

WATER CRISIS DEMANDS NEW APPROACH TO METRO GROWTH

When the water supply crisis in north Georgia worsened last fall, state officials placed the blame for the shortages and low lake levels on Mother Nature, endangered species and stubborn federal agencies.

At the same time, these officials dismissed any role that water waste, overdevelopment and growth in metro Atlanta had played in depleting the small rivers and streams that flow through the region.

Asked by a reporter whether growth had anything to do with the water crisis, Governor Perdue is said to have testily replied, "Next question", as he stood beside what remained of West Point Lake last October. Georgia EPD Director Carol Couch has repeatedly said, "We have not consumed our way into this crisis."

Business-As-Usual Mentality

The business-as-usual mentality that has led to this water crisis remains alive and well among top decision-makers in Georgia—as it has for at least the past two decades. During this time, the number of people living in our state grew by 50 percent and metro Atlanta added about 100,000 new residents in each of the past seven years. Publicly available information about the effects of this growth on natural resources has failed to keep the same pace.

But, a growing number of Georgians don't buy the claims by state leaders that metro Atlanta's existence has a "minimal impact" on the Chattahoochee River downstream. Intuitively, these citizens realize that with millions of people living, drinking and flushing in the smallest urban

water supply watershed in the nation, there is a very real impact that is degrading their quality of life.

Water use data confirms the massive amount of water that is needed to keep metro Atlanta running—even without the additional 2.5 million people that growth boosters predict will arrive in the next two decades.

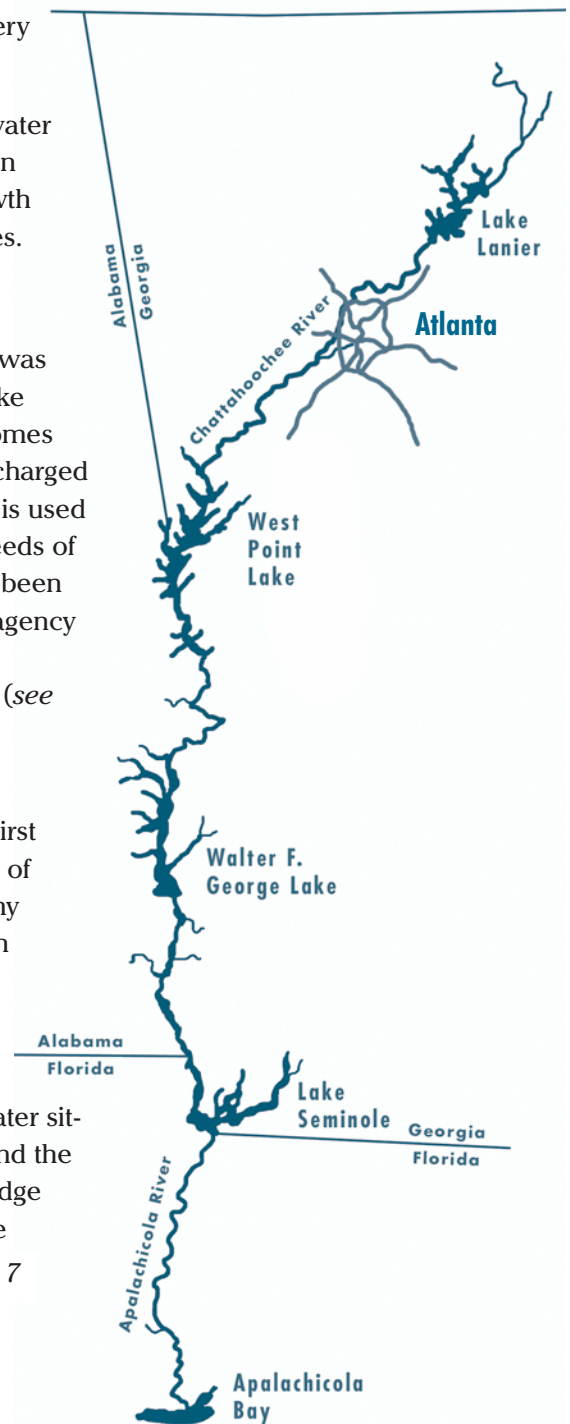
A Billion Gallons of Water Every Day

Early last fall, close to *one billion* gallons of water was required in the Chattahoochee downstream of Lake Lanier every single day to supply metro Atlanta homes and businesses and dilute the treated sewage discharged back into the river. An additional volume of water is used in the production of electric power to meet the needs of every Georgian (*see below*). These statistics have been confirmed by the Corps of Engineers, the federal agency that controls the flow of water in the river system through dam releases at the four major reservoirs (*see map*) to serve multiple water users.

With no rain and little flow from tributaries to the Chattahoochee, the only way to satisfy Atlanta's thirst every day has been to release significant amounts of water from Lake Lanier. This is a major reason why lake levels have continued to plummet, in addition to the impact from the direct, and increasing, withdrawals to supply growing communities around Lanier.

One the most frustrating aspects of our current water situation is the fact that the metro growth industry and the officials that they helped elect refuse to acknowledge that there is a limit to the amount of water that the

See **Water Crisis**, page 7



CONSERVE ENERGY TO CONSERVE WATER

The water crisis in Georgia has citizens wondering how to be more efficient in their water use to save every precious drop. Surprising to some is the fact that one of the most effective ways to conserve water is through energy conservation.



