



GET OUT WITH CRK IN 2016!

You don't have to travel far to have a great time with Chattahoochee Riverkeeper and friends on a paddle trip, lake tour, cleanup or festival. Each event is planned to maximize your fun, help you learn new skills and increase your knowledge of the Chattahoochee River.

To secure your reservation, register as soon as possible at www.chattahoochee.org/crk-watershed-outings/ for the events below and others offered during the second half of the year.



Headwaters Paddle and Camp: April 16-17
Enjoy spring in the mountains on this 12-mile paddle from Mossy Creek State Park to Don Carter State Park on Lake Lanier, where we will camp.

REI Campout at McIntosh Reserve: May 14-15
Camp with CRK and REI at a beautiful local park on the river in Carroll County and enjoy the great outdoors: kayaking, stand up paddle boards, mountain bikes, star-gazing and more.

Chestatee River Paddle: June 25
Escape the summer heat with a beginner-friendly paddle on Yahoola Creek that ends on the Chestatee at GA 400. The eight and a half mile trip will take about four hours with a picnic lunch along the way. Single seat boats only due to the small size of the creek.

Cleanups

Sweep the Hooch: April 9
Help us break last year's record of 500 volunteers who walked, waded and paddled the Chattahoochee and tributaries to remove seven tons of trash from a 60-mile stretch of river! More than 30 sites available from Lake Lanier to West Point Lake.



West Point Lake Wildlife Tour: April 2
Enjoy an afternoon on board our pontoon boat, the *Miss Sally*, led by CRK and wildlife experts. Learn about fish in the lake, animals along the shoreline and birds of prey. Binoculars provided.

West Point Lake Floating Concert: June 23
Hear a live acoustic performance by City Mouse, an Atlanta-based singer/songwriter group, and enjoy catered food by LaGrange's 505 Eats on this evening cruise around the lake.



Chattahoochee Valley River Revival: May 7
Celebrate the Middle Chattahoochee region at the new river park in West Point with local music, art, food and a family-friendly, three-mile float trip down the river; the free festival (5-9PM) will include local artists, restaurants and community groups.

Wild & Scenic® Film Festival: May 14
Watch environmental and adventure films that illustrate the Earth's beauty, the challenges facing our planet and the work communities around the world are doing to protect the environment. Refreshments and Sweetwater beer will be served at the event to be held at the Brenau Center in Gainesville.

14th Back to the Chattahoochee River Race and Festival: June 11
Race competitively (or not) on the eight-mile course from Garrard's Landing to Riverside Park in Roswell. Open and recreational categories for various age divisions: solo and tandem canoes and kayaks and paddle boards.

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

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Reflections

Since the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Americans have averaged building a new dam every single day.



In Georgia, there are more than 4,000 dams that meet the state's definition of a regulated dam. Thousands of smaller dams across the state are not regulated (monitored) and pose a safety threat.

All together, these structures hold back hundreds of thousands of acres of impounded water, permanently changing the flow of water to downstream communities, lakes and natural ecosystems.

Given the high cost of dam projects and less environmentally-damaging supply alternatives, it makes sense to view new dams and reservoir projects as last resort options.

Are more dams the best solution?

As state leaders ponder solutions to meet future water demands, the concept of constructing additional dams comes up time and time again. The beaver-minded bureaucrats argue that we cannot meet our

needs through conserving what we have, even though we are far from reaching our true conservation potential.

Aside from all of the environmental harm caused by damming a waterway, the fact is that dams actually cause a net loss in water volume during drought due to evaporation. Read that again: dams lead to less water, not more.

The concept of Glades Reservoir in north Hall County has been tossed around for the past two decades, even though Hall is home to one of the state's largest reservoirs, Lake Lanier. The size and scope of Glades has changed many times, as has the stated need for the project.

This highly-engineered scheme is more about developing an amenity lake for private residential and commercial gain and less about meeting our water needs. Engineers, lawyers and consultants are filling their pockets and taxpayers are footing the bills.

