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UCR Announces New Office in LaGrange; Water Protection Programs to be Offered in West Point Lake Region

ATLANTA — Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, a nonprofit environmental organization based in Atlanta, announces the opening of a new satellite office in LaGrange staffed by local resident, **Jill Sistino**. Sistino will serve as UCR's Regional Outreach Manager covering Troup, Heard and Harris Counties and, eventually a portion of the river basin in Alabama.

"Our goal for this new initiative is to engage the people who live and work in the West Point Lake region in programs to protect the river, lake and their tributaries," said **Sally Bethea**, UCR's Executive Director.

"We have worked for the past 17 years to improve the quality and quantity of water in the Chattahoochee flowing downstream from Atlanta and to ensure West Point Lake is treated fairly in the tri-state water negotiations," she continued. "Our investment in a local office will allow us to expand our outreach and monitoring programs and we are thrilled to have Jill on board."

Charles W. Smith with Hutchinson Traylor joined UCR's board of directors in 2010 and is helping the organization with strategic planning for the new office in a storefront on the square in LaGrange, which will officially open this summer.

Smith said recently, "Of all my civic and community interest over the years, I feel like the service to Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper may become the most significant to me. The issues of sustainability and stewardship of our natural resources are critical to our regional well-being, as well as the legacy that we create for our children and grandchildren. I am honored to serve this organization."

A graduate of Oglethorpe University who has worked in marketing and communications for companies including UPS, Sistino and her husband Ray moved to LaGrange with their two young daughters four years ago. Since then they have spent precious time on West Point Lake and have enjoyed getting to know the area, along with the people and businesses in their new community.

“I am thrilled about using my corporate marketing and communications skills to share UCR’s mission with friends and neighbors,” said Sistino. “It has been my pleasure to get out and meet other groups who are like-minded in their efforts to provide clean and plentiful water resources. So much talk in this area is about water, so it has been a wonderful opportunity to become engaged in these discussions with a supportive voice.”

Both Charles Smith and Jill Sistino will participate in an Earth Day Water Saver Workshop this Saturday, April 23 at 10am, at the ReStore in LaGrange (333 Main St) hosted by Habitat for Humanity and UCR. They will be available to talk about UCR programs and how to get involved for those who are interested.

Open to the public, this workshop will include valuable water saving tips, a discussion of local conservation efforts and instruction on how to use and install a rain barrel to capture water for use in gardens. Registration is not required but is recommended. The \$65 fee includes the 30-minute workshop, a prepared rain barrel and an installation kit. Kids are welcome at this family friendly event, a perfect way to celebrate Earth Day!

To register for the Water Saver Workshop, call 706-416-6332. For more information about Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, see www.chattahoochee.org.

UCR’s mission is to protect and preserve the Chattahoochee River, its lakes and tributaries for the people, fish and wildlife that depend upon it. The Chattahoochee is the most heavily used water resource in Georgia. For more information, visit www.chattahoochee.org.

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