Courtesy of Southern Alliance for Clean Energy
Georgia Power's Plant Scherer, one of the largest single generating stations in the nation, is located on Lake Juliette north of Macon.

An article published last November in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* revealed that a family of four typically uses *three times* more water to power their home than they use to drink, shower, flush and for outdoor watering. It takes about 27,000 gallons of water to generate the electricity (1,100 kilowatt hours) used by the average family in a month—compared with

9,000 gallons used directly for household purposes.

The **Southern Alliance for Clean Energy** notes that every time we flip the light switch, the water is running. Therefore, using compact florescent light

bulbs, turning off lights and lowering your thermostat can do as much, or more, for the Chattahoochee and other stressed rivers as taking a shorter shower.

Proposed Water Plan Ignores Power Generation

Electric utilities are the single largest users of Georgia's waterways; in 2000, the last year for which data is available, power generation used 68% of all surface waters. Yet, the EPD water plan, currently under consideration by the legislature, largely ignores the link between our use of water and power generation. Neither do the long-term water plans adopted by the Metro Water Planning District in 2003 include strategies for managing water demand by the power industry.

Georgia's energy plan does make the connection. It says that the public "may indirectly consume as much water turning on the lights and running appliances as they directly use taking showers and watering lawns." A study paid for by the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority, the state's energy planning agency, found that aggressive statewide conservation could save 164 million gallons per day by 2015.

See www.ajc.com/metro/content/printedition/2007/11/18/power1118.html for the AJC article.

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

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REFLECTIONS

On a beautiful day last October, unsurprisingly cloudless, UCR's Captain Harlan Trammell, George Floyd and I took a trip from Morgan Falls Dam in Sandy Springs to the Hwy 16 Bridge near Newnan. We set out to accomplish two things: help George cover a section of the river during his journey from Lake Lanier to the Gulf (see page 5), and see the effect of the drought and excessive water demands.



Photo credit: Beiq Honarvar/
Atlanta Journal Constitution

The water was low and crystal-clear; you could see every rock on the river bottom and aquatic vegetation waving in the river currents. I thought, not for the first time, how lucky we in the metro Atlanta region are to have such an incredibly beautiful, if hard-working, river flowing through the heart of our region.

L-O-W water

As we motored in our jet boat, which needs just four inches of water to operate, Harlan had to take more care than usual to miss exposed rocks and logs. Near Cochran Shoals, upstream of the I-285 North Bridge, the water was so low that we had to get out of the boat and literally drag it down river for several hundred yards. It wouldn't be the last time that day that we had to get out and push.

Below Atlanta, we hit a rock and for the first time in our dozen years on the river, knocked a big hole in our boat. Quick action by Harlan and George resulted in a temporary fix with rags and we limped to a boat ramp where friends brought epoxy, allowing us to continue downstream to Newnan.

H-I-G-H water

A month after this river trip, a local television reporter asked me to meet her at the river, which she said was flowing out of its banks. At the Paces Mill in Cobb County, I stood speechless, watching seven feet of muddy water rushing downstream—released from Lake Lanier to meet water supply and quality, power generation and environmental needs.

If we learned anything last fall as river levels rocketed up and down, it is that our Chattahoochee's daily flow is controlled by man—through the releases from federal dams and the demands of an ever-increasing population. It also became clear that the Chattahoochee is at its limit in meeting metro water needs, unless current wasteful habits are abandoned.

Sally Bethea

DESPITE LOW LEVELS, UCR MEMBERS ENJOY A DAY AT THE LAKE

In mid-October, UCR members, staff and special guests gathered at Van Pugh Park on Lake Lanier to celebrate the christening of our new 40-foot catamaran, *Chota Princess II*, which began plying the waters of the lake last May captained by UCR's Harlan Trammell.

Sally Bethea and Peter Gordon of Elachee Nature Science Center each broke ceremonial bottles on the bow of the boat, which annually carries more than 2,000 students of all ages on board for journeys of adventure and education. The highly successful partnership program has been in operation since 2000.

Several donors who helped us purchase the new boat this year attended the event, including **John and Millie Seydel**, the **Dave Kirkpatrick Family**, and representatives of **Honda Marine**. Participants enjoyed beautiful weather, **Popeye's** fried chicken, specialty quesadillas and boat rides. Everyone also got to see first hand the remarkably low lake levels, as we walked down to the launch on a beach that would normally be 16 feet below water.



Photo credit: Kent Ruby

Representatives of Honda Marine (left) and the Kirkpatrick Family (center) join Corps Reservoir Manager Jonathan Davis, Sally Bethea, and Peter Gordon.



WELCOME TO NEW BOARD AND STAFF MEMBERS!

Last fall, we welcomed **Dionne Driscoll** to UCR's Board of Directors. As the SE Regional Regulatory Manager for CONTECH Stormwater Solutions, Dionne has brought important new technical and political expertise to our work. CONTECH, a UCR supporter, is a manufacturer of stormwater site technologies.