As we continue to plan for our future, one thing is abundantly clear. We need to stop paying for these absurdly complex "solutions" and focus on the low-hanging fruit.

The last thing we need is another dam.

JASON ULSETH
Riverkeeper

Faces of the Chattahoochee



"I've been rowing on the Chattahoochee River for twenty-six years. After years of competitive cycling, I was hooked by the river's beauty, the intense low-impact exercise, and the social nature of the Atlanta Rowing Club (ARC).

My favorite time of the year is late spring when everything turns green again and all the houses are covered up; that's when I see **more herons than houses**. I started thinking about the water that we all enjoy and learned that we could have a hand in keeping it safe and clean. That's when I became a Neighborhood Water Watch volunteer. Now, all the members of the ARC help out with collecting water samples."

— Charlie Freed

Developer Agrees to Restore Muddy Stream

At a large construction site near GA 400 in **Dawson County**, CRK staff observed excessive sediment in a creek and improper use of the best management practices (BMPs) that should stop the flow of muddy water into nearby streams. When complaints filed with the county and the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) failed to resolve the problem, we requested a meeting with the developer, **Halpern Enterprises**. The company agreed to remove the sediment from the stream and install appropriate BMPs. We will continue to monitor the site.

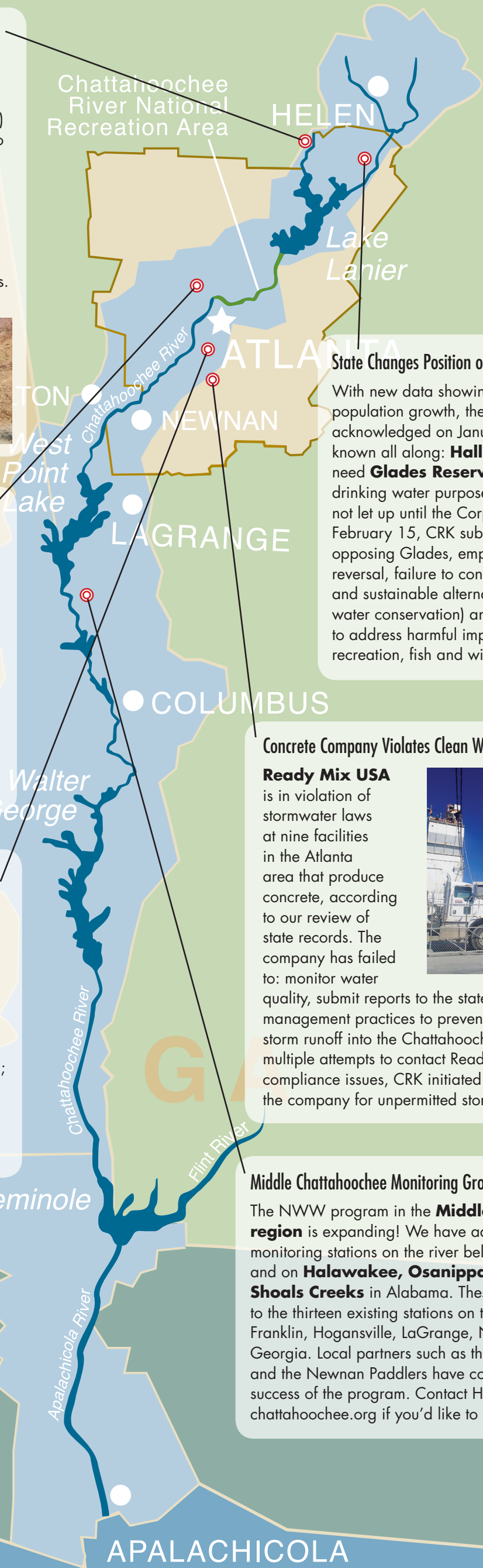


Fulton Fails to Stop Chronic Spills

Following recent heavy rain, CRK received multiple reports of overflows from a sewer line along the river in **north Fulton County**. In the past year alone, more than twelve million gallons of raw sewage have spilled into the Chattahoochee from this line. Fulton County has failed to make the necessary infrastructure upgrades to stop the spills, despite the fact that this problem has occurred repeatedly over the years. CRK is currently reviewing the county's corrective action plan to determine what additional steps are necessary to fix the problem.

