

RIVER CHAT

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF UPPER CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVERKEEPER
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WITHERING DROUGHT HIGHLIGHTS WATER MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS

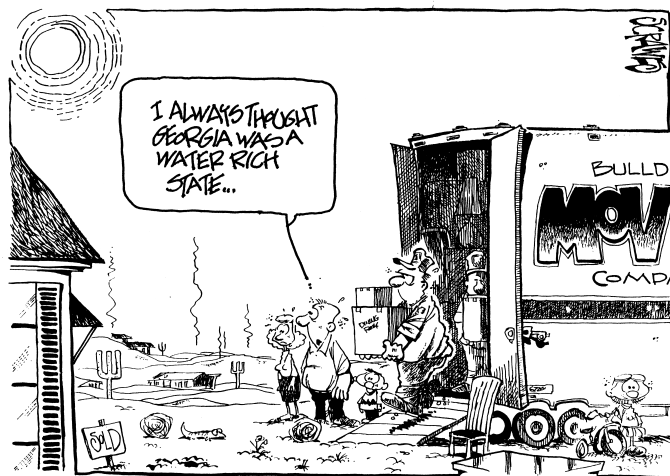
Water, or the lack thereof, has recently been thrust into the spotlight in Georgia. The current drought plaguing the state has made Georgians aware of just how stressed our water supplies are, particularly in areas where demand has outstripped supply.

Images of dry streambeds, exposed lakeshores and brown lawns, coupled with increasingly stringent municipal water use restrictions, have elevated public awareness of drought, and water supply issues in general, to a new level in Georgia. Now in its third year, the drought has also exposed inadequacies in the State of Georgia's plans and policies for dealing with drought.

An examination of recent regional climate trends suggests that this drought, like the others before it, will eventually pass, and our rivers and aquifers will be replenished. The ensuing rains will also likely wash away the keen public awareness raised by the drought. Yet, many of the issues illuminated by this drought will remain pressing and must be resolved if Georgia is ever to successfully manage its water for the long-term.

Economic and Environmental Impacts of Drought

Immediate, direct impacts of this drought are real and significant. Economic losses to the agricultural sector, not yet fully calculated, are already serious enough to warrant disaster status for *all* of Georgia's 159 counties (i.e., 30% or greater loss in one or more agricultural commodity). One of the areas hardest hit by the



drought is southwestern Georgia, and the Flint River Basin in particular, where some of Georgia's most intensive agricultural activities rely on irrigation water from the Flint River system, the flows in which are at record lows.

Water-based recreation, especially at Georgia's popular reservoirs, is suffering too. As many as a dozen public boat ramps at Lake Lanier are closed due to low lake levels. For every boat that cannot be launched into the Lake, a ripple effect is created throughout the local, and by extension, regional economy; fewer people visit the area and utilize associated services. These and other impacts on the Lake's economy could persist if we receive rainfall insufficient to replenish the Lake.

The drought has taken its toll on the natural environment as well. Though further removed from the public eye, drought impacts on fish and wildlife, both direct and indirect, are mounting. Drought, like fire and flood, is a natural ecosystem

See Water Management Problems for Georgia, page 7

THE RIVER MATTERS

For more info check out our event calendar on www.chattahoochee.org

- | | |
|--|---|
| Patron Appreciation Dinner at Canoe Restaurant | September 7 |
| Canoe Trip: Chattahoochee River below Atlanta
Call 404-352-9828 (24) for details. | September 16 |
| Citizen Soil Watch Workshops
West Atlanta Watershed Alliance (City of Atlanta)
Henderson Mill Watershed Alliance (DeKalb County)
Call 404-352-9828 (16) for details. | September 9
September 26 |
| Adopt-a-Stream Workshop - LaGrange
Call 404-352-9828 (17) for details. | October |
| 2000 Apalachicola/Flint/Chat River Summit
Columbus, GA. Call 334-687-9755 for details. | October 2-3 |
| Canoe Trip: McIntosh Reserve to Franklin | October 28-29 |



ALL IS BORN OF WATER;
ALL IS SUSTAINED BY WATER.
Goothe

CANOE THE RIVER SOUTH OF ATLANTA

September 16
~ members trip ~

Reflections

It took an environmental disaster to remind us that our neighborhoods, shopping centers and industrial districts are connected by more than just roads. In July, the *entire* 18-mile length of Nancy Creek was sterilized by a discharge of highly chlorinated water from a treatment plant and several swimming pools. At least 15,000 fish and other creatures died in the toxic, drought-stressed waters (see page 6).

