

NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD STRIPPED OF ENVIRONMENTALISTS GROWTH INDUSTRY DOMINATES



Photo credit: Tom Wilson

by Sally Bethea

On a hot summer day in 1999, a year almost as dry as 2007, I received a call from Governor Roy Barnes' chief of staff. He asked if I would accept an appointment to the Georgia Board of Natural Resources (also called the DNR Board).

Not having sought such a position, I was surprised and responded that I'd have to think about it. I also said that if I took the position I would not curtail any activities associated with my day-job as director of Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper. Since UCR was established in 1994, those activities have included advocacy on behalf of the Chattahoochee, lobbying for clean water, and occasionally an appeal of a state-issued water permit.

The Barnes staffer replied that they had already checked with the Attorney General's office and that there was no problem with my serving on the DNR Board while also working for a nonprofit environmental advocacy organization. Later that summer, I placed my hand on the Bible and took an oath of office along with longtime conservationist and former Lt. Governor Pierre Howard and two other new Board members.



Every single day in metro Atlanta, 50 acres of trees are destroyed and 55 acres are covered with hard surfaces, such as roads, rooftops and parking lots.

Photo credit: AUC/Ben Gray

Conflicted Mission Statement

The mission of the Department of Natural Resources is to "sustain, enhance, protect and conserve Georgia's natural, historic, and cultural resources for present and future generations, while promoting the development of commerce and industry that use sound environmental practices."

Protect and promote the use of our natural resources—clearly a challenge under any circumstances, but near impossible for a DNR Board dominated by individuals whose personal finances are advanced by the use of these resources. To recall an old remark, "When a man's income depends on his not understanding something, no amount of argument will convince him of it."

Rubber Stamping

I first started attending the DNR Board meetings in the early 1990s as an observer. I was struck then by the absence of any questions or comments from Board members and the fact that every vote was unanimous. It wasn't until I became a DNR Board member myself, years later, that I realized what was actually going on.

All the important work, including the choreography of the

See **Board of Natural Resources**, page 7

WHO ARE THE MEMBERS OF THE DNR BOARD?

The Board of Natural Resources, or DNR Board, consists of 18 citizens appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the State Senate. There is one member from each of the 13 Congressional districts of the state, four "at large" members, and one additional member from one of the coastal counties. The members are appointed for seven year terms, which are staggered to create continuity of experienced members on the Board.

The Board has the power to establish the general policies to be followed by the Department of Natural Resources, but does not issue environmental permits or make regulatory decisions in environmental matters. The Board meets 10 times a year, usually the fourth Tuesday (Committee Day) and the fourth Wednesday (Board Day) of each month, at 2 Martin Luther King Drive SE, Suite 1252, East Tower, Atlanta, GA 30334, although meetings are occasionally held elsewhere in the state.

You may obtain the Board's schedule and places of meetings at www.gadnr.org or by calling 404-656-3500. The Board Chair determines the agenda for each meeting and allows public comment on topics that are before the Board.

Additional information about the DNR Board, including contact information, can be found at www.gadnr.org/documents/board_info.html. Let your

District Board representative and the At-large members know your concerns about the issues that the Board considers.

Match Your Congressional District with Your DNR Board Member

1st District:	Loyce Turner	Retired legislator
2nd District:	Cader Cox	Owner, Riverview Plantation
3rd District:	Warren Budd	New York Life Insurance
4th District:	David Allen	Consultant to Health Care Industry
5th District:	Tom Wheeler	Wheeler-Kolb Management Co.
6th District:	Jim Tysinger	Retired legislator
7th District:	Bob Rutland	Allied Holdings, Inc.
8th District:	Earl Barrs	Knapp-Barrs & Associates
9th District:	Jim Walters	Walters Management
10th District:	Joe Hatfield	Fieldale Farms Corporation
11th District:	Bill Carruth	Carruth Wood Products and Aiken Grading
12th District:	Mabel Jenkins	Owner, Hanging Rocks Plantation
13th District:	Walter Hudson	Excell Developers
Coastal:	JennyLynn Bradley	Community volunteer
At-large:	Gene Bishop	Retired, Health Service Centers
At-large:	Bill Archer	Retired, Georgia Power
At-large:	Phyllis Johnson	Thompson Hardwoods
At-large:	Vacant	

UCR Staff

Alexandra Adams
Policy Director

Sally Bethea
Executive Director and Riverkeeper

Birgit Bolton
Programs Coordinator

Bill Crawford
Business Manager

Mary O. Harrison
Development Associate

Darcie Holcomb
Headwaters Conservation Director

Mary Manson
Receptionist

Tammy Morrissey
Events Coordinator

Elizabeth Nicholas
General Counsel

D.J. Strickland
Development Director

Harlan Trammell
Boat Captain

Board of Directors

Sonny Cohen

Denise Donahue

Mike Eckert

Gary Gaines

Billy Hall

Richard Jacobson

Ben Jordan

Dave Kirkpatrick

Kay Lee

Jim McCaffrey

Elena Mola

Steve O'Day

J. Rutherford Seydel II, Chair

David Shaffer

Our mission is to advocate and secure the protection and stewardship of the Chattahoochee River, its tributaries and watershed.