Dionne Driscoll

Dionne has a bachelor's degree in environmental geology, a masters degree in environmental science and a strong commitment to community service. While in Dallas, she served on the board of Keep Dallas Beautiful and played a leadership role in organizing Earth Day events. Dionne has been interested in water quality and conservation throughout her career and says, "Through the UCR Board, I can apply my education and practical experience toward a greater good."

In September, we had to say good-bye to **Birgit Bolton**, our longtime Programs Coordinator, who left UCR to take a job with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

in Atlanta. For more than eight years, Birgit was Sally's capable right-hand assistant who handled many key tasks from the management of our quarterly newsletter and website to water quality monitoring, our intern program and other important administrative activities. We miss her, but she's still working on water issues in her job new at the CDC!

Christina Cooper is our new Administrative Assistant with the challenging task of working as Sally's assistant and our database manager—in addition to helping UCR's development and outreach team and our general counsel! She has a bachelor's degree from Georgia State University and experience in the administrative and customer service industries in both academic and non-profit settings. After graduation, Christina served as the assistant for five active research professors at Duke University's Center for Human Genetics. Skilled at managing multiple projects at once and with great attention to detail, Christina is already an essential member of our team.



Christina Cooper

ILLEGAL DUMPING BY PORTABLE TOILET WASTE HAULER?

We received a HOTLINE call from a neighbor about a discolored stream near our Atlanta office that smelled disgustingly of sewage and chemicals. We investigated the area, confirmed that there was an ongoing spill, and contacted the state Environmental Protection Division (EPD) and the city of Atlanta to assist in the investigation. EPD and city staff decided that the source of the spill was a bus maintenance facility, believing that broken pipes in a maintenance bay were allowing untreated sewage to flow into a storm drain and then into the tributary to **Proctor Creek**. Upon further investigation, it now appears that neither the bus facility nor the city's sewers are the likely source of the contamination. Analysis of samples taken by the city has revealed that the discharge was consistent with portable toilet waste. It appears that the spill may have been the result of an illegal dumping by a portable toilet waste hauler who didn't want to pay the \$80 per 1000 gallons required to legally discharge into city sewers. We are actively monitoring the stream to stop any future dumping.

CORPS FINALLY TAKES ACTION TO RESTORE FORSYTH STREAM

Almost two years 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, including the draining and filling of 1,800 linear feet of an intermittent stream. Frustrated with the lack of enforcement by government agencies, UCR filed a notice of intent to sue Winmark under federal law last June, with pro bono assistance from Andrews, Knowles & Princenthal. No action was taken by the developer to fix the problems, so UCR moved to file a lawsuit in Federal Court. On the eve of filing, we learned that Winmark was in negotiations with the Corps of Engineers; they subsequently signed a settlement agreement that requires the complete restoration of the stream, however, no fines were imposed for the egregious violations. While we are frustrated that it has taken so long to resolve this situation and believe that fines should have been levied, we are pleased that the situation will finally be resolved and that this Chattahoochee tributary will be restored.

SEPTIC OR SEWER SYSTEMS FOR NEW METRO DEVELOPMENT?

You may be surprised by this statistic: one in every four homes in metro Atlanta sends its wastewater into a septic system. This represents a greater reliance on this kind of onsite treatment than in any other major city in the country. In suburban metro counties—Coveta, Forsyth, Hall, and Paulding—more than 50% of the new development is permitted using septic systems, usually a quicker and cheaper alternative for developers.

The use of properly installed and maintained septic systems makes sense in many rural settings, but not in a stressed, urbanizing watershed such as the upper Chattahoochee, where every drop counts.

Consumptive Water Loss

During times of drought when it is critical for rivers to receive return flows, septic systems do not return water in a timely manner. It can take years for water from a septic system to flow through the ground and reach the nearest surface water, and some studies show there can be a consumptive water loss of as much as 20% of the flow due to evaporation.

In high development areas, like the upper Chattahoochee, septic systems can limit downstream water supplies by tying up volumes of water that could be treated and put back into the natural hydrologic cycle on a more timely and reliable basis during low flow conditions. Sewers, on

SANDY SPRINGS AGREES TO PROTECT STREAM BUFFER AT SCHOOL SITE

We received a HOTLINE call about a stream buffer issue at a proposed Fulton County elementary school on Ison Road in the city of **Sandy Springs**. In 2004, prior to the city's incorporation, Fulton County determined that there was a regulated stream onsite, triggering buffer setback requirements to protect water quality. Once it became an "issuing authority", Sandy Springs *reversed* the prior determination by the county, allowing the stream to be filled. Along with other organizations and concerned citizens, UCR contacted Sandy Springs to express our concern that they had disagreed with the county and that the stream would be impacted. In response, Sandy Springs invited EPD to investigate the site. The state agreed with the original Fulton County determination, as did UCR technical staff, and concluded that Sandy Springs had wrongly reversed the determination. The result is that school construction cannot occur within the protected buffer, unless a variance is obtained from the state. Sandy Springs has agreed to abide by this decision.

HELEN LANDOWNER VIOLATES BUFFER RULES AGAIN!