Rising in a largely industrial area near Doraville and in close proximity to DeKalb County's Scott Candler Filter Plant, Nancy Creek travels south-westerly under I-285, draining much of Dunwoody, then past Marist School, through Chastain Memorial Park, and dozens of residential areas to its confluence with Peachtree Creek.

Landowners adjacent to Nancy Creek watched in horror last month as dead fish floated past their homes and businesses. In Sunderland Subdivision, **Kathryn Gable**, a member of Riverkeeper and Friends of Nancy Creek, called state officials, collected dead fish and spoke with the media. At Frog Hollow Camp, 8 miles downstream, **Lisa Haverty** used the incident to alert her campers to the need to protect our urban streams. Employees at Atlanta's Water Intake near Peachtree Creek noted dead fish drifting out into the river.

Having grown up on a tributary to Nancy Creek, this event was especially troubling to me. I imagined how I would have felt, as a small child, to see this flood of death moving down my creek, past my home.

Accidents do happen, and the state is still investigating the specific causes of this disaster and will undoubtedly be taking enforcement actions. But, this event reminds me that there is an attitude among some of our decision-makers that Atlanta's urban streams don't really matter-that even if they could be cleaned up, it's just not worth the effort. Perhaps the people along Nancy Creek can help these leaders make the connection.

Sally Bethel
RIVERKEEPER

1ST CLASSIC GOLF TOURNAMENT HELD AT E-FRIENDLY CLUB

On June 27, Riverkeeper's First Annual Golf Tournament and Clinic was held at the environmentally-friendly **Golf Club of Georgia** in Alpharetta located near Big Creek. Eighty-eight golfers participated in the tournament raising \$30,000 for Riverkeeper. With its wildlife habitat, wetlands protection and water quality and conservation programs, the Club was a perfect match for Riverkeeper's new event.

Chip Drury and **Maureen Darcey** chaired the golf clinic held before the tournament. The tournament's success can be attributed to a *very* active steering committee including **Rob Adamson, Bob Biebel, Michael Coles, Maureen Darcey, Joe DeLany, Chip Drury, Bert Ellis, Taylor Glover, Tom Lennon, Curry Julian May, Chris Means, Robby Miller, Rutherford Seydel, Robert Shuford, Jerry Wickliffe** and **Keith Wood**.

Title Sponsor for the tournament was AllConnect. **Hole Sponsors:** Taylor Glover & Art Rollins, The DeLany Company, Lawson, Davis, Pickren & Seydel, Encubate Holdings LLC, iXL Holdings, Visy Recycling, Planning Technologies, Inc., Restore Health Group, CareData.com. **Team Sponsors:** NB Financial Group, National Museum of Patriotism, BeBetter, Inc., Scientific Games International, Longstreet Publishing, Siemens Westinghouse Power Corp., Journey's Unlimited, Breckenridge Group, Inc., iXL Holdings, Merrill Lynch. **Participating Sign Sponsors:** The North Highland



Golf and Riverkeeper supporters Beau Turner, Lee Pritchard, George McKerrow and Rutherford Seydel

Company, PriceWaterhouse Coopers, Seattle's Best Coffee, Fishbone Restaurant and Gagwear. This year's Hole-In-One Sponsor was Ed Voyles Chrysler-Plymouth in Marietta.

Tournament Winners: Gross Champion's First Place team sponsored by BeBetter, Inc., Keith Wood, Bill Baer, Mark Burden and Carty Davis. Net Champion's First Place team sponsored by iXL was Jerry Arehart, Rick Buff, James Savarese and Tom Lance. Closest to the Hole winners were Bill Voyles and Mark Teichner and Longest Drive winner was Robert Noble. Special thanks to the steering committee, sponsors, The Golf Club of Georgia and the *many* volunteers who made this first-time event a huge success. We look forward to next year's tournament.

LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD Staff and Board Changes

The past six months have seen some name changes for both Riverkeeper's staff and Board of Directors. At the end of 1999, three long-supportive directors rotated off our board after six years of hard work advancing the protection of the Chattahoochee River - **David Pope, Bob Biebel**, and **Dr. Gail Marshall**. In recent months, we have welcomed three new board directors - **Billy Hall** with Newfields, **Dr. Judy Meyer** with UGA's Institute of Ecology, and **Chrissy Sapp** with TBS - each of whom bring special much-needed talents to our hard-working board.

Staffwise, we started the new year with **Sandy Layton** who returned to us as Riverkeeper's Special Events Coordinator. **Birgit Bolton**, our first-ever administrative and legal assistant, came on board to help organize our executive director and general counsel, and shortly thereafter, **Kristi Rose**, replaced Dana Poole as Riverkeeper's Director of Watershed Education and Monitoring. More recently, **Pam Davee** has joined the staff as Development Director. **Kristin Costley** was hired to help execute a new grant in Riverkeeper's Headwaters Office, focused on source water protection.



TROUT STREAM COULD BE DAMMED FOR SUBDIVISION

Blue Creek, a secondary trout stream in **White County** that flows into the Chattahoochee will be dammed to create a 95-acre lake for a residential development, if **Blue Creek Partners** secures state and federal permits. This project would impact 17,530 linear feet of stream and 14.4 acres of wetlands. In its application to the Corps of Engineers, the developers *failed* to acknowledge that Blue Creek is a state-designated trout stream. The Environmental Protection Division (EPD) *proposed* removing this tributary from its list of trout streams, which would eliminate protections relating to temperature and dissolved oxygen levels, however, final approval has not been granted. Riverkeeper alerted the state to this discrepancy and EPD has subsequently refused to certify the permit until water quality issues are resolved. Both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. EPA have recommended *denial* of the permit for this project for a number of important reasons, including loss of rare wetland habitat by dam creation, potential water quality violations and the lack of alternative evaluation. Riverkeeper will continue to monitor this project and oppose efforts to de-list Blue Creek as a state-designated trout stream.

GEORGIA POWER SEEKS NEW WATER WITHDRAWAL PERMIT

Georgia Power seeks to double its water withdrawal from the Chattahoochee River at **Plant Wansley** (eight miles upstream of West Point Lake in Heard County) from 60 million gallons per day (mgd) to 120 mgd per day. Special conditions in the permit would allow Georgia Power to withdraw 120 mgd when flows in the Chattahoochee at Wansley are *1190 cubic feet per second (cfs) or greater*, and allow Georgia Power to withdraw only 60 mgd when flows are between 1100 and 1189 cfs. These flows, however, represent drought or near drought conditions; the lowest recorded flow for this river reach since the construction of Buford Dam is *1090 cfs*, recorded during the extreme drought of

1988. The conditions would effectively enable Georgia Power to further deplete flows in the Chattahoochee during droughts, and could adversely affect water quality and aquatic life below Wansley's intake. Moreover, Georgia Power has not adequately documented a need for the increase. Riverkeeper and local citizens voiced objections to the permit both in writing and at a public hearing held by EPD. While Georgia Power has indicated that they may revise their withdrawal request, Riverkeeper continues to closely monitor this situation and is prepared to challenge the permit if it is issued in its current form.

FULTON COUNTY LANDFILL UNDER INVESTIGATION

Fulton County maintains a closed landfill below **Morgan Falls Lake** that includes a storm water runoff pond that discharges into an unnamed tributary approximately 1000' from the Chattahoochee. According to County records, there is a leachate collection system *under* the runoff pond designed to filter leachate and discharge the leachate into the sanitary sewer system. Based on the color and odor of the pond and tributary, however, Riverkeeper suspects that the leachate collection system has failed and, as a result, the storm water pond also may be receiving and discharging leachate. We recently sampled the tributary and the pond and found very high levels of ammonia in all samples. Despite evidence that the leachate collection system has not been functioning properly for several years, neither Fulton County nor EPD has taken any aggressive action to investigate and stop the problem. With the help of outside counsel, Riverkeeper will continue investigating the landfill and consider legal options to improve the water quality in the stream and thereby the river.