ATLANTA OFFICE
3 Puritan Mill
916 Joseph Lowery Blvd.
Atlanta, GA 30318
404-352-9828

GAINSVILLE OFFICE
615 F Oak Street
Suite 1000
Gainesville, GA 30501
770-531-1064

www.chattahoochee.org
www.getthedirtout.org

SAVE THE RIVER, FREE YOUR SOUL! RIVER REVIVAL RAISES MORE THAN \$85,000

The night of May 10th was breezy and clear for the hundreds of guests at our 11th Annual River Revival who danced, feasted on southern cuisine and local beers, and enjoyed the views of Piedmont Park and Midtown Atlanta from the tented terrace at Park Tavern.



Event Co-Chairs Missy Courts, Mary Jane Kirkpatrick and Dave Kirkpatrick (UCR Board Member).

This year's event, themed *Save the River, Free Your Soul*, brought new and old Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper members to Park Tavern to celebrate the Chattahoochee and support our mission of keeping watch over our waters and ensuring enough clean water for ourselves and our children.

The **Apostles of Bluegrass** and the popular local band

Kingsized entertained a diverse and lively crowd that included more than two hundred new UCR members. Menu highlights included a low-country boil, fried catfish, sweet potatoes, fried green tomatoes and Atlanta-brewed beers from **SweetWater** and Park Tavern and wine from **Whole Foods Market**. A mechanical bull dressed up as a rainbow trout was a new feature for this annual party.



Host Committee Member Toi James (second from left) and friends enjoy the evening.

The silent and live auctions were a huge success, featuring items such as a trip for two to Steamboat Springs, Colorado, a Dagger recreational kayak, and a wide variety of sporting, dining, travel, art and entertainment-related offerings. All told, this year's River Revival raised more than \$85,000 and netted about \$68,000 to assist in UCR's fight to protect north Georgia's most valuable natural resource—the Chattahoochee River.

We very much appreciate all of you who attended, volunteered, served on our host committee, and donated auction items. A special thank you goes to our event Co-Chairs: **Missy and Clay Courts, Lesley and Dan Flores,**

NEW EVENT, MARKETING AND OUTREACH STAFF ON BOARD

The team at the Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper office has recently been strengthened with the arrival of two new full-time staff focused on public outreach, outings, events and general awareness for our members, volunteers and the public.

With close to 20 years of experience in event management, advertising, public relations, website development and graphic design, as well as a passion for rivers, **Tammy Morrissey** is a great new addition to UCR. She is a Certified Meeting Professional and a member of Meeting Professionals International, Georgia Chapter.



Tammy Morrissey

As our Events and Outreach Coordinator, Tammy is managing our events—from the Spring River Revival and June Race and Festival, to the Patron Dinner, River Adventure Outings and Annual Membership Meeting. She's also expanding our outreach programs to new community and nonprofit groups. Tammy says that she is "excited to be a part of a community that's actively involved

Mary Jane and Dave Kirkpatrick, Angela and Paul Smith, Andrew Sugrue, and Ralston Wells, The energy, creativity and commitment they demonstrated was inspiring. Finally, a very special thanks to our **River Revival Sponsors:**



UCR staffer Birgit Bolton, Larry Castillo and Bonny Putney.

Presenting Sponsor:



A Time Warner Company

River Benefactor Sponsors:



Radio Sponsor:



River Defender Sponsors: Georgia Power, Honda Marine, ProductionPeople, Inc.

River Advocate Sponsors: Atlanta Illustrated, Chevron, Southwire, SweetWater Brewery, Upper Chattahoochee Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Whole Foods Market.

River Sponsors: Fonda Inc., Innovative Water Solutions, May P. and Francis L. Abreu Charitable Trust, Merrill Lynch, Montgomery Watson Harza/Kafra - A Joint Venture, Pacific Group, Pratt Recycling Industries, Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta.

Friends of the River Sponsors: Aquascape Environmental, Atlanta Fly Fishing Club, Brown & Caldwell, Ecological Solutions, Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Galiato, The Lovett School, Rochester & Associates, Southern Civil Engineers.



SweetWater's Mike Goot (l), Freddy Bensch (r) and friend sample the crawfish.

Event Photo credit: Kent Ruby

in preserving our watershed."

Tammy replaces Magnus Christon who left UCR in February for a position with the Big Brothers, Big Sisters organization. We miss Magnus' smile and friendly disposition and appreciate his several years of assistance with our event fundraising.

Mary O. Harrison has worked part-time for UCR since December 2005, but recently became our new full-time Development and Marketing Associate. Mary O. grew up in Auburn, Alabama—only 20 miles from the Chattahoochee River—as the youngest of five children in a family of teachers.



Mary O. Harrison

While she has taught for many years, including ten years at a Montessori school in Fayetteville, Mary O says that she is taking some time off from teaching to do her part in the fight to protect the environment, while also pursuing her passion for music. She has recorded her first solo record and hopes to have it released in the fall.



