

METRO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, BUSINESSES ARE HELPING FILL OUR WATER GAP

On March 8, Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper released a report, *Filling the Gap: Conservation Successes and Missed Opportunities in Metro Atlanta*, highlighting the past decade of water conservation efforts in the region. The study was supported by RBC's Blue Water Project as well as the Turner Foundation and C.S. Mott Foundation.

The report focuses on ten local water utilities, eight of which depend on the Chattahoochee River and Lake Lanier: City of Atlanta Department of Watershed Management, DeKalb County Department of Watershed Management, Fulton County Department of Public Works, City of Roswell, Cobb County Water System, City of Gainesville, Gwinnett County Department of Water Resources, and Douglasville-Douglas County Water & Sewer Authority.

We also assessed two metro utilities in adjacent watersheds: Clayton County Water Authority, which relies on the Flint River for much of its water supply, and Bartow County Water Department, which depends upon the Etowah River and Lake Allatoona. Conserving businesses in each of the ten jurisdictions are also highlighted.

Of the 10 water utilities examined, four rose to the top for their innovative water conservation efforts. UCR recognized these "best in class" utilities at the March press event:

- 1. Atlanta's "Care and Conserve" Program** assists low-income families by performing audits, installing efficient plumbing fixtures, repairing household leaks, and offering payment assistance. To date, this program has helped over 5,000 families and saves 5.7 million gallons of water every year.
- 2. DeKalb County's "Retrofit on Reconnect" Program** requires new water customers to certify that their plumbing fixtures meet current plumbing code requirements before initiating service. In spite of the relatively large potential savings for the region, close to 50 million gallons of water per day by UCR's estimates, other local governments and



Photo courtesy of iStockphoto.com/Ekaterina Novikova

regional water planners have yet to embrace this measure.

- 3. Cobb County's Partnership with the Green Industry** is helping to significantly reduce outdoor watering demand. Irrigation uses as much as 65 percent of our treated drinking water in summer months. Working with Cobb County, golf clubs, irrigators and landscapers have voluntarily implemented best management practices. An impressive 98 percent of all golf courses in Georgia now participate in a voluntary water-conservation program.

- 4. Douglasville-Douglas County's Watershed Management Program** to protect its water supply, Dog River Reservoir. Key measures include septic system regulation, stream monitoring, zoning restrictions, large buffers, stormwater management and floodplain mapping.

While local governments in metro Atlanta are doing a far better job of managing water demand than they did a decade ago, many challenges remain.

Importantly, state leaders have largely failed to provide firm guidance and adequate financial resources to support cities and counties in their efforts to conserve limited water resources. Although the 2010 Water Stewardship Act was a good first step, much more can and must be done to lessen the growing pressure that metro Atlanta places on our stressed waterways.

Filling the Water Gap outlines three water conservation measures that can help reduce metro water demand by 160 million gallons per day—or enough water to supply the current needs of the city of Atlanta and Gwinnett County combined.

- **Fix system leaks** – Funds must be provided to local governments through matching grants and loans to detect and repair leaks. Georgia's Environmental Finance Authority may be able to provide some assistance, if the agency directs its limited funding toward conservation rather than expensive new reservoirs.
- **Replace outdated plumbing fixtures and appliances** – Pass state legislation requiring retrofit on reconnect for plumbing fixtures in metro Atlanta; alternatively, pass local ordinances like DeKalb. Pass legislation limiting the sale of clothes washers and dishwashers to high-efficiency models. Offer low-income assistance for retrofits.
- **Price water right** – Evaluate and adjust pricing for residential customers to provide an adequate price signal to encourage conservation. Develop and implement a conservation pricing structure to reward conservation efforts by commercial customers.

To view the entire report, see www.chattahoochee.org. For more information, contact Laura Hartt, UCR's Water Policy Director, at lhartt@ucriverkeeper.org.

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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

Every winter, our state legislators come to Atlanta for a session of the General Assembly — 180 men and women elected to the Georgia House and 56 elected to the Georgia Senate.