Atlanta Sewage Spill Found and Fixed

In January, CRK's tracking team found a sewer spill near the headwaters of **South Utoy Creek** in **southwest Atlanta**. City crews responded quickly, clearing a grease blockage in a line that allowed untreated sewage to flow out of a manhole and enter the creek. The contamination would have gone undetected without our regular Neighborhood Water Watch (NWW) testing; samples collected by program volunteers identified the public health concern. Go to www.chattahoochee.org/neighborhood-water-watch.org to join the NWW team.



State Changes Position on Glades Reservoir

With new data showing slower than expected population growth, the state officially acknowledged on January 29 what we have known all along: **Hall County** does not need **Glades Reservoir** for current or future drinking water purposes. However, CRK will not let up until the Corps rejects the project. On February 15, CRK submitted lengthy comments opposing Glades, emphasizing the state's reversal, failure to consider more cost-effective and sustainable alternatives (Lake Lanier, more water conservation) and its continuing failure to address harmful impacts on water quality, recreation, fish and wildlife.

Concrete Company Violates Clean Water Laws

Ready Mix USA is in violation of stormwater laws at nine facilities in the Atlanta area that produce concrete, according to our review of state records. The company has failed to: monitor water quality, submit reports to the state and implement best management practices to prevent the flow of polluted storm runoff into the Chattahoochee River. After multiple attempts to contact Ready Mix to discuss their compliance issues, CRK initiated legal action against the company for unpermitted stormwater discharges.



Middle Chattahoochee Monitoring Grows

The NWW program in the **Middle Chattahoochee region** is expanding! We have added new water quality monitoring stations on the river below West Point Dam and on **Halawakee, Osanippa, Osilegee and Flat Shoals Creeks** in Alabama. These five new stations add to the thirteen existing stations on the river and tributaries in Franklin, Hogansville, LaGrange, Newnan and West Point in Georgia. Local partners such as the LaGrange Sierra Club and the Newnan Paddlers have contributed greatly to the success of the program. Contact Henry Jacobs at [hjacobson@chattahoochee.org](mailto:hjacobs@chattahoochee.org) if you'd like to adopt a station.

The River Park that Speaks to Daryl Johnson



Daryl Johnson, McIntosh Reserve manager, stands on Council Bluff overlooking the Chattahoochee River – a gathering place for the Creek Indians from 900 A. D. until the 1820s.

“When you can come to work and see a bald eagle fishing, you know you have a great job,” says Daryl Johnson, longtime manager at McIntosh Reserve in Carroll County.

Nearly 20 years after he took the helm of the 527-acre nature park on Chattahoochee River, Daryl still loves his work at the place that “speaks to him”, especially during the daily walks that remind him of its rich Native American history.

A Mercer graduate and amateur historian who grew up “all along the Chattahoochee”, Johnson can rattle off names and dates to tell the story of Chief William McIntosh. The park’s namesake was a pivotal and controversial figure in the negotiations and treaties that ultimately resulted in the removal of native people from the Southeast.

Daryl’s enthusiasm for the park inspires his staff and visitors: scout troops, cross-country runners, equestrians, fishermen, campers, renaissance groups, kayakers, nature-lovers — even Bigfoot searchers. More than 80,000 people per year find their way down the little country road that leads to McIntosh Reserve.

A river returns

The Chattahoochee River flows for a mile and a half along the Reserve — over rocky shoals and through an historic fish weir about forty miles downstream of Atlanta — but the waterway was foul when Daryl started his job in 1995.