As mentioned in our last *RiverChat*, EPD issued a consent order to **Terry Sims** for violating buffer laws at his **Cool River Tubing** business in the city of Helen. Sims was ordered to pay a \$2,500 fine, remove a set of concrete stairs leading into the river and remove about 1,000 sq. ft of concrete patio. Even while Sims was negotiating the terms of this consent order, he was in the process of encroaching in the buffer on a *second* piece of property upstream of Helen. In this case, he used heavy equipment in the stream to alter flow and create a waterfall without the required state issued buffer variance or a permit from the Corps of Engineers. When regulatory personnel conducted a site visit, Sims was told to cease all work and to contact the Corps, however, during a subsequent site visit, the state EPD noted that Sims had gone ahead and placed rocks in the stream. In response to this blatant disregard for the buffer regulations, EPD is in the process of negotiating a consent order which is anticipated to require a large fine and site remediation.

the other hand, return treated wastewater to rivers much more quickly.

As water managers in metro Atlanta seek more efficient ways to use water, they are evaluating the possibility of restricting the use of septic systems in new developments. Developers, however, are fighting any such limits in favor of keeping their costs low, at the expense of those downstream.

Septic systems affect how we meet our obligation to send clean water to our downstream neighbors. Returning high quality water to rivers and streams is particularly critical during times of drought because large amounts of stream flow come from those returns. If we want to continue to supply water to all of our residents now and into the future, we must re-evaluate how we use septic systems. *For more information on septic systems, go to*

http://www.garivers.org/gawater/pdf%20files/GWC%20Septic-Water%20Quantity2.pdf



One in every four homes in metro Atlanta uses a septic system.

River Stewardship

UCR AND ALLIED WASTE TACKLE LANIER TRASH

As the level of Lake Lanier dropped last fall, previously submerged trash began to emerge along the lake's new shoreline—ancient beer cans, picnic tables, tires, sunglasses, watches and even a kitchen sink and a small motor boat.

In partnership with **Allied Waste Industries** and sev-

eral of its contractors, UCR took on the challenge of removing an overwhelming amount of trash along two miles of shoreline at Lake Lanier Islands.

On a beautiful Saturday morning in December, sixty volunteers pulled more than *four tons* of trash from the edge of



Allied Waste experts pull a motor boat submerged since the 1970s from the lake.

the lake, using essential equipment that included several ATVs with trailers, large pickup trucks and a boat pushing a trash barge. Families with children joined experienced waste handlers and UCR volunteers to get the job done.

The biggest challenge was the small boat and motor that had apparently been submerged since the 1970s. It took eight men, a Jeep Wrangler with a wench, a dually pickup truck

and an ATV with a trailer to pull the boat out and place it into one of the two 30 cubic yard roll-offs provided by Allied, both of which were filled by the end of the cleanup. The hard work was followed by a barbecue lunch provided by Allied for all the volunteers.



RICK MARTON: TIRELESS LAKE VOLUNTEER

After retiring from United Airlines about ten years ago, **Rick Marton** and his wife Jane moved to Lake Lanier. Already a Coast Guard Auxiliary member, Rick joined the local Auxiliary Chapter on Lanier and soon found that a lot of his "free" time was being focused on lake-related activities.



Rick Marton on his famous "trash barge".

When UCR launched our floating classroom program in 2000, Rick began serving as a substitute captain. A year later, when we began our lake water quality monitoring program, Captain Rick jumped right in to help out as a

volunteer. Initially, he provided the use of his personal boat and spent many long summer days collecting water quality data with UCR staff.

Rick's Trash Barge

Rick began participating in the annual Lanier Shore Sweep because he hated seeing a trashy lake. For several years, he captained the *Chota Princess I* and helped remove massive amounts of Styrofoam from the lake. In 2006, when UCR decided to replace the *Chota Princess* with a new catamaran, Rick began searching for another vessel suitable for hauling trash—one that could be used year round. He finally found an old pontoon boat to serve as his "trash barge" and approached several businesses and organizations for support.

Despite being swamped by a careless boater during one of the early cleanups, Captain Rick has been out on the lake at least eight times in the two months following September's Shore Sweep. He's already decided that the barge is too small and doesn't hold enough weight to be able to haul the heavy Styrofoam floats and other water logged debris. So don't be surprised if you find Rick starting another campaign to acquire a larger, sturdier trash barge.



NATURE CENTER TO OPEN NEW DISCOVERY CENTER

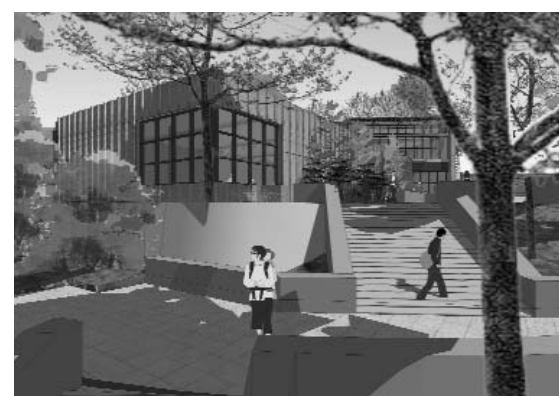
The Chattahoochee Nature Center (CNC), once known solely as an educational facility for children, is expanding its mission to become the interpretative center for the Chattahoochee River with the construction of a new, state-of-the-art Discovery Center.

The 10,000 square foot exhibit hall and museum will help visitors learn how to protect the Chattahoochee watershed and serve as a portal of information about other groups working to protect the river. According to CNC Director Ann Bergstrom, "There has been a long-standing need for this centralized place of information, education and exploration."