Registered lobbyists outnumber legislators five to one every year, representing a wide variety of interests. Only a dozen or so of these folks, including several of us at UCR, are focused solely on protecting Georgia's air, land and water. We are seriously out-numbered and out-gunned, a fact that seemed clear during the 2011 season.



Yet, despite our few numbers and limited resources, UCR and our allies in the **Georgia Water Coalition** were able to help stop or amend several bad proposals and, more importantly, shed light on bills that are not what they seem — or what their proponents claim.

A brief summary of several bills can be found on page 6 of this newsletter. Illustrated here is one story of how power works at the State Capitol, and why it's so important for us to elect men and women who are honest and transparent in their dealings and their representation of the constituents who elect them — instead of the lobbyists who pay for their campaigns and their entertainment during the legislative session.

Developers Take Advantage of Water Crisis

State leaders have been pushing new dams on rivers for years, despite the fact that the use of existing lakes (such as Lanier) represents the most logical and most cost-effective solution for metro Atlanta's water supply, along with aggressive water conservation.

The Deal administration has followed the Perdue administration in calls for more reservoirs to capture water before it is "wasted" on downstream communities and other states. The Public Private Partnerships Act (SB 122) passed this session was the culmination of those aspirations, fueled largely by those who stand to benefit financially from publicly funded projects that promote new development with amenity lakes.

Hallmarks of SB 122 include: eminent domain powers used to benefit developers, a possible end-run around interbasin water transfer (IBT) regulation, expedited permitting, strategic abandonment of watershed protections for some reservoirs, and the ability of private utilities to set rates for water service with no oversight. This bill was ram-rodged through the legislature with unprecedented bullying, no opportunity for amendment, and few chances to question bill proponents.

Rep. Mark Hatfield (R-Waycross), a member of the Governmental Affairs Committee in the House to which the bill was assigned, was repeatedly denied the opportunity to propose amendments to SB 122 by committee chair **Rep. Mark Hamilton** (R-Cumming).

Rep. Lynn Smith (R-Newnan), who carried the bill on the House floor, refused to answer specific questions about the bill and referred to environmentalists and others opposing SB 122 as being "cursive," a strange and apparently pejorative comment related to her days as a French teacher.

Yet, with all their muscle, the proponents of SB 122 won by just two votes. We will fight for another day, and perhaps we will prevail with greater resources. Considering the odds, we did pretty well.

Sally Bethea
Executive Director and Riverkeeper

Watershed Moment

In 1943, longtime UCR member **Dick Jennings**, was a counselor at Fritz Orr Camp in Atlanta, which is now the location of Westminster Schools. Fritz had his camp on the River every week. We would camp just below the present I-285 Bridge (not there in 1943). After breakfast, we would launch the canvas Old Town canoes in the river just above the Devils Race Course. On this rapid and the Horseshoe rapid pictured in Tom Wilson's "West Palisades," we would practice our whitewater canoeing. As a 9-year-old, I was afraid that the current would take me into the "black" rock on the right side of the Horseshoe Rapid. Dick, however, maneuvered the canoe with a steady hand. Soon after this camp experience, Dick went into the Army—it was WWII.

— **Bill Crawford**



Photo courtesy of Tom Wilson

On Patrol

For further details on UCR's investigations and enforcement actions, go to www.chattahoochee.org/on-patrol.

MULTIPLE SEWAGE SPILLS SPOTTED BY HOTLINE CALLERS

UCR receives several hundred Hotline calls every year from concerned citizens regarding a wide range of water quality issues, some of which turn out to be raw sewage spills into streams, rivers and lakes. This past winter, we had four reports of smelly, discolored water flowing into metro Atlanta streams.

From **Cobb County**, we received a report of a milky substance in a tributary to the Chattahoochee with dead fish. UCR's technical programs director Jason Ulseth responded and conducted water tests, which quickly confirmed the presence of raw sewage. The source: an upstream sewer manhole that was overflowing into the stream because the sewer line had become clogged with grease and solids.

From the city of **East Point**, we received two similar calls that led us to overflowing manholes caused by clogged sewer lines. In **Forsyth County**, we found a sewage spill in Bald Ridge Creek that dumped 10,000 gallons of raw sewage into Lake Lanier.