SECOND AGREEMENT WITH FULTON SCHOOL BOARD PROTECTS STREAM BUFFERS

The Fulton County Board of Education recently obtained a variance to the State's 25-foot stream buffer requirement to

reconstruct a school in the **City of East Point**. Initially, the plans required the piping of a small tributary running through the site (Trib 1) and significant encroachment within the 25-foot buffer of another tributary along the back of the site (Trib 2). Riverkeeper submitted comments to EPD strongly objecting to the variance. The Board responded quickly to our objections, in all likelihood fearing that we would *again* challenge their variance in court. (Last year, Riverkeeper successfully challenged a variance obtained by the Board to pipe another stream in East Point for the Connally Elementary School.) In exchange for our agreement not to challenge the variance, the Board has agreed to redirect Trib 1 to avoid piping, limit the encroachment into Trib 2, hire an on-site environmental consultant, give Riverkeeper permission to inspect the site, keep all mechanical equipment out of the buffer and preserve 100 feet of land along Trib 2 in a conservation easement.

SOUTHSIDE TRUCK STOP CLAIMS EXEMPTION FROM CLEAN WATER ACT

In 1999, Riverkeeper discovered a large concrete storm water outfall discharging into a tributary to Proctor Creek that appeared to be connected to a **Petro Truck Stop** facility on Bankhead Highway in southwest Atlanta. The Petro facility consists of a restaurant, a parking lot typically filled with hundreds of trucks, and washing, fueling and maintenance facilities. A significant amount of trash surrounds the outfall, as well as evidence of other contamination such as oil and grease. We contacted EPD and discovered that the facility does *not* have a permit to discharge storm water from the site under the Clean Water Act's industrial permitting regulations. Receiving no response from our initial letter of concern to Petro, we sent the company a 60-day notice of intent to sue letter under the Clean Water Act for discharging storm water and other pollutants without a permit. Presently, we are negotiating with representatives of Petro to address the facility's stormwater runoff problems and clean up the tributary without litigation.

No Shortage of Ideas to Solve Georgia's Water Crisis

Governor Roy Barnes has indicated his intention to address Georgia's water problems in the 2001 session of the General Assembly. In response to the Governor's interest, several groups have sprung into action to proactively formulate recommendations.

Clean Water Initiative Seeks Regional Solutions

"It is essential that the leadership of metro Atlanta develop a cohesive regional strategy for maintaining water quality." With these words, Southern Company CEO Bill Dahlberg set the tone for the first meeting of a new Clean Water Initiative task force.

The Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and the Regional Business Coalition have brought together a 37-member task force to seek regional solutions to the water quality crisis that is threatening the greater metro area and to help ensure our region's continued prosperity and growth well into the 21st century.

This task force is focusing on what must be done to ensure compliance with state and federal water quality laws and wastewater capacity for the growing metropolitan area. Only 10% of waters statewide have been tested by the state, yet, over 1,000 miles of waterways in Metro Atlanta fail to meet water quality standards.

After developing an understanding of the region's water quality issues, the task force will work to gain consensus on recommendations that will be forwarded to state and local policymakers in October. All task force meetings are open to the public. *Citizens and interested groups are encouraged to view all materials submitted to the task force through the Web site www.metroatlantachamber/qualityoflife/environment.com. A public input session will be available immediately following the task force meeting on August 30.*

Citizens Group Promotes Water Bill of Rights

Led by the Georgia Wildlife Federation (GWF) and Riverkeeper, conservation groups have called upon diverse citizens working on water and related issues statewide, as well as scientists knowledgeable about these matters, to meet over the summer and craft a citizen's water program.

Meeting at GWF's beautiful new Alcovy River Conference Center, more than 60 activists and experts gathered in late June to discuss their ideas regarding Georgia

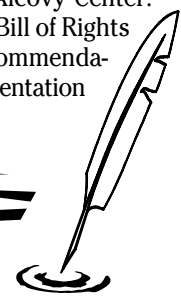
water law and policy that need attention and correction. At the same time, this Citizens Group worked on a broad policy document that is being called a Georgia Water Bill of Rights. It sets forth the beliefs and expectations of the state's ordinary citizens in regard to their most important natural resource - water (see below).

The Citizens Group is committed to the protection and restoration of water quality and quantity statewide for the benefit of the state's people and wildlife. The group believes that all citizens have an equal right

to water, that clean water is a basic right and necessity of life, that future generations have the right to a future legacy of clean water, and that there is no inherent right to pollute.

A second planning session was held in early August to plan a final Georgia Citizen's Water Summit that will be convened in mid-September at the Alcovy Center.