“You couldn’t stand to get near the river; it smelled like a urinal and nobody wanted to get in it,” he said, adding that the river has significantly improved over the years.

Daryl attributes the changes in water quality and awareness about pollution and watershed issues to Chattahoochee Riverkeeper – its lawsuit against the city of Atlanta, work with developers and educational programs.

“The Riverkeeper got people thinking and made those of us down here feel like we had ownership. That was important.”

In early spring, Atamasco lilies cover historic Council Bluff at McIntosh Reserve.

See www.carrollcountyga.com/293/McIntosh-Reserve-Park for more information.

The Chattahoochee’s ‘White-Headed Sea Eagle’

After decades of decline caused by pesticides, habitat destruction, and illegal shooting, America’s national symbol, the bald eagle, faced extinction.

Thanks to a ban on the insecticide DDT in 1972, followed by protection under the Endangered Species Act, this bird is making a remarkable comeback. Down to just one fledgling in 1980, Georgia’s Department of Natural Resources counted 270 fledglings in 2015.

Although delisted by the federal government in 2007, the eagle’s future is far from secure. The bird remains a threatened

species at the state level, impacted by habitat loss, mercury exposure, poisoned bait, gunshots, and avian vacuolar myelinopathy (AVM). AVM is a fatal neurological disease linked to toxic algae growing on aquatic plants consumed by the American coot on which eagles prey.

Eagle nests along the river

Biologists estimate there are 39 nests along the entire length of the Chattahoochee, including three on Lanier, five on the river between Atlanta and West Point Lake, and seven on West Point Lake.

With a Latin name that literally translates to “white-headed sea eagle,” the *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* hunts along the



Chattahoochee for fish, turtles, waterfowl, small mammals, and carrion.

Bald eagles are monogamous, pairing for life unless they lose a mate. They build conspicuously large stick nests in pine and cypress tree tops. Adult pairs return to these nests every fall, and by December or January, females lay two or three eggs which both parents incubate for 35 days. Eaglets fledge after 12 weeks but continue to receive bi-parental care for several more weeks.

As juveniles, bald eagles lack the distinctive white head and tail feathers; adult plumage is visible upon sexual maturity at five years of age. Eagles live up to 25 years in the wild, achieving wingspans of up to 8 feet.

You can help protect bald eagles by reporting potential eagle or nest sightings to Georgia DNR at <http://georgiawildlife.com/conservation/eaglenest>.



Biologists estimate there are 39 eagle nests along the Chattahoochee River.

Eagle photos courtesy of Tom Wilson

Record-Breaking Brown Trout in the National Park

The spring fishing season is finally upon us and the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (CRNRA) is a great place to try your luck.

For much of the winter season, the Corps of Engineers released high flows from Buford Dam to draw down rain-swollen Lake Lanier. These high flows

can be dangerous and prevented angler access to the river for most of the winter. Assuming that the flow rates subside to more reasonable levels this spring, the trout will be hungry and less wary.

In March, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will begin stocking the river with rainbows; with

the "hold-over" trout from the previous seasons, the fishing will be great. But, don't forget that the river also sustains an abundant population of wild brown trout.

Natural reproduction

In 2000, DNR documented the natural reproduction of brown trout, after years of stocking the fish in the river. Three years later, state biologists ceased the stocking to see if they could develop into a self-sustaining population. They did and today the browns continue to spawn in the cold, clear water.

Two Georgia state record brown trout have been caught in the CRNRA — an 18-pounder in 2003 (29 inches) and a 20-pounder in 2014 (31 inches). Last November, River Through Atlanta's John McCloskey caught and released another possible record-breaking brown that measured 35 inches. Because John didn't want to kill this fish to weigh it on a certified scale, we will never know.

That monster brown, along with thousands of other trout, are lurking in the CRNRA, waiting for the next angler to test their luck.

By Chris Scalley, owner of River Through Atlanta Guide Service – www.riverthroughatlanta.com/.