These spills can go unchecked for long periods of time unless they are spotted and properly reported.

Problem streams can look milky and have a chemical/sewage-type odor, or appear to be muddy, even though there may not have been a recent rainstorm. This may be caused by the sewage flow eroding the bank and washing sediments into the stream.

All four of the spills described above were stopped within hours, once we notified the appropriate local government.

If you notice anything that appears to be wrong with a stream in your neighborhood, contact Jason Ulseth immediately at 404-352-9828, ext 16 or email him at julseth@ucriverkeeper.org.



Water samples from an overflowing manhole in Cobb County confirmed the presence of raw sewage.

Enforcement Action Pending in Habersham County

While paddling the upper reaches of the Chattahoochee River in Habersham County, UCR's Headwaters Outreach Manager Bonny Putney came across a property owner who had illegally built a large structure and gazebo into the river without the necessary permits and approvals. Using our new **iPhone App**, Bonny sent a photo and the location to UCR's Jason Ulseth, who then reported it to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD). The river has a state-mandated protected buffer that requires property owners to leave all vegetation intact along the river for a width of at least 50 feet (for trout streams) to prevent riverbank erosion and protect water quality. EPD currently has a pending enforcement action against the property owner and we are monitoring the proposed actions.

Metro Water Planning District

Buffer Violations at County Park on Lake Lanier

While on a routine water quality monitoring trip on Lake Lanier in February, we discovered several possible erosion and buffer violations at a **Forsyth County's Shady Grove Park**. It appeared the county was in the process of clearing land within the lake's buffer to make way for new campsites. Once on dry land, we learned that Forsyth County had failed to obtain any of the necessary local and state permits for the work. We reported the violations to the county's enforcement section and to the Georgia EPD. They responded with a site inspection and issued a stop-work order on the construction project. Additional enforcement actions are pending.

Evidence Presented in Appeal of Sewage Discharge into National Park

In a four-day court hearing in March, UCR attorneys presented evidence that it is economically and technically feasible for **Forsyth County** to treat and discharge higher quality water through its newly-designed Shakerag sewage treatment facility into the **Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area**. Administrative Law Judge Kristin Miller called the hearing after finding that the wastewater discharge limits for two pollutants permitted by Georgia EPD (phosphorous and fecal coliform bacteria) would degrade the water quality in the area of the discharge and that EPD had misinterpreted the state's rule that protects high quality waters. In a surprise move — and inexplicably — the county argued that the river is not part of the Chattahoochee River National Recreational Area established in 1978.

West Point Lake

Efforts Underway to Reduce Nutrients in West Point Lake

In response to requests from the **city of LaGrange** and other **West Point Lake** stakeholders to lower the existing nutrient standard in the reservoir, EPD has begun to model all of the point and non-point source discharges into the watershed from Buford Dam to West Point Lake. Throughout the years — but particularly during times of drought and low flows — this lake downstream of Atlanta has experienced negative impacts due to high nutrient levels. When nutrients are elevated in the lake, detectable by monitoring chlorophyll-*a*, the city has had to incur added expenses to treat drinking water for foul odor and taste, and algal blooms are more likely. UCR is working with all parties to ensure that the lake has the best water quality possible.

River Stewardship

SAWNEE MOUNTAIN PRESERVE TEACHES WATERSHED VALUES TO STUDENTS

About 900 students from elementary schools in Forsyth County that serve low income families have been introduced to water lessons, thanks to the settlement of UCR's legal action against the city of Cumming for violations of clean water laws.

Photo courtesy of Sawnee Mountain Foundation and Preserve



Forsyth students conduct water sampling at the preserve.

In 2010, UCR settled a lawsuit against Cumming for violations of state and federal stormwater pollution control laws and regulations at a site less than 400 yards from Lake Lanier. In addition to requiring stream restoration, the settlement called for several supplemental environmental projects (SEPs). A

SEP is a tool used to redirect monies that would typically be paid in penalties to the U.S. Treasury to environmentally beneficial projects at the local level that are related to the violation in question.