Hearing and Feeling the Natural World

One purpose of the Discovery Center is to focus on water conservation. Other goals include promoting connections between the environment and the community related to the health of the river, providing a place where visitors can hear and feel the natural world, and inspiring change in visitors by communicating actions that advance a sustainable future.

The two-level LEED-certified building will house hands-on exhibits depicting the three separate



SPECIAL/Lord, Aeck & Sargeant

areas of our watershed (river, wetland and forest) and a 65-person theater. The Discovery Center will help expand the CNC's audience with a new series of programs and events geared toward adults. The smaller, existing Discovery Center will become an open air pavilion and event space. UCR has already been asked to advise CNC on several of the exhibits.

The new building is scheduled to break ground in February 2008 with an estimated completion date of April 2009. For more information about the CNC's work or to make a donation, go to www.chattnaturecenter.com.



Wednesday April 2nd and Thursday April 3rd

The Wild & Scenic Environmental Film Festival has traveled to over 50 US cities since 2004, and thanks to Patagonia we are bringing it to Atlanta. With a growing public awareness for the environment, the festival aims to increase this groundswell through inspiring and educational films which we hope will motivate people to go out and make a difference in their community and around the world.

More information coming soon. Contact Tammy Morrissey at tmorrissey@ucriverkeeper.org.

DISCOVER THE CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER IN 2008!

In partnership with the National Park Service (NPS), UCR has developed a new *River Discovery Series* of paddling trips for the summer of 2008. These trips are designed for beginners and advanced paddlers alike and are meant to be a fun and educational way to get to know the river.

All together, the five consecutive trips cover 37 miles of the river within the Chattahoochee River National Recreation



Photo credit: Tom Wilson

The Great Blue Heron is native to our watershed.

Area—from Bowman's Island to Paces Mill. For each segment, an NPS guide will acquaint paddlers with key features of that part of the river. Although the NPS has

been a crucial partner in UCR's *Back to the Chattahoochee River Race and Festival* for many years, this is the first time we have collaborated on a paddling series.

"The National Park Service is very excited to share these river experiences and help individuals and families discover the beauty and magic of the Chattahoochee River," says longtime NPS ranger Jerry Hightower.

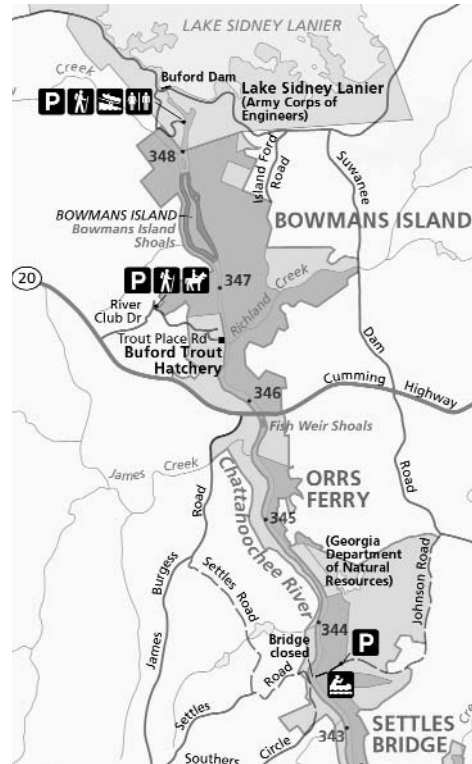
Great Blue Heron, Red-tailed Hawks and Osprey

Participants will have the opportunity to witness the variations in the river and the wildlife that depend upon it, including trout, great blue heron, red-tailed hawks, and an occasional river otter and osprey. Guides will also point out historic places such as Settles Bridge, Native American sites, and the site of the Federal forces outflanking the Confederate Army.

Although any one segment can be traveled separately, the series has been designed as one big adventure and a

discount (and special gift) will be provided for those who sign up for all five trips. Participants should bring a picnic lunch... and a camera!

The registration fee for individual segments is \$30 for UCR members and \$35 for non-members. Space is limited to 30 people per trip, so please review the schedule below and make your plans early. For more information, visit www.chattahoochee.org or call 404.352.9828 x12. Registration opens April 1.



Our first River Discovery Series trip will travel from Buford Dam to Settles Bridge.

River Discovery Series Paddle Trips

- Segment 1: Buford Dam to Settles Bridge**
Saturday, June 21, 2008 (5 Miles)
- Segment 2: Settles Bridge to Abbotts Bridge**
Saturday, July 12, 2008 (8 Miles)
- Segment 3: Abbotts Bridge to Jones Bridge**
Saturday, August 2, 2008 (7 Miles)
- Segment 4: Jones Bridge to Island Ford/Historic Hewlett Lodge**
Saturday, August 9, 2008 (8 Miles)
- Segment 5: Morgan Falls Dam to Paces Mill**
Saturday, August 23, 2008 (9 Miles)



MAKING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE MOUNTAINS AND THE SEA

George Floyd has personal ties to both ends of the Chattahoochee River. He lives on Lake Lanier most of the time, but grew up in Apalachicola, Florida, where his grandfather was a sea captain in the 1850s. He has acquired several properties in the area in recent years and is helping establish a local maritime museum.