UCR FILES NOTICE OF INTENT TO SUE FORSYTH DEVELOPER

More than a year ago, UCR investigated a construction site in Forsyth County after receiving a call from a concerned citizen. We found multiple violations of stormwater laws at a **Winmark Homes** development known as **Champions Run**. More than 1,800 linear feet of an intermittent stream that flows into the Chattahoochee had been drained and covered with rock and the developer was poised to construct buildings on top of the stream. After Forsyth issued a stop work order and told Winmark to repair the stream bed and restore the flow, the developer submitted a restoration plan, but failed to implement it. UCR then contacted the state EPD, Corps of Engineers and U.S. EPA for enforcement; however these agencies took no meaningful action on the matter, which was also investigated by a local television station (Fox 5 I-Team). Frustrated by the lack of progress, we asked Adam Princenthal with **Andrews, Knowles & Princenthal** to send a letter to Winmark on our behalf, which gives notice of UCR's intent to bring a lawsuit under the federal Clean Water Act to restore the stream.



"GREEN" DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH FULTON CHANGING COURSE?

In 2002, the **Chattahoochee Hill Country Conservancy** completed an innovative plan for a 40,000-acre area in South Fulton County with a goal of sustaining the rural landscape and protecting the watershed as the region develops. The Fulton County Commission subsequently approved an overlay zoning district for the area, which included a land preservation tool called "transfer of development rights". A TDR program requires the developer to purchase "credits" from landowners in the area who preserve greenspace on their properties. These credits can then be used to increase densities on the developer's property. CHCC's original plan included three high-density village centers surrounded by natural areas. The developer of the first village, **Minerva Properties**, recently requested a rezoning to *triple* the size of the village. UCR submitted written comments and spoke to the Fulton County Commission, highlighting the need to condition any rezoning on the implementation of the TDR program. The Commission approved the rezoning with this condition to ensure permanent protection of greenspace. *For more information about the Chattahoochee Hill Country, see www.chatthillcountry.org.*

DNR BOARD WEAKENS PROTECTIONS FOR DRINKING WATER

By a vote of 13 to 1, the Georgia Board of Natural Resources recently weakened the buffer protection requirements for our drinking water sources. The amendments that were adopted at the June board meeting reduce all stream buffer widths by *at least one-half*—from 150 to 75 feet—and some buffers by *two-thirds*—to only 50 feet. The new rules also create a virtually incomprehensible matrix of best management practices that are not likely to be enforced, as local governments have neither the resources nor technical expertise to do so.

For the past 17 years, buffers of 150 feet (100 feet of vegetated buffer and an additional 50 feet of impervious surface setback) have been required under state law to protect the streams and reservoirs that supply our drinking water. When the state EPD, a DNR division, pressured several cities and counties to adopt these buffer requirements as a condition of receiving a water withdrawal permit, the local governments balked. They turned instead to elected officials and others to use their political pressure to change the law.

Unable to Prevail Legislatively, Developers Succeed with DNR

The **Georgia Water Coalition** defeated a bill (SB 510) during the 2006 legislative session that would have weakened



RIVERSIDE RESTAURANT CITED

The city of **Sandy Springs** is working hard to protect the Chattahoochee River. A routine inspection last May of a major renovation project at **Ray's on the River** restaurant resulted in a stop work order for violations of streamside buffer laws, land disturbance activities without a permit and potential damage to existing specimen trees. Citations were issued to **Hutcheson Landscape**, **Frawley Associates Landscape Architects** and Ray Schoenbaum, the owner of Ray's. All were instructed to appear at City Hall the following morning to discuss a remediation plan to restore the damaged areas along the river. The Sandy Springs arborist required the replanting of native riparian vegetation including: 72 trees of various sizes and species; 288 three-gallon shrubs from eight species; and 1,784 one-gallon plants from eight species. Each of the three defendants was fined \$1,500 and the landscape contractor and landscape architect were each required to perform 40 hours of community service. UCR staff visited the site to monitor the remediation plan and to commend Sandy Springs for its quick and effective action to protect water quality in the Chattahoochee.



EPD ENFORCES EROSION, BUFFER LAWS ON THE SOQUE RIVER

The flight we took with **SouthWings** earlier this year is finally paying off. With aerial photos and video, we were able to confirm stream buffer encroachments, rip rap along the river bank and a new gravel road within 50 feet of the state-protected trout stream. EPD is currently negotiating a consent decree with Soque River property owner **Janice Lovell** which will, in all likelihood, require the removal of the road and a large fine for the violations. Our efforts to involve the Corps of Engineers in this matter have been far less productive. We waited over two months to receive documents requested under the open records act, only to find the Corps issued a nationwide permit "after the fact", ignoring the unauthorized work the land owner claims was done more than five years ago. UCR believes that the nationwide permit issued by the Corps is invalid because (1) the stream alteration exceeds the total lifetime limit of 300 feet per site and (2) the land owner never obtained the proper state permit/variance which is a requirement for the issuance of a valid nationwide permit.



stream buffer requirements for water supply watersheds. Unhappy with this outcome, SB 510 proponents sought and found a sympathetic audience at the DNR Board.

After a DNR rulemaking attempt last fall failed to satisfy north Georgia counties and developers seeking relief from buffer laws, EPD withdrew the proposed rule and convened a stakeholder group to draft proposed regulations. UCR General Counsel **Betsy Nicholas** served as one of four representatives of the Water Coalition on these stakeholder groups, along with consultants and representatives from affected north Georgia counties.