At that time, the Water Bill of Rights will be ratified and recommendations formalized for presentation to Governor Barnes.



GEORGIA'S WATER BILL OF RIGHTS

The quantity, quality, and reliability of Georgia waters shall be preserved so that the human use of water does not compromise the long-term sustainability of aquatic and associated ecosystems. All Georgians are responsible for the integrity of state waters, and the costs of providing and protecting these resources must be fairly allocated among users.

- 1. We, the people, believe that Water is a Public Resource.**
The surface and ground waters of the State of Georgia are public resources - vital areas held by the State as a trustee charged with the duty to manage these waters in the best interests of the public.
- 2. We, the people, believe that Water Resource Use Must Be Sustainable.**
Each Georgian has the right to expect that the waters of the State on and below the surface of the earth will be conserved and maintained as a perpetual blessing to the State's people and ecological systems.
- 3. We, the people, believe that We All Live Downstream.**
Management of the State's water resources must ensure the integrity of these resources by acknowledging the natural flow of waters through the watersheds and aquifers, from the mountains to the sea.
- 4. We, the people, believe that Economic Prosperity Depends on Clean Water.**
Clean surface water and pure groundwater are essential to Georgia's health, welfare, and prosperity; Georgians no longer accept the assertion that polluted water is a necessary price for economic progress.
- 5. We, the people, believe that Water Policy Decisions must be Just and Equitable.**
No person or community should bear a disproportionate share of any burden resulting from the water use of others.
- 6. We, the people, believe in Property Rights that Ensure Environmental Protection for All.**
The citizens of Georgia have a right to use the surface and groundwater resources on their properties, but the use must be reasonable, in a manner and to the extent that the water supply is not depleted or degraded to the detriment of the health of people and wildlife.
- 7. We, the people, believe in Water Resource Protection Through Law Enforcement.**
Georgians have the right to the full, timely, and equitable enforcement of local, state and federal environmental laws, which rightfully require protection of water quality and all life dependent on that quality.
- 8. We, the people, believe in the Public's Right to Know.**
All decisions by government officials, the public trustees of Georgia waters, shall be made in open forums, after full disclosure through public discussion and deliberation of all scientific, political and economic facts and associated impacts. Citizens shall have readily available and unrestricted access to such information.
- 9. We, the people, believe in Accountability.**
Our government shall be held accountable for the proper management of Georgia's waters.

RIVERKEEPER CONDUCTS REAL-TIME RIVER MONITORING

Thanks to a generous grant from the Cobb County - Marietta Water Authority and the hard work of volunteer Brett Salter, Riverkeeper has installed a *real-time* monitoring station on the Chattahoochee below north Fulton County's Johns Creek sewage treatment plant. This plant, which discharges within the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, has been the site of numerous sewage spills in recent years, causing at least one known fish kill. Our new sampling station will help us alert the County, the National Park Service, river users and downstream water intakes to potential health hazards caused by problems at the Johns Creek facility.



Riverkeeper's first real-time monitoring station

The solar-powered monitoring station contains a Hydrolab that monitors, and logs for later analysis, four chemical parameters *every five minutes* around the clock. The parameters are *water temperature*, *pH* (acidity/alkalinity), *conductivity* (an indication of dissolved salts and/or metals), and *Redox* (reduction/oxidation potential). Because the Hydrolab sensors are located immediately downstream from the plant discharge, the data collected here are not necessarily representative of the river as a whole, but are intended to serve as an early warning system for potential spills.

When the Hydrolab detects an unusual event such as a spike in conductivity, it will determine whether or not the value remains out of the normal range during the next sample cycle. If so, the station will collect 12 actual water samples over the next 90 minutes for subsequent lab analysis and will immediately call Riverkeeper staffers.

Testing the Water Chemistry in Nancy Creek

For over a year, Riverkeeper has performed monthly chemical monitoring at 12 sites in Nancy Creek. Beginning at the West Wesley bridge over the creek and working upstream to the headwaters in Dunwoody, Riverkeeper uses a Hydrolab to monitor water temperature, pH, conductivity, dissolved oxygen (DO), and turbidity.

Temperature readings throughout the watershed are remarkably consistent. The pH usually ranges from approximately 6.5 (mildly acidic) to 7.2 (very mildly alkaline), although we have seen several acidic spikes down to 6.1, just upstream of the Ashford-Dunwoody bridge.