A shrimp boat follows the Apalachicola River as it flows into the Bay.

Photo courtesy of Apalachicola Riverkeeper

For the past decade, George has pursued his passion to help people make the connection between the upper, middle and lower portions of the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee River Basin—from north Georgia to the Gulf. He has funded numerous educational and inspirational projects, including a special CD by Florida environmentalist and songwriter Dale Crider and a series about the river that was aired on Florida Public Radio.

On the shores of Lake Lanier, near Buford Dam, George purchased **The Dam Store**, which offers canoe and kayak trips on the Chattahoochee for only \$10. George is not in the business to make money from the river, rather to get people out on this amazing waterway and learn how to

love and protect her.

Low Water Levels Bring Challenges

In early October, just as the drought and water shortages were accelerating, George and several friends put their kayaks in the icy water below Buford Dam and embarked on an adventure and exploration trip downstream. Destination: Gulf of Mexico.

Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper joined George at Morgan Falls

Dam in our river patrol boat to carry him on a 50-mile segment of the river to Newnan. Along the way, we had to get out and push the boat through several areas of extreme low water and, for the first time ever, we hit rock bottom, literally, and put a hole in our boat. Luckily, we were able to repair the boat and continue on downstream, enjoying the crystal clear water and a beautiful fall day. See *Reflections*, page 2.

George made it to Apalachicola by early November, in time to enjoy the annual Seafood Festival and celebrate the river system that sustains millions of people and abundant wildlife.



Welcome to Edward Sutherland!

UCR is fortunate to have a new intern, Edward Sutherland, for eight months through June 2008. Edward received his BSC in Geography from the University of Birmingham, UK. Having grown up near Yorkshire Dales National Park, he loves outdoor activities like bicycling, hiking and canyoning and is passionate about protecting these environments for others to enjoy. Edward is helping UCR with water sampling and assisting our Watershed Protection Specialist, Jason Ulseth, with various water quality issues primarily related to development and soil erosion.

Since last summer, UCR has been concerned with questionable proceedings regarding the proposed Crossroads shopping center development in Forsyth County, which ultimately led to our filing suit against the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD).

Last year, the developers (**Crossroads@400 LLC** and **Day Retail**) applied for permits to pipe 745 feet of a stream on the Crossroads property. The protections applying to the stream would be dependent upon whether it was designated as an "intermittent" or "ephemeral" stream by EPD. While an intermittent stream flows in a well-defined channel during some, but not all, of the year, an ephemeral stream flows only in wet weather. The "ephemeral" stream designation results in fewer regulations.

In April 2007, the Corps of Engineers conducted a site visit and through expert staff evaluation determined that the stream in question was intermittent. In August, EPD staff came to the same conclusion after conducting a full scientific evaluation of the site. The developer's consultant, however, had determined that the stream was "ephemeral" and Forsyth County agreed.

Ignoring the findings of state experts and the Corps, EPD Director Carol Couch upheld the county's determination. The project was allowed to proceed with Dr. Couch issuing a § 401 Water Quality Certification under the Clean Water Act for the project on August 22, 2007.

EPD Reverses Its Position

Why the reversal in position by EPD? This project, a commercial strip center associated with a Super Wal-Mart, has been the subject of much political attention, including phone calls and meetings with EPD (documented in state files) by former **state Sen. Clint Day**, **state Sen. Judson Hill** (associated with Day Retail), **Cong. Lynn**



Sign posted in front of the proposed development site along Browns Bridge Road in Forsyth County.

Westmoreland and **DOT Board Chair Mike Evans**, a part-owner of the development project. The intermittent stream that Crossroads proposed to pipe is an unnamed tributary to Baldrige Creek, which flows into Lake Lanier. The developer could not receive a 404 permit from the Corps to pipe the stream until Crossroads had obtained a 401 Certification from the Director of EPD.

It appears that Dr. Couch ignored the scientific find-

ings of her staff and may have responded to political pressure—despite the fact that it is illegal for EPD to delegate state waters and related buffer determinations to local governments. With the help of pro bono counsel from Steve O'Day and Andy Thompson of Smith, Gambrell and Russell, UCR filed an appeal of Director Couch's Water Quality Certification for the Crossroads project last fall.

Developer Changes Attitude

Within a week of our legal filing, we were contacted by the developers to discuss the situation and were pleased to note a significant, positive change of attitude. They proposed going through the appropriate permitting process, acknowledging that the stream is intermittent, and met with Dr. Couch. Following this meeting, Dr. Couch withdrew the 401 Certification. UCR has had further meetings with the developer and its consultant about additional design concerns at the site. They have agreed to make the requested changes to better protect nearby streams.

Although we are very pleased with the outcome at this specific development site, we had hoped to obtain a judicial ruling that would establish a precedent that EPD cannot delegate such important water quality decisions to local governments. We are aware of numerous situations throughout the state where EPD has allowed cities and counties to determine whether or not a stream would be protected by Georgia's buffer regulations.



UCR's Boat Captain Harlan Trammell.