For information about the CRNRA, see www.nps.gov/chat/.



John McCloskey holds a possible state record brown trout caught and released back into the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area.

STEM Studies Lead to Urban Creeks

Dominique Smith and Ogechi Ironi were initially hesitant to get close to Atlanta's urban streams; they knew the waterways could be polluted with untreated sewage and industrial waste, especially after heavy rains.

However, the women's concerns were trumped by their desire to work with community members they met at the River Rendezvous: an annual event for volunteers who take weekly water samples as part of CRK's Neighborhood Water Watch program. They also wanted to use their STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) studies to help make a difference.

On a rainy day in January, Dominique — who has a master's degree in Public Health from Georgia State — collected water samples and video footage of a sewage spill near Utoy Creek. Six months into her position with CRK, the Henry Babson West Atlanta Fellow knew how to respond to such an emergency; within a few days the spill was stopped by city workers.

Now with the Peace Corps in the Dominican Republic, Dominique



Babson Fellows Ogechi Ironi (L) and Dominique Smith sample the water in Atlanta's South Utoy Creek.

enjoyed talking to the "open and welcoming" residents in her focus area (Sandy, Utoy, Woodall Creeks) and advising them on ways to keep the streams clean.

Recruiting volunteers

Ogechi — our new Babson Fellow and a chemistry major at Clark-Atlanta — was "appalled" to learn of the condition of some city streams. Building on her predecessor's work, she is already busy recruiting volunteers, reporting water data and educating residents about the waterways

that crisscross their neighborhoods.

Longtime CRK Board member Dave Kirkpatrick said, "Our family is thrilled to support CRK and this project which will make a meaningful difference in the Westside community. Dominique and Ogechi are very bright individuals with a passion for making a difference in the community through our waterways."

For Neighborhood Water Watch testing results, see www.chattahoochee.org/nww.

Water Testing Confirms a Cleaner River

Scott Parrott remembers a day in the late 1970s when he fished with his grandfather at Bush Head Shoals, about five miles upstream of the bridge in Franklin, Georgia: the water was crystal clear and in the early morning light they could see the fish hitting the bait.

In the decades that followed, the Chattahoochee River downstream of Atlanta was plagued by chronic sewage spills from the city's failing infrastructure; when it rained, and sometimes when it didn't, the river filled with high levels of bacteria.

Silt and sediment from upstream development resulted in a shallower channel near Franklin and local residents didn't fish as much.

Weekly bacteria monitoring

It's a different story today. The river between Atlanta and Franklin, the headwaters of West Point Lake, is much cleaner; this improvement is largely the



Scott Parrott (L), battalion chief with the Heard County Fire and Emergency Services, at the Chattahoochee with his fishing buddy Jon Glover.

result of CRK's successful lawsuit against the city and the massive upgrade of its dilapidated sewer system.

In 2013, CRK staff and volunteers began collecting weekly bacteria samples at Whitesburg and Franklin, respectively 40 and 65 miles downstream of Atlanta, with funding provided by the Alice H. Richards Foundation.

Our data confirms that the river downstream of Atlanta is meeting water quality standards

and is dramatically cleaner than it was in the 1990s. To review the data, see www.chattahoochee.org/nww, Chattahoochee at Whitesburg and at Franklin.

Last fall, for the first time in years, Scott fished at Bush Head Shoals with his friend Jon Glover and recalls that the water was as clear as he remembered it as a child. Both of the men said that they see much less trash than they did a decade ago.

Scott added, "The river is definitely a lot cleaner than it used to be."

Tom Parker and John Sanker collect water samples from the Franklin Parkway Bridge over the Chattahoochee.

Where Does All that Dirty Water Go?

Every day, municipalities and industries must treat their wastewater (sewage, industrial process water and stormwater) and dispose of it in accordance with one of the most important environmental laws ever passed by Congress: the federal Clean Water Act (CWA).