The groups met for two months and were able to reach an agreement on proposed rules to reduce the 150 foot buffer, while providing an equivalence of protection. The new approach balanced any decrease in buffer width with increasingly more stringent best management practices such as impervious surface limitations and post-construction stormwater control requirements. Unfortunately, discussions and negotiations were held outside the stakeholder process that ultimately derailed the agreement and resulted in the weakened rules adopted by the DNR Board.



Photo Credit: iStockphoto.com

River Stewardship

GET YOUR COMPANY, EMPLOYEES INVOLVED WITH EARTH SHARE

Earth Share of Georgia (ESG) plays a vital role in promoting environmental education, volunteerism and charitable giving by partnering with businesses across the state. Since its founding in 1992, employees have generously pledged their financial support and time to the important work of Earth Share's 61 member organizations—25 of which are located in Georgia.



Earth Share
OF GEORGIA

These contributions are growing as more businesses move to place the environment alongside United Way and other approved charities as a key recipient of annual employee payroll pledges. United Way does not offer work-place giving opportunities to environmental organizations.

ESG now participates in over seventy government and corporate campaigns including: **Primerica, Worldspan, Emory University, Turner Broadcasting Systems, Lawson, Davis, Pickren and Seydel, Cox Enterprises, NewFields, the city of Atlanta, the state of Georgia** and many **Combined Federal Campaigns**.

See www.earthsharega.org/partner.htm for other corporate and public partners.

UCR an Earth Share Member Since 1996

An ESG member since 1996, Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper has received about \$150,000 in campaign contributions through this important work-place giving program. These funds are used to support UCR's advocacy and education programs, including cleanups, river patrols and monitoring, floating classroom on Lake Lanier, and our highly successful *Get the Dirt Out* Campaign. Our Executive Director Sally Bethea also serves as an ESG board member.

ESG celebrates Earth Day every year with its member organizations and corporate partners at a Leadership Breakfast, Park in the Park and Green Day, where groups engage in hands-on projects in the community (*see article below*).

This is just one more way UCR can join together with other organizations to raise money for important environmental causes.

If your company is not already involved with Earth Share of Georgia and you would like more information, please contact our Development Director, DJ Strickland at 404-352-9828/ext. 19 or djstrickland@ucriverkeeper.org.



GREEN DAY WITH EARTH SHARE AND PARTNERS

On April 28, a few days after Earth Day 2007, UCR Program Coordinator Birgit Bolton organized a river cleanup with Earth Share of Georgia, National Park Service, Patagonia and Starbucks. With the help of about 15 volunteers, large amounts of trash were removed from the Powers Island Unit of the Chattahoochee River National Recreational Area—not far from the place where an alligator was discovered in June!

Cleanup volunteers focused on picking up debris and garbage from underneath the I-285 Bridge and the surrounding buffer area, while others used canoes to get trash floating in the water. Additional volunteers disassembled a rotting dock that had become lodged on a



A young volunteer rolls a tire to the trash pile at Powers Island.

small island in the river and also removed non-native plants.

This Earth Day cleanup was a big success thanks to all the volunteers and also the support of partners. Special thanks to Earth Share for the goodie bag donation—a gift from their Corporate Green Day Challenge, to Starbucks for the coffee and t-shirts, to Patagonia for the manpower, and to the National Park Service's John Huth and Jack Sweitzer for providing canoes and other equipment.

Learn more about Earth Share of Georgia activities at www.earthsharega.org.



PADDLE SERIES BRINGS RIVER LOVERS TOGETHER

For the second year, UCR offered summer canoe and kayak trips led by Richard Grove and others, the self-described Georgia Kayaker who paddled from Buford Dam to the Gulf of Mexico several years ago.



Kayakers stop for lunch on a rock in the middle of the Chattahoochee near Island Ford.

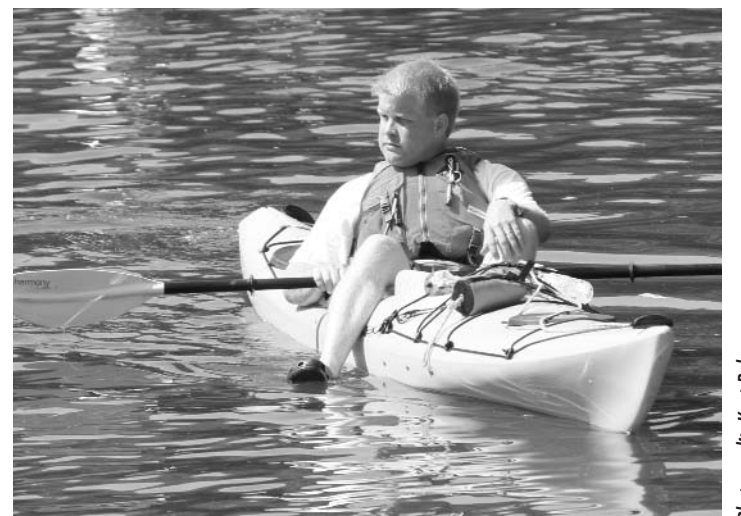
Focusing on the metro section of the river below Buford Dam, our Chattahoochee Challenger Series includes half a dozen trips for novices and intermediate paddlers.