CAPTAIN'S CORNER

LOW WATER MEANS RISKY BOATING AND GREAT FISHING

With a record-setting drought in full swing, boaters and fishermen are learning new ways to fish and boat. In the lakes, low water levels are bringing dangerous obstacles near or above the surface. Trees, rocks, and trash can cause severe damage to props, lower units, hulls and transducers.

The best way to avoid these dangers is to have good charts and/or a GPS Chartplotter, locate the original river and creek channels, and stay over those channels. Trees did not grow in the river channels, so clearer routes can be navigated there. Extra care must be taken, however, in order to actually get out to the channels. Be prepared to adjust your routes to those channels as levels continue to fall, and operate at idle speeds only outside of the channels.

Don't Let Your Boat Get Landlocked!

Another word of advice: don't let your boat get landlocked. UCR's 40-foot catamaran is on the lake for the long haul, since travel lifts are no longer in service. I have had to move her twice, so far, to avoid land-locking, but will keep

her wet and running at all times. Lack of use is a boat's silent killer. You need to run your boat at least once per month or follow long-term storage instruction or winterization procedures from your manufacturer.

Make sure you check your lubrication points and cables often, so that they don't freeze from the rust that tends to sneak in when you don't use the boat. Neglect is a boat's biggest enemy. You need to have your boat in a level environment with cooling water in order to run it. Without running it (or prepping it for long-term storage), your boat could suffer irreparable damage to the hull, underwater gear, and engine.

If you can get out in the boat, or just fish from the shore, you'll find that the fishing is absolutely outstanding with fish more concentrated due to lack of water in lakes. River fishing has been excellent as the water is very clear from the lack of storm runoff. Bring plenty of tackle as you will lose some on the snags. Your same tactics for lake or river fishing still all work—you'll just catch many more fish!

WATER CRISIS

Continued from page 1

Chattahoochee can supply and still meet responsibilities to downstream users. When the 16-county Metro Water Planning District developed its water plans in 2003, it failed to take these downstream requirements into consideration in projecting future water availability.

Steps to Resolve the Water Crisis

In order to resolve the current and future water crises in north Georgia, we need to do three things, at a minimum: maximize the use of existing water supplies, minimize our water use, and restore the natural systems—the watersheds that protect our water resources, especially during droughts.



Photo credit: Tom Wilson

Low water levels at Gainesville marina on Lake Lanier.

As streams are piped, floodplains filled and hard surfaces established in a watershed, the way that water flows over and under the land is significantly altered. Every single day in metro Atlanta, 55 acres of impervious surface is constructed for roads, roof tops and parking lots. These hydrological changes affect not only the quality of the water downstream, but also the quantity available during droughts.

One way to maximize existing water supplies is to restore storage capacity in existing reservoirs. With lake levels at all-time lows, there are opportunities to dredge these impoundments that have been filled with eroded soil and sediment over the years. Also, there are 15 existing flood control reservoirs in the drought area that were built by the federal government for agricultural purposes, but could be used for community water supply.

Minimizing water use through conservation of both water and energy use in metro Atlanta will yield more than one hundred million gallons of water each day. The most productive efficiency programs include:

- leak detection and repair,
- tiered conservation rates for all water users structured to affect demand,
- incentives and mandates to retrofit old plumbing fixtures,
- xeriscaping and permanent daytime outdoor watering restrictions
- restrictions on the use of septic systems in urbanizing areas,
- incentives to reduce impervious surfaces and plant more trees,
- incentives to cut energy demand.

Metro Atlanta can continue its economic growth into the near-term future, but not unless significant changes are made to the way it grows. Failure to change is no longer an option.



LOCAL GOVERNMENTS LEAD CHARGE ON WATER CONSERVATION

As we grapple with north Georgia's water crisis, some of our local leaders and thousands of citizens are finding creative and measurable ways to use water more efficiently. These success stories are important examples of the "head out of the sand" attitude that we need to see from other local, regional and state leaders to improve the management of our limited water resources.

Leak Repair and Detection

With the oldest drinking water system in the metro region, the city of Atlanta has had an uphill battle to detect and repair all of its water leaks. But, years before the current drought, Mayor Shirley Franklin decided to invest significant funds to upgrade her drinking water system. Her billion dollar decision was on top of the billions of dollars needed to comply with the federal consent decree governing the upgrade of the city sewer system. Thanks to the Mayor's leadership, the city leads other jurisdictions in reducing its leakage rate. Now, Atlanta loses 14%, as compared with 20% when the program was initiated six years ago—saving millions of gallons of water per day.

Plumbing Rebates and Retrofit on Resale

More than one million homes in metro Atlanta still use old-fashioned toilets that require 2-3 times more water to flush than low-flow toilets that have been required in new homes since 1993. Replacing these old fixtures could result in a water savings of close to 20 million gallons of water per day in the 16-county Metro Water Planning District.

While the District considered a regional rebate voucher program last fall, some local governments led by example, adopting and implementing their own rebate programs as an incentive for homeowners to replace their old plumbing. These local governments include Cobb, DeKalb, and Paulding

Counties and the cities of Gainesville, Marietta and Austell.

Another way to efficiently replace old water-wasting toilets is to require them on the resale of homes. Twice, the real estate industry has defeated retrofit legislation at the State Capitol, even though the typical \$450 investment in new toilets prior to closing can be recouped in just a few years through lower water bills.

