

## An Aquifer Sucked For Mining...and Sold?

PCS Phosphate on the south shore of the Pamlico River has done deep, open pit mining since the early 1960s by lowering the water table, pumping 68 million gallons a day of wonderful drinking quality water from the Castle Hayne Aquifer. The company discharges most of it into the Pamlico River as if it were wastewater.

When PCS began its pumping, individual and municipal wells dried up for many miles, even across the Pamlico River. The continuing impact on ground water resources is now more gradual, though still significant. A corporation formed in 2001, Eagle Water, has bought the rights to this water and is looking for a big buyer to make a massive pipeline profitable. Many in Eastern NC are objecting to the fact that, in private hands, the resource or any profits unlikely to be used to benefit the people of their region.

PCS is a prime example of massive withdrawal by a for-profit company, and a waste of priceless groundwater. The company provides more than thousand jobs in Beaufort and Pamlico counties, and wields huge political and economic clout. If PCS is allowed to greatly expand its operation, as the company is seeking, the damage would only increase.

Says Jack Spruill, Vice President of PenderWatch, in the state's current study of its water allocation policies, "There should be no sacred cows, such as the PCS mine. The social cost of wasting valuable ground water in order to mine the mineral and create the jobs should no more be ignored than the social cost of polluting our streams in order to produce cheap pork and chicken or to generate cheap electricity by polluting our air."

We agree—industries that exist only by wasting or degrading public resources must undergo major changes in how they operate, or have no future in a sustainable NC economy.

-With thanks to Jack Spruill