On Saturday, June 2, a group of 16 paddlers met at Roswell's Azalea Park to organize a shuttle to Medlock Bridge—the beginning point for a 14-mile trip downstream on a twisting-turning river section that includes shoals, parks, beautiful woods and manicured yards.

The slightly overcast weather kept the paddlers cool, while they observed wildlife (blue heron, kingfishers, and tur-

ties) and the clear, jade-colored water. A highlight of the four and a half hour paddle was Richard's "Tarzan swing" from a rope hanging from a tree on the riverbank.

See www.chattahoochee.org/community4.htm for a schedule of remaining river trips.



UCR member Joel Walberg relaxes in his kayak after his paddle.

Photo credit: Kent Ruby



UCR at Earth Day Events Around the Watershed

Earth Share - Corporate Green Day

Arms around Atlanta - Grant Park

Sweetwater 420 Fest - Candler Park

Watershed Mural and Dedication - DeKalb Ave

Trinity Presbyterian Church Celebration

Hewlett Packard Earth Day

Coca-Cola Water Day

Down to Earth Kid's Day - Chattahoochee Nature Center

BACK TO THE CHATTAHOOCHEE RACE & FESTIVAL SETS NEW RECORDS!

New attendance records were set at the 5th Annual Back to the Chattahoochee River Race and Festival held on June 9, 2007, which was organized by Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, **National Park Service**, the city of **Roswell** and **Fulton County**.



Photo credit: Kent Ruby

Race Master, Larry Castillo (top, center), waits his turn at the Race start.

In 258 boats, 374 paddlers, including children and dogs, raced downstream along with 30 Sprint racers from the **Lake Lanier Canoe and Kayak Club**. The race started at Roswell's Garrard Landing Park on the Chattahoochee River at Holcomb Bridge Road and finished eight miles downstream for the recreational paddlers at Riverside



Photo credit: Kent Ruby

Boats at the festival were all shapes, sizes and colors.

Park. The competitive racers paddled an extra mile and then muscled their boats back up river against the current to finish at ten miles. Dr. Marcus Ericksen of **The Weather Channel's Commando Weather** paddled his custom made "Plastic Bottle" trash boat as a symbol of environmental stewardship.

At the end of the race, paddlers were greeted by the sounds of bluegrass music by **Apostles of Bluegrass** and UCR's floating pontoon boat, *The Molly B.*, which offered **SweetWater** beer to those of appropriate age.

More than 30 environmental exhibitors offered information at the festival following the race and were available to educate the public and provide hands-on activities such as fly-casting by **Orvis** and a bouncy room and scavenger hunt for the children. All registered paddlers received a goodie bag, event shirt and meal ticket with their registration fee, as well as a one-year UCR membership.



Photo credit: Kent Ruby

Environmental exhibits, music, food and an awards ceremony entertained festival goers.

Medals were awarded at the end of the festival to paddlers who placed in their category. The **Neill Harkins Trophy** was presented to Alex & Jim Guthrie in memory of longtime paddler and UCR member, Neill Harkins. The trophy is given to the parent and child team with the best time. Winners of the **Georgia Flatwater Series for 2007** were: C-1 Men, Larry Castillo; C-1 Men Master, Jim Normantin; Sea Kayak Men, Ardie Olson; Sea Kayak Men Master, Bill Beavers.

Thanks to all the sponsors and supporters that made this event such a big success, especially:

- Chevron
- Coca Cola
- Turner Broadcasting System
- The Weather Channel
- Tom's of Maine
- Honda Marine
- Harry's Farmers Market
- SweetWater Brewery



Photo credit: Kent Ruby

I did it!

And a special thanks to **99X Radio Station** and their sponsor **AT&T Real Yellow Pages** for the main stage where entertainer Gary Pfaff played to the festival crowd. Race results, additional sponsors and event photos can be found by visiting our website at www.chattahoochee.org. Be sure to mark your calendars for next year's race and festival on **Saturday, June 14, 2008**.

If you're interested in becoming a sponsor for next year, please contact Tammy Morrissey at tmorrissey@ucriverkeeper.org or 404.352.9828/ext. 12.



Photo credit: Israel Benear

The Molly B. pontoon boat awaited 21 and older racers with cold SweetWater beer at the finish line.

2007 LEGISLATIVE SESSION IN REVIEW

The 2007 Session of the Georgia General Assembly was among the lengthiest in modern times, however, the extra time added little or nothing of value to the Session's output. Disputes over various questions surrounding the state budget provided the reasons, or excuses, for the extra month that the legislators worked under the Gold Dome.

Funds for Lake Monitoring, Erosion Control and Land Acquisition

The Legislature approved a state budget that includes several important funding items for the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD). The agency received an appropriation of \$680,000 to conduct studies on Lake Lanier and three other lakes. Portions of these impoundments were recently added to Georgia's list of "impaired" waters based on monitoring data that revealed exceedances of state water quality standards, specifically nutrients. Excess nutrients, such as phosphorus, can rob the water of oxygen, causing algal blooms and fish kills.