At least one local government has considered its own retrofit on resale legislation. DeKalb County CEO Vernon Jones actively promoted an ordinance to mandate retrofit on resale countywide in December. That measure is currently written to require retrofits before water service can be restored to newly purchased homes.

Multi-Pronged Approach in Douglas County

In Douglas County, known for its progressive water management, local leaders implemented an outdoor water ban last July—three months earlier than the rest of the region—and aggressively enforced the measure.

Meters just for irrigation were shut off and a 90-day moratorium on re-zonings for new development was adopted. The county also became the first to adopt the model conservation rate ordinance promoted by the Metro Water Planning District. While other metro governments have adopted conservation rate ordinances, most of these measures are much weaker than the model and will not substantially affect water demand through pricing disincentives.

Water conservation is no longer optional for metro Atlanta, which will either reduce its waste of water resources or stop growing. The smart money would be on the first choice.



Cartoon courtesy of Mike Luckovich



6TH ANNUAL RIVER RACE & FESTIVAL SCHEDULED FOR JUNE 14, 2008!

Whether you're a paddler or a festival-goer, you can join your friends and neighbors at UCR's annual festive celebration of river appreciation! Organized by UCR, National Park Service, Fulton County and the city of Roswell, the race starts at Garrard Landing Park at Holcomb Bridge Road and finishes at Roswell's Riverside Park—the venue for the festival, music and awards.



The race is a family event with recreational categories for most ages and abilities following an 8-mile course. The race is open to both solo and tandem paddlers. It is also an open competitive race and part of the Georgia Flat Water Series (see details to the right). Larry Castillo, a veteran winner of the Flat Water Series, will again serve as our Race Official.

Registration Opens April 1

Race registration will open April 1. You can register online, download a registration form at www.chattahoochee.org, or visit a local outfitter for a brochure. Be sure to register early to ensure your spot as registration will close when we reach boat capacity.

The festival will have something for everyone. And standing on the banks of the Chattahoochee watching hundreds of boats race to the finish line is an experience you won't want to miss. But that's not all... you can enjoy live music, great food, activities for the kids and over 50 exhibits representing environmental organizations in Atlanta. *To be an environmental exhibitor at the festival, contact Tammy Morrissey at tmorrissey@ucriverkeeper.org or*

404.352.9828. Visit www.chattahoochee.org for more information.

Georgia Flat Water Series

The Flat Water Series is a group of paddling races throughout Georgia; the results of each race contribute to a point total of the whole series. Awards are based on points earned for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place. You must participate in 4 of 6 races to be eligible for an award. Awards are presented at the *Back to the Chattahoochee Race and Festival* in June, as well as the other races.

March 22: Lula Bridge at Lake Lanier
Visit www.lckc.org

April 5: Canoochee River Race
Visit www.ogeecheecanoocheerriverkeeper.org

April 26: Oostanaula River Race
Visit www.coosa.org

June 14: Back to the Chattahoochee Race
Visit www.chattahoochee.org

Aug 23: Savannah RiverFest
Visit www.savannahriverkeeper.org

Oct 13: Suwannee Challenge
Email rodbprice@hotmail.com

For information about the Series, contact Larry Castillo at lcastillo@mindspring.com or 404.406.7367.



River Matters

Adopt-A-Stream Workshops
February 15-16
Hall County
Contact judith@elachee.org or 770.535.1976

Georgia River Network Conference
February 22-23
Berry College, Rome
Visit www.garivers.org

Environmental Education Alliance Conference
March 14-16
Unicoi State Park
Visit www.eealliance.org

Beetle Battle Paddle
March 29
A benefit to help save the hemlock trees
Visit www.canoegeorgia.com or call 706-864-7117.

Wild and Scenic Film Festival
April 2-3
Contact Tammy Morrissey at tmorrissey@ucriverkeeper.org

River Adventure
April 19
Flatwater Paddle on Lanier from Lula Bridge to Clarks Bridge
Contact Tammy Morrissey at tmorrissey@ucriverkeeper.org

Sweetwater 420 Festival
April 19-20
Sweetwater Brewery's annual Earth Day celebration
Candler Park
Visit www.sweetwater420fest.com

EARTH DAY
April 22
Visit www.earthday.net

Sunset in the Swamp - Marsh Meanders
Wednesdays in May
Johnson Ferry South, Chattahoochee National Rec. Area
Contact the Island Ford Visitor Contact Station at 678-538-1200

12th Annual River Revival
May 15
The Park Tavern at Piedmont Park
Contact Tammy Morrissey at tmorrissey@ucriverkeeper.org

6th Annual Back to the Chattahoochee River Race and Festival
June 14
Contact Tammy Morrissey at tmorrissey@ucriverkeeper.org

Paddle Georgia
June 20-27
Flint River
Visit www.garivers.org



12th Annual River Revival - The Party Continues in 2008!

Last May, about 400 guests danced, ate and celebrated together on a breezy spring night at Park Tavern in Midtown Atlanta. In 2008, we plan to exceed your expectations, as we welcome old friends and greet new ones at the 12th Annual River Revival. Join UCR Staff and friends on May 15 at Park Tavern at Piedmont Park! Stay tuned... details to follow.



Keeping Watch Over Our Waters

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404-352-9828

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