Conductivity values are fairly normal, except on Little Nancy Creek which has registered 120 to 180 micro Siemens per cm (40-60 is a normal reading for this area). The DO numbers vary by season from a summer low of 6-7 mg/liter to a winter high of 10-11 mg/l and are remarkably consistent through the watershed. Little Nancy Creek does show low DO at times in the warmer months.

Dry weather turbidity values are almost always less than 40 NTU (nephelometric turbidity units), except after storms when we have measured values as high as 484 NTU in Nancy Creek at West Paces Ferry. (NOTE: In 1996, a scientific panel determined that Georgia streams with turbidity levels in excess of 25 NTU will have an adverse effect on aquatic life.)

The real value of Riverkeeper's program will grow as we detect trends over time and once we are able to expand to include macroinvertebrate (or critter) surveys. Without ongoing sampling of the aquatic life in Nancy Creek, an incident, such as the recent massive fish kill, which resulted from excessive levels of chlorine (see pg 6), could go unexplained or even undetected.

Problems Detected at Three Major Tributaries

Riverkeeper also conducts monthly monitoring in the Chattahoochee itself at 16 locations between Buford Dam and the GA 400 bridge at Roswell and in eleven major tributaries. Again, the Hydrolab is used to measure the chemical parameters of water temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen, specific conductivity, and turbidity. We have observed normal trends for temperature, dissolved oxygen and pH.



Staffers Kristi Rose and Alice Champagne use the Hydrolab to monitor water quality.

However, the trend data for conductivity and turbidity indicate problems in three major tributaries.

Conductivity in the river itself is consistent, running between 40 and 45 micro Siemens/cm, with the exception of the Johns Creek sewage plant outfall which can be dramatically higher (as much as 250). The tributaries vary, however, with peaks at three noted problem areas: **Big Creek** (Fulton County), and **Suwanee** and **Richland Creeks** (Gwinnett County) where readings range from 175 to 225 micro Siemens/cm. Riverkeeper attributes these high readings to polluted stormwater runoff coming from increased development and growth in these sub-watersheds.

Our turbidity monitoring confirms that eroded soil entering the Chattahoochee from its tributaries constitutes an extremely serious problem. Water released from Buford Dam is almost always 0 NTU, but after a rainstorm *all* the tributaries contribute muddy water, especially Richland, Suwanee, and Big Creeks. Last March, the turbidity increased from zero at Buford Dam to 847 NTU below Abbotts Bridge, just 13 miles downstream. Suwanee Creek was measured at 635 NTU that day. High levels of suspended sediment (turbidity) can damage the gills of fish, block sunlight from aquatic plants and increase the cost of treating drinking water. In addition, other pollutants (e.g. metals, oils and bacteria) attach to the soil particles and are carried into the river. The increased turbidity is a direct correlation to the increase in land disturbing activities in these sub-watersheds.

CHLORINATED WATER DESTROYS AQUATIC LIFE IN NANCY CREEK

An 18-mile tributary of the Chattahoochee known as Nancy Creek is now depleted of all fish due to several chlorine spills last month. Although chlorine is used in swimming pools and to treat drinking water to kill bacteria and other organisms, it can be highly devastating to aquatic life. It is estimated that 15,000 fish of all species were killed the week of July 4th when high levels of chlorine entered Nancy Creek.

The **Scott Candler Water Filter Plant** in Dekalb County located off Winters Chapel Road and several swimming pools are believed to be the sources of this massive fish kill. As much as a million gallons

of highly chlorinated water may have been released into Nancy Creek. Low water levels due to Georgia's severe drought enhanced the magnitude of this event.

Time is of the essence when dealing with a fish kill. Evidence of the source, or sources, of the kill can be washed away in less than 24 hours, making any investigation and efforts to stop future incidents more difficult. It is, therefore, imperative that the right steps are taken immediately. **Kathryn Gable** and **Lisa Haverty** are examples of fast-acting and concerned citizens who alerted both the state and Riverkeeper to the recent fish kill in Nancy

Creek. State officials who investigated this incident anticipate that several enforcement actions may be taken as a consequence of this environmental disaster.