Because segments of Lanier are now on the state's 303(d) list, a *Chlorophyll a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Study* must be developed for the lake. The two-year effort will include one year of intensive data gathering, and another year of advanced water quality modeling, to lay the foundation for future regulatory decisions to be made concerning the Lanier watershed. UCR was instrumental in bringing the water quality exceedance data to the attention of both EPD and the U.S. EPA in early 2006.

In 2003, when the State Legislature authorized the collection of user fees by state and local agencies for land-disturbing activities, EPD promised to hire 80 additional administrative and enforcement staff to help keep muddy stormwater out of our waterways. With a new appropria-



Papers fly through the air, as the 2007 Legislative Session is gavelled to a close at midnight on April 20, 2007.

Photo Credit: AUC/Ben Gray

tion of \$300,000, EPD can hire an additional six people—bringing the total new EPD staff, since 2003, to just 41 individuals statewide. While the recent appropriation is important, Georgia still has a really long way to go before it is adequately managing its erosion control program.

Finally, Governor Perdue asked the Legislature for \$50 million for land acquisition grant funds and ultimately received about \$42 million for this chronically under-funded program. The Governor also asked for, and received, \$19 million for a new "Go Fish Georgia" Program to promote tournament fishing in the state—a bet on improvements in water quality.

Two Problems Averted, Another Approved

UCR was successful in our opposition to two bills that, as originally written, would have gutted the education

requirements for those conducting land disturbing activities and would have made all the District Supervisors of the Soil and Water Conservation Commission into appointed, instead of elected, officials. The first bill was amended to actually strengthen the law with regard to on-site presence of trained personnel. The other was changed to set common terms for all District Supervisors, so that they could be voted on during the

General Election every other November.

A potentially very harmful measure passed at the very end of the Session as a Constitutional Amendment. The measure, which will have to be approved by voters on the 2008 ballot, would allow the creation of "private cities," residential housing projects where the developers will be allowed to sell low-interest municipal bonds, and to levy taxes to fund those bonds and run the projects they are used to build. Such projects could include Wolf Creek in Carroll County, which projects 19,000 houses.



UCR's Boat Captain Harlan Trammell.

CAPTAIN'S CORNER

NEW CATAMARAN UP AND RUNNING!

Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper's new flagship vessel—Georgia's only floating classroom and glass bottom boat—is up and running on Lake Lanier.

The boat was completed and delivered from **Corinthian Catamarans** of Tarpon Springs in late April.

After a week of final engine tweaking with retired **Honda Marine** founding member **Neil Mullen** and the installation of the tower, electronics and canvas installation by **Rick Marton**, the boat was launched on May 1. The inaugural student trip with **Elachee Nature Science Center** took place the next day. *See article on page 8.*

Outstanding Performance

The props needed further pitching from a 15" pitch down to 14" to get the correct rpms on the twin H225 hp outboards. With the correct pitch achieved and the props reinstalled, the boat is now a very powerful vessel. Built for comfort and speed, riders get to stations for monitoring and lake education fast. The boat planes at 16 and has a top speed of 32 knots. With its heavier weight (9 tons), it slices over the waves with little, if any, motion felt aboard. The performance of the *Chota Princess II* is outstanding.

The *Chota Princess II*'s ultra-quiet, fuel-efficient Honda bf225 outboards are barely heard at the helm. This boat burns the same amount of fuel as our old pontoon boat (12.5 gallons per hour), with more than twice the weight,

twice the speed and twice the passengers. The spacious decks and rails allow for easy movement and equipment deployment.

Island Excursions

The island excursions have been the most popular this season. Trips typically stop at Bird Island for wildlife viewing, then cruise to some rock piles for fish and bottom viewing through the glass bottom, with a final stop on an island for water quality testing and a walk on the beach.

Cleanup on this boat is easy, as the boat was made to be sprayed down after each use. I use a small 12v pump with a hose that clips directly to the battery and uses lake water. A quick wash-down from bow to stern gets rid of any sand and dirt tracked in.

This project is the culmination of *hundreds* of hours of work by myself and others and thousands of dollars worth of generous in-kind donations by many, including the 225 hp outboards from Honda Marine. The entire project promises to be the gold standard in aquatic learning in the state of Georgia for years to come.

To arrange a student program on the Chota Princess II, contact Elachee Nature Science Center at 770-535-1976. For a schedule and price list for private trips, contact UCR's Development Director, DJ Strickland at 404-352-9828/ext. 19 or djstrickland@ucriverkeeper.org.

BOARD OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Continued from page 1

voting process, was done before meetings by the powerful players on the Board. The result was a seamless unanimity of opinion, or at least the appearance of such.

Things began to change some when Governor Miller appointed **Sara Clark** from the League of Women Voters to the Board in the early 1990s and added trial lawyer **Jim Butler** a few years later. When **Pierre Howard** and I arrived in 1999—thanks to Roy Barnes' commitment to diversify the Board—there were four committed environmental voices on the 16-member Board. Discussion and debate began to occur. Questions were asked, information revealed, and not all votes were unanimous.



Photo Credit: AJC/Charlotte Teague

At a Board of Natural Resources meeting in September 2006 at the Brasstown Valley Resort and Conference Center, five members voted in favor of stronger coastal protection measures. Three of them are no longer on the Board.

