March 22, 2015

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As Charleston Waterkeeper enters into its seventh year, I have made the decision to transition out of my operational role as Executive Director and Waterkeeper to pursue new professional opportunities and personal projects. At this exciting stage, I am honored to accept an invitation to serve as a member of the organization's Board of Directors. Though my title will change, my commitment to Charleston Waterkeeper is life-long.

With my announcement, the Board has established an ad-hoc search committee to oversee the transition. As the organization enters this next chapter, we will divide the joint Executive Director / Waterkeeper role into two separate positions. It is with great pride to announce Andrew Wunderley as Charleston's next Waterkeeper. Andrew joined Charleston Waterkeeper in 2011 and has since served as the organization's Staff Attorney and Program Director. I will remain in my current role until Charleston Waterkeeper's Board of Directors identifies our next generation of executive leadership.

Charleston Waterkeeper was born out of a passion for Charleston’s waterways. I was less than two years out of college when I read a book that would alter my life’s trajectory. The Riverkeepers told the story of a group of fishermen who banded together to protect their fundamental right to fish the Hudson River. This sense of unyielding dedication and an impassioned responsibility was infectious and inspiring.

In 2008, while teaching sailing on Charleston Harbor, I recognized a need for such a strong, united voice – A voice that brings together the diverse users of Charleston’s waters under a common call and shared vision. A voice that understands the nuanced relationships we have with this delicate resource. A voice grounded in science, magnified by an ability to identify and address water pollution issues. A voice that empowers the next generation of citizens through education and outreach. And a voice that celebrates the public's fundamental right to clean water.

Though still a mere idea, Charleston Waterkeeper became real in 2009 with the filing of articles of incorporation. By 2011 we had secured adequate support to build an organization in earnest. 2013 and 2014 marked the launch of our key initiatives, including a Water Quality Monitoring Program, a DHEC-certified hydrochemistry laboratory, a Patrol Program, Clean Water Act enforcement work, and a Mobile Pumpout Program. Now, in 2015, Charleston Waterkeeper stands as a fully operational organization with a professional staff, serving as the voice of Charleston’s waterways and all who depend on them.

I am beyond proud of what our team has done. The organization that stands today is a function of the countless individuals, hours, and resources that have been devoted to our mission since day one. This same community dedication will ensure the organization’s future growth and sustainability.

Together, as we look ahead as an organization, I am encouraged by the strength of our foundation and the clarity of our vision. To all of our supporters, to our team (past and present), and to my friends and family, thank you. It has been one of my life's greatest honors to serve as Charleston's Waterkeeper and to help build this organization to what it is today. I am truly humbled, and I am truly grateful. Here's to the future.

In the name of clean water,

Cyrus A. Buffum
Founder