The CWA sets up a permitting system that makes it legal for wastewater that is sufficiently treated to be discharged into our waterways. In Georgia, the Environmental Protection Division (EPD) is authorized by the U.S. EPA to issue five-year permits.

Led by Riverkeeper Jason Ulseth, CRK's water quality team periodically reviews the 150 individual permits issued to cities and industries in the Chattahoochee River basin, when they come up for renewal. New permit requests receive close scrutiny.

While most rivers in the U.S., including the Chattahoochee, are cleaner than they were in the 1970s, issues remain at some facilities, requiring the attention of CRK's experts.

Using permits to protect the river

Last November, EPD issued a draft renewal permit for the city of Atlanta's three wastewater plants, each of which discharge treated sewage to the Chattahoochee River; together, they have the capacity to treat up

to 188 million gallons per day — that's nearly 3.8 million bath tubs of water every day!

EPD proposed to give one permit to the city of Atlanta that would allow it to combine the discharges of the three plants and report on the average water quality results

to meet the requirements of the CWA. This could allow a plant that was not effectively removing pollution from its discharge to be "carried" by the other plants that are better performing.

CRK submitted comments to EPD urging the agency to separate the three permits and mandate upgrades to the city's oldest facility (R.M Clayton plant) to ensure that it is capable of meeting water quality standards and protecting downstream communities.



A wastewater pipe discharges into the Chattahoochee.

Lobbying for Clean Water Under the Gold Dome

In January, CRK returned to the Capitol for the 2016 Georgia legislative session. Every year, CRK and our partners in the Georgia Water Coalition (GWC) combine our resources to advance scientifically-based environmental bills through the Georgia General Assembly.

With guidance from our long-time lobbyist Neill Herring, CRK staff and members work closely with legislators to promote legislation that will protect the Chattahoochee and its watershed and stop bills that would roll-back any protections. This year, the Coalition is advancing two priority bills.

Well Water and Stream Buffers

Senate Bill 36 will protect Georgia's pristine underground water supplies from contamination. These water supplies support local economies by irrigating crops, servicing industries and providing drinking water for homes and businesses.

This bill requires the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to adopt regulations to protect the groundwater on which hundreds of thousands of Georgia citizens, industries and agriculture rely. The bill made it through the Senate in 2015 and we hope to move it through the House this session.

House Bill 966 was introduced to correct ambiguous language in current law regarding stream buffers. A 2015



Rep. Calvin Smyre (L) talks with environmental lobbyist Neill Herring and CRK staff attorney Kevin Jeselnik (R).

Georgia Supreme Court decision left some state waters — including portions of the Chattahoochee — without the natural buffers that function as green infrastructure to protect the river and its tributaries from erosion and polluted stormwater from development activities. The State's high court instructed the legislature to address the issue; HB 966 will ensure buffer protections for all state waters.

"After the Court's ruling limiting the methods used by the state to determine streamside protection zones, it is essential that we clarify this issue by updating the language in the laws that establish these buffers," said Riverkeeper Jason Ulseth.

For an update on the status of these bills, see www.chattahoochee.org.

New 'Digs' Improve Efficiency in Metro Atlanta Lab

On any given Thursday, the sounds of clanking glassware and feet shuffling down the hall means it must be a Neighborhood Water Watch (NWW) testing day at CRK's Atlanta office.

Dedicated volunteers from all over metro Atlanta come to our Westside office every week to deliver samples collected from local waterways, so that we can assess the health of these streams and identify hot-spot problems.

Thanks to upgrades to the Atlanta laboratory, our staff and interns now have some extra help. The renovated workspace makes the processing and analysis of nearly fifty water samples — a total of 250 tests — much more efficient.