For a half dozen years, the Board had some semblance of balance—although the Growth Industry members were the dominant force and continued to prevail in most matters in which they were interested.

Killing the Debate

Pierre Howard, always an eloquent and reasonable voice for Georgia's natural resources, was the first to be dumped from the Board in 2002 after Sonny Perdue was elected Governor. In a foreshadowing of my own demise five years later, the newly-Republican State Senate failed to confirm Howard's re-appointment.

DROUGHT AND GLOBAL WARMING STRESS WATER RESOURCES IN GEORGIA

Scientists have been warning us for some time that global warming will create erratic weather patterns throughout the country. Predictions have included longer and more frequent periods of drought and more severe storms with increased flooding. The Southeast saw some of those predictions realized in recent hurricane seasons, as Florida and the Gulf Coast contended with devastating storms that caused millions of dollars in damage. Now Georgia is experiencing additional unwelcome climatic changes, as the dry season becomes drier, and drought conditions threaten many parts of the state.

When summer months approach, water availability dips, just as people typically begin to use more water for landscaping and other outdoor uses. Summer water demand can increase up to 60 percent in Georgia. Mild drought conditions have persisted in Georgia for many months. This April the state's Drought Response Committee met to reassess the drought declaration based on these worsening conditions.

Restrictions on Outdoor Watering

The Drought Response Committee, comprised of representatives from several state, federal and local agencies as well as universities and non-government organizations, met with EPD Director Dr. Carol Couch who then raised the state's official declaration to a Level Two drought. This declaration restricts outdoor watering for residential areas statewide: residents at odd numbered addresses may water only on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays from midnight until 10 am, while even numbered addresses can water on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays. Some jurisdictions, such as the city of Atlanta, have moved beyond these restrictions, allowing residents to water outdoors only one day per week.

Even these restrictions may not go far enough to conserve enough water in all locations through this persistent drought. While outdoor watering restrictions limit residential water use, they do not apply to *any* commercial uses such as car washes, landscaping and other industries. Even more problematic is that EPD does not have data to show if these restrictions are being observed in all areas.

Drought Conditions, Wildfires and Flooding

Meanwhile, the bone dry conditions have created the perfect environment for blazing wildfires that have now consumed a half million acres in south-east Georgia. Some are wondering if these conditions are a preview of

Jim Butler was not re-appointed when his term was up and Sara Clark and **Ralph Callaway**, another environmental voice appointed in 2003, were axed several days before Christmas in 2006. Congressional re-districting was blamed, yet at least one of these individuals could have been moved to an at-large seat and stayed on the Board.

Sara and Ralph had spent much of the fall of 2006 vocally advocating for the protection of Georgia's coast from the Growth Industry. Just a few months before being removed from the DNR Board, they had voted with three other Board members, including me, against proposed regulations that would have weakened coastal laws.

In the waning days of the 2007 legislative session, my name was removed from a list of 300+ gubernatorial appointments without debate and my re-appointment by Governor Perdue, during the 2006 election year, was not confirmed.

Politics by Intimidation

Of the 17 remaining members of the Board (which had expanded to 18 in 2002), none are trained in protecting natural resources. More than half of its members are developers, real estate investors, or people whose business interests directly impact these resources. The good folks on the Board, who want to do the right thing, are clearly intimidated by the Growth Industry members.

At their recent June meeting, the Board voted 13-1 to weaken protections for drinking water supply watersheds (*see page 3*) and failed to protect all state waters from mercury contamination from coal-fired power plants.

The DNR Board should be comprised of *all kinds* of citizens: developers, business people, scientists, farmers, environmentalists and foresters—with no single group dominating. At least then Georgia's natural resources, and its next generations of people, might have a chance to enjoy the blessings we have received.

The present DNR Board is so out of balance that Georgia's natural resources are permanently threatened by its members' focus on their own businesses—at the expense of the state's future.



This view from Country Club Road Bridge in LaGrange shows West Point Lake suffering from drought conditions and reduced flows from upstream in 2006.

global warming impacts to come in Georgia. The *Atlanta Journal Constitution* has reported that some local scientists say impacts may include more rainfall coming in severe weather events, rather than through steady precipitation.

These storms are likely to cause flooding as well. While flooding seems a distant hazard as Georgia's drought continues, the problem of erratic weather—persistent droughts punctuated by severe storms—looms. With all of this uncertainty, it is becoming clearer that we can no longer operate in "business as usual" mode. All communities in Georgia must take a closer look at how they use water and what efficiency measures can be adopted. At the same time, keeping development out of growing urban floodplains is more important than ever.

The statewide outdoor watering restrictions are only a good first step. Many more water saving strategies will have to be adopted to preserve water resources, especially in metro Atlanta. Local governments must now take water efficiency more seriously, working on leak detection and repairs and helping citizens to retrofit older inefficient plumbing. Businesses and industry must also do their part to reduce water use and all citizens can implement some easy water saving strategies at home. We cannot predict when the drought will end, but we can do our part to protect our rivers and aquifers at these critical times.