Ⓒ Citizens can do their part to protect the Chattahoochee by taking the necessary precautions when cleaning swimming pools to ensure that highly chlorinated water does *not* drain into nearby tributaries.

Ⓒ If you observe dead fish, report the incident as soon as possible by following the procedures outlined below.



Riverkeeper members ford the Chattahoochee at its headwaters above Helen on a recent River Adventure. Members and staff spent a challenging but rewarding day exploring this rugged reach of the Chattahoochee River.

THE RIVERKEEPER STAFF

Sally Bethea - Executive Director and Riverkeeper
Katherine Baer - Director of Headwaters Conservation
Birgit Bolton - Administrative and Legal Assistant
Kristin Costley - Headwaters Conservation Office
Alice Champagne - Watershed Protection Specialist
Pam Davee - Development Director
Michelle Fried - General Counsel
Matt Kales - Program Mgr. River Basin Protection
Sandy Layton - Special Events Coordinator
Mary Manson - Receptionist
Kristi Rose - Director of Education & Watershed Monitoring
Susan Smith - Office Manager
Harlan Trammell - Boat Captain



www.chattahoochee.org
Phone 404-352-9828 FAX 404-352-8676
Email rivrkeep@mindspring.com

REPORT AN INCIDENT:

FISH KILLS

If you observe numerous dead fish or unusual behavior such as fish coming out of the water gasping for air, call the following three numbers and **report the incident** during the business hours of **8:00am - 4:30pm, Monday through Friday:**

- 1) State Wildlife Resource Division:
Metro Atlanta at 770.918.6418
Douglas, Carroll, Cobb & Paulding Counties at 706.629.1259
Troup County - West Central & Fort Valley at 912.825.6151
Lumpkin, White, Habersham & Hall Counties at 770.535.5498
- 2) State EPD Emergency Response at 404.656.6905
- 3) Riverkeeper: 404.352.9828 ext. 16 - Alice Champagne

To report a fish kill and other emergencies **after 4:30pm** and on weekends, call the following two numbers:

- 1) State Dispatcher at 800.241.4113 (ask for the operator to relay your call to the Wildlife Resource Division and the EPD).
- 2) Riverkeeper: 404.352.9828 ext. 16 and leave a message for Alice Champagne

If possible, note the number and kinds of dead fish, the exact location of the kill, and time it was first observed. **Photos are also helpful.**

If the kill is recent or ongoing, **collect a few of the freshest fish, wrap them in aluminum foil or a ziploc bag and put them on ice. DO NOT FREEZE.**

Observe and document the appearance and behavior of the dying fish. Try to describe the water. Look for potential causes of the kill such as: nearby discharges, pesticide applications, evidence of accidental or intentional chemical spills, or recent heavy rains that may have carried organic or toxic wastes into the stream. **Be sure to avoid direct contact with your skin.**

WATER MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS FOR GEORGIA

Continued from page 1

process to which organisms can adapt, *provided* that drought conditions are not exacerbated or perpetuated by human activities, such as water withdrawals or flow regulation.

In the lower reaches of large river basins that rise in Georgia, resource managers are closely monitoring the status of sensitive aquatic species, the viability of which are jeopardized by the twin threats of drought and diversion of flow for human uses. Additionally, the drought creates the potential for water quality problems. Point source permittees are *not* required to reduce their discharge when drought reduces flow, which could lead to inadequate assimilative capacity in some of Georgia's waterways.

A graphic reminder of the water quality problems created by the drought was the recent massive fish kill that occurred in Nancy Creek. Approximately 15,000 fish in this major tributary to the Chattahoochee died after exposure to high levels of chlorinated water. Extenuating climactic factors, such as low flow conditions, contributed to the kill (see pg.6).

State Management Problems Highlighted

This drought has revealed gaping holes in Georgia's water management infrastructure. Specifically, this drought illuminated a lack of both short- and long-term plans to address water shortages, such as:

- No drought management plan; and
- No comprehensive state water management plan; including provisions for water conservation (see box).

In sum, the severity and significance of this drought begs the question: *What practical lessons will we take away from this experience and apply to future water management questions?*

First, solutions to water management problems should be proactive, not reactive. For too long, the State has operated in a "crisis-driven" mode when it comes to water management. A perfect example of this crisis-driven approach is the fact that it took a crippling drought (just one in a series of major droughts that have occurred in Georgia since the Second World War) to prompt the State to start a drought planning process.

