.
- Volunteer with the Gullah Geechee Chamber of Commerce or other advocacy organizations.
- Speak out for our issues on social media.

Cleaner energy sources will make for cleaner waters and a cleaner environment for our Gullah community. Join us as we work together for a stronger, vocal, Gullah community and a cleaner environment for everyone!

To get more involved today contact:

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☎ (843) 318-8644

🌐 GullahEnviroCon.org

📘 facebook.com/GullahGeecheeChamber

🐦 twitter.com/GullahGeChamber

i. <https://aceee.org/research-report/u1806>

ii. <https://aceee.org/research-report/u1806>

iii. <https://aceee.org/research-report/u1806>

iv. https://dc.statelibrary.sc.gov/bitstream/handle/10827/28329/DHEC_Fish_Consumption_Advisories_2018.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

v. <https://www.scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/Library/ML-004042.pdf>

vi. <https://www.southernenvironment.org/news-and-press/press-releases/fossil-fuel-path-for-santee-cooper-is-most-expensive-for-customers>