A professional grade laboratory

Once a make-shift lab in a hallway, the space has been transformed into a professional grade laboratory: new cabinetry, lab-grade counter tops, updated lighting, proper seating, an



CRK staff use newly upgraded lab equipment and volunteer sign-in table to process weekly samples.

adjustable volume water dispenser, a multi-meter, a multi-probe (which allows us to conduct multiple tests in a fraction of the time) and other new technology and equipment.

A generous donation from longtime supporters Sally and Peter Parsonson made these efficiency measures possible, giving our team more time to conduct field investigations: finding, addressing and confirming fixes to water quality issues identified by the tests.

Cox Conserves Hero and longtime NWW volunteer Alan Toney said, "The new lab is a

great improvement; we now have a comfortable place to drop off samples and the staff must be glad to have better equipment, lighting and a more efficient work space."

Indeed, we are very thankful for the changes which have cut our processing time by half!

To make a donation to CRK's Neighborhood Water Watch Program, visit www.chattahoochee.org.

New Staff in CRK Outreach Offices!

Representing the Headwaters



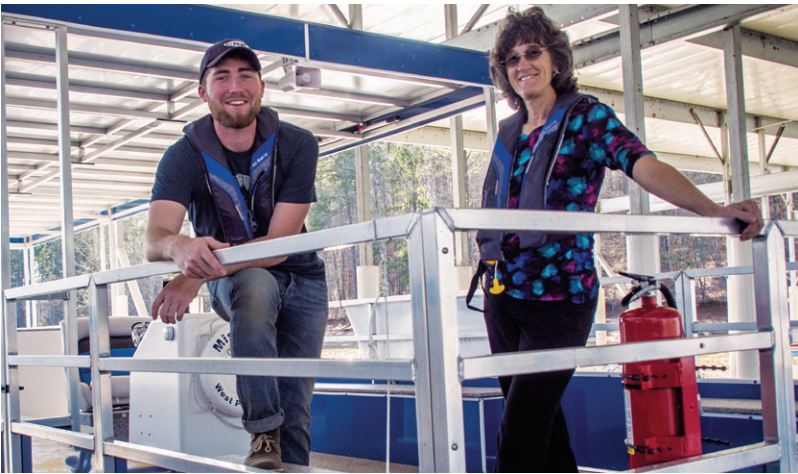
Dale Caldwell, Watershed Protection Specialist and Janet Westervelt, Headwaters Outreach Manager.

Meet Janet Westervelt and Dale Caldwell. They recently joined forces at CRK's Gainesville office where together they are launching a new era in Headwaters protection. While still getting to know each other, they discover they have much in common. Both grew up in Georgia to families that took full advantage of the great outdoors. Dale was hunting and fishing, while Janet was hiking and camping.

Neither are new to CRK. As members, volunteer advocates and avid recreationalists, they have long admired the organization's effectiveness. Together, Dale and Janet have set high goals for the Headwaters in the coming years. Janet wants to "help educate people about protecting and restoring the incredible resource that we have with the river." Dale plans to "be a positive resource in the Headwaters and decrease pollution."

You can reach Janet and Dale at jwestervelt@chattahoochee.org and dcaldwell@chattahoochee.org or call 770-531-1064.

Representing the Middle Chattahoochee



Henry Jacobs, Middle Chattahoochee Outreach Manager, and Laura Breyfogle, Floating Classroom Instructor.

It's no accident that Henry and Laura are leading an education revolution in the long underserved Middle Chattahoochee region.

Having both grown up in families that cared about natural resource protection, Henry and Laura now share their appreciation of nature's beauty and knowledge of water science with the community through the new West Point Lake Floating Classroom.

With the first full season of the floating classroom underway, Henry hopes "to help people better understand the natural world around them while also helping our community prepare for the future." Laura looks forward to "offering opportunities for people to have awe-inspiring experiences such as spotting bald eagle or seeing a beautiful sunset on the water."

You can reach Henry and Laura at [hjacobson@chattahoochee.org](mailto:hjacobs@chattahoochee.org) or lbreyfogle@chattahoochee.org or call 706-882-3701.



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