Additionally, it's high time that the State, with guidance from policy making bodies such as the DNR Board, clearly establish the priorities and values we assign to water uses in Georgia. These priorities and values should, in turn, reflect the public's will and be the ultimate determinant of drought contingencies and water use hierarchy during drought.

Perhaps the most significant impact of this drought will ultimately prove to be a sea change in water resources policy in Georgia, one that is marked by a move towards sustainability. The origins of drought management plans, water conservation, potable reuse, and other critical initiatives may someday be traced to this drought.

It is imperative that we seize the momentum generated by this crisis and develop and promote policies and practices that will ensure Georgia's waterways, and all they support, are protected during times of plenty *and* during times of want.

Water Conservation and Education Program

Currently in Georgia, there is no *comprehensive* effort to educate consumers and local governments about water conservation. Water conservation practices tend to be implemented in a reactive rather than a proactive manner (i.e. during times of drought). Although the state requires that some water systems have a water conservation plan, these plans have not been consistently reviewed for content and/or implementation. As demand for water increases through increased drought frequency, a rapidly expanding population and possible compact-based limits, conservation must be used consistently and up-front as a water resources planning tool. With a grant from the **Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority**, Riverkeeper has initiated a **Water Conservation and Education Program** designed to identify the gaps of water conservation programs on a local and state level and recommend a strategy for effective water conservation within the Chattahoochee River Basin. For further information, call 770-538-2619.

Membership up for renewal? Please send it in today!

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE UPPER CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVERKEEPER

- \$10 Student
- \$25 Individual
- Please make a contribution of \$_____ or reserve membership for the person(s) listed below.
(A card will be sent notifying the recipient(s) of your gift.)
- \$35 Family
- \$100 Contributor
- \$500 Lifetime
- Other \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ (H) _____ (W) _____ (Fax)

email _____

- I would like to volunteer my time to help the Riverkeeper. Please get in touch with me.

Please make checks payable to: **Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper**

Contributions to the Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper Fund are tax-deductible.

Riverkeeper is a 501(c)(3) organization. Quarterly newsletters are provided to members and other subscribers.

- Please send _____
Riverkeeper caps
at \$18.00 each (includes shipping)

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FOWLER PREACHES COMMON SENSE WATER MANAGEMENT

It doesn't take much to get Roy Fowler up on his soapbox. Just ask him about water conservation and the fast-talking general manager of the Cobb County-Marietta Water Authority will fill your ear at 100 words a minute.

Given his experience, it is understandable for Fowler. In his 30 years with the Authority (the past five as general manager), water conservation has become a critically important issue, particularly since the droughts of the 1980s and water wars of the 1990s.

"We don't have the water to waste," Fowler said. "We have no choice. We've got to continue to stress water conservation. It's not just an environmental issue. It's a consumer issue. People have said that the Atlanta region is too affluent to accept water conservation, but I can remember in the 1970s, we thought nothing of driving around in cars that got eight miles to the gallon. That was a behavior pattern that had to change. It's the same with water conservation. We have to change our behavior patterns."

The Authority, which provides drinking water from the Chattahoochee and Etowah Rivers to some 650,000 residents in



five metro counties, actively promotes water conservation and drought management through its WaterSmart program. The educational program encourages residents to water wisely during dry summers and utilize xeriscaping practices.

Outdoor Water Use Can be Reduced by Half

Some 60 percent of the water provided by the Authority is used for outdoor watering purposes. By changing the way homeowners landscape and water, Fowler believes outdoor water use can be cut in half in the coming years.

For the Authority, the push to conserve water is as much an economic ethic as it is an environmental ethic. Maintaining and even lowering current consumption levels will ultimately benefit the Authority and its customers by preventing the need for costly capital expansions to water treatment facilities.

And while public utilities and environmental groups such as the Riverkeeper have often historically had adversarial roles, Fowler said the issue of water quality and conservation provides the opportunity to work together.

"We have a lot in common with Riverkeeper," he said. "We share the same goals-not only service to the community but to the environment as well."

Recently, the Authority provided a \$10,000 grant to Riverkeeper for the installation of an automated, remote water quality sampler on the Chattahoochee (see article, page 5).

Contributed by Joe Cook



Reclaiming Our River

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



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