To learn more about the drought and ways to conserve water go to: www.georgiadrought.org and www.conservewatergeorgia.net.

SMOOTH SAILING FOR FLOATING CLASSROOM PROGRAM

It's smooth sailing now and for years to come for UCR's floating classroom on Lake Lanier and our highly successful partnership with **Elachee Nature Science Center**. With a new 40-foot catamaran capable of holding 49 passengers, we anticipate being able to bring about 2,500 students and teachers on board every year. See *Captain's Corner*, page 6.

Since 2000, our two organizations have taken school and com-

**HONDA
MARINE**

munity groups out on the lake on a pontoon boat named the *Chota Princess* for hands-on learning activities, including water quality sampling, chemistry experiments, watershed mapping, and wildlife observation. (The Cherokee Indians who lived in the mountains near the river, now known as the Chattahoochee, called it the Chota River.)

Custom-Built Boat Has More Power and a Glass Bottom

Last year, the U.S. Coast Guard issued new regulations on stability after several fatal pontoon boat accidents in New England, which ultimately restricted the number of passengers that we could carry on our boat. Although the *Chota Princess* has always operated safely, only 19 passenger could be accommodated, which significantly limited our education program.



Photo credit: The Times Gainesville/Robin Michener Nathan

Captain Harlan Trammell pilots the *Chota Princess II* on its inaugural trip on Lake Lanier. Students visit an island in Lake Lanier as part of the two-hour voyage of adventure.

The *Chota Princess II* has been on the lake since early May. "This is a step up", said Peter Gordon, Elachee's education director. "It's got a more powerful engine, so we can move quicker. We can get out into the deep water faster and get our teaching under way." Students also really like the boat's glass bottom, a new feature.

The boat was custom-built by **Corinthian Catamarans** of Tarpon Springs, Florida and its construction was overseen by UCR's longtime boat captain, **Harlan Trammell**. The vessel is two feet wider than the old pontoon boat and is powered by two 225-horsepower Honda motors.

Funding from New and Longtime Partners

A grant from the **Vasser Woolley Foundation** provided the initial funds for our campaign to raise \$160,000 for the new catamaran and its engines. Additional foundation support has come from the **Captain Planet Foundation**, **Walker and Marjory Rich Memorial Fund at SunTrust**, **McKinney-Geib Foundation**, and the **Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta**.

Honda Marine, longtime UCR supporter, provided one engine free and the other at their cost. The sale of our pontoon boat and several individual gifts should help us reach our goal in the coming months. **Aqualand Marina**, the world's largest marina, has generously committed to continue its in-kind donation of a boat slip on Lanier for the *Chota Princess II*.

The cost to UCR to operate the floating classroom program for 2,500 students typically runs about \$50,000 per year which has been supported by companies such as **AGL** and **Home Depot**; foundations such as the **Hampshire and Harland Foundations**; student fees; and other general revenue. The *Chota II* will be officially christened in the fall, although no date has yet been set.

If you would like to support our floating classroom program, please contact UCR Development Director, DJ Strickland, at djstrickland@ucriverkeeper.org or 404-352-9828/ext. 19. A gift of \$1000 will support a class of 50 students at our Lake Lanier Aquatic Learning Center.

River Matters

Afternoon Paddle with Lanier Canoe and Kayak Club August 25

Contact Connie Hagler at 770-287-7888 or <http://www.lkc.org/> or conhagler@aol.com

Moonlight Paddle with Lanier Canoe and Kayak Club August 31 & September 8

Contact Connie Hagler at 770-287-7888 or <http://www.lkc.org/> or conhagler@aol.com

UCR Patron Appreciation Dinner September 19

Contact Tammy Morrissey at 404-352-9828/12 or tmorrissey@ucriverkeeper.org

Afternoon Paddle with Lanier Canoe and Kayak Club September 22

Contact: Connie Hagler at 770-287-7888 or <http://www.lkc.org/> or conhagler@aol.com

Workshop for Adopt-A-Stream Volunteers and Environmental Educators September 28 & 29

Red Top Mountain State Park (9:00 - 5:00 each day)

To register, contact Petey Giroux at petey_giroux@dnr.state.ga.us or 404-675-1638 or Allison Hughes at allison_hughes@dnr.state.ga.us or 404 675-1635. Deadline: August 31.

17th Annual North Fulton Rivers Alive Cleanup and Festival September 29

Contact Laura Aikens at laikens@ci.roswell.ga.us or 770-641-3742.

Hike at Buck Shoals State Park on the Chattahoochee October 13

For information contact Gary Gaines at 770-654-5501; to register, e-mail Birgit Bolton at bbolton@ucriverkeeper.org.

Afternoon Paddle with Lanier Canoe and Kayak Club October 20

Contact: Connie Hagler at 770-287-7888 or <http://www.lkc.org/> or conhagler@aol.com

UPPER CHATTAHOOCHEE
RIVERKEEPER

Keeping Watch Over Our Waters

Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper Fund, Inc.
916 Joseph E. Lowery Blvd. NW, Suite 3
Atlanta, GA 30318-5280
404-352-9828

Non-Profit
Organization
US Postage Paid
Permit No. 3363
Atlanta, Georgia

Address Service Requested