Nature Center, Students Benefit from Legal Settlement

Our legal settlement required that a grant of \$40,000 be provided by Cumming to the **Sawnee Mountain Foundation and Preserve**, a nature center, science laboratory and natural preserve that works closely with

the Forsyth County Park and Recreation Department to provide environmental education.

Named after a member of the Cherokee Nation who welcomed white settlers and showed them how to build their homes around the area of present-day Cumming, Sawnee Mountain is arguably the southernmost summit in the Blue Ridge range, making it the first link in the Appalachian chain, which reaches all the way to Maine.

Grant funds were used by the Sawnee Mountain Preserve for the development and implementation of an education program to introduce elementary school students to the concept of a watershed. All of Forsyth County's Title 1 elementary schools—those with a high percentage of students from low-income families—were given an opportunity to participate in the program. During the 2010-11 school year, students participated by either visiting the preserve or learning from a naturalist in their classroom. The curriculum, which focuses on protecting watersheds, was developed to meet the current Georgia Performance Standards.

The lessons, which varied based on the student's grade level and whether students were at the preserve or in their classrooms, included the use of songs, art collages, Enviroscape demonstrations, trail walking and laboratory experiments. Soil and water sampling projects taught the students about the water cycle, the basic needs that water provides to plants and animals, the importance of conservation and the inescapable truth that wherever you are, you are in a watershed!

Sawnee Preserve has secured some additional funds to continue this successful program in future school years and with summer camps.

GRAND OPENING FOR HISTORIC FOURTH WARD PARK!

The city of Atlanta and neighborhood activists will celebrate the completion of the Historic Fourth Ward Park on June 18 (10 a.m.-2 p.m.) when they host a grand opening to showcase innovative stormwater controls, artistic granite outcroppings, a 350-seat natural amphitheater, and pedestrian walkways.

Conceived in 2003 for greenspace protection in the Clear Creek watershed, the park is located south of North Avenue and just west of the Atlanta BeltLine; it includes a 2-acre stormwater detention pond that drains 985 acres as the central visual feature. Clear Creek is a tributary to Peachtree Creek which flows into the Chattahoochee River.



The Old Fourth Ward's new historic park features innovative stormwater controls and an amphitheater.

Photo courtesy of Susan Ross

water flows for a 100-year storm event to address capacity relief problems in the drainage basin and reduce peak flows to the sewage system. Engineered water features including a fountain aeration system should ensure there will be no odors associated with the pond which is not suitable for swimming.

The total cost of what will ultimately be a 17-acre park is \$52 million — half paid by the city of Atlanta's Department of Watershed Management (DWM) and remaining funds coming from other city sources including the Atlanta Beltline and private donors.

The Trust for Public Land made the

initial land acquisitions necessary for the project and Atlanta BeltLine managed the construction project.

The Historic Fourth Ward Park Conservancy is providing ongoing maintenance, programs and amenities for the park, in cooperation with the Atlanta Parks and Recreation Department, Atlanta Beltline, BeltLine Partnership, and the Atlanta DWM.

The public can access the park via walkways and a boardwalk from entrance points along Morgan, Rankin, Dallas and Edith streets. For more information, see www.h4wpc.com.

Creative Solution to Stop Sewage Overflows, Preserve Greenspace

Initially, the city of Atlanta intended to address chronic sanitary sewer overflow problems in the area by constructing a "spur" to a nearby combined sewer overflow (CSO) tunnel. Revised plans allowed the city to reclaim a portion of the original creek, saving millions of dollars while creating a functional, creative feature for the neighborhood.

The pond whose source is natural groundwater will help detain storm-

358 VOLUNTEERS TURN OUT TO 'SWEEP THE HOOCH'!

Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, **National Park Service** and the **Georgia Chapters of Trout Unlimited** joined together on April 16 to organize "Sweep the Hooch" — an unprecedented, multi-site cleanup spanning the 48 miles of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area.

Approximately **358 volunteers** picked up trash and performed trail maintenance at 14 park units.

A storm that ripped through Atlanta the night before prevented volunteers from paddling or wading into the river to clean up additional trash, but they were still able to clean up from their launch sites.

The results of this incredible day of service included **2.76 tons of trash removed from the river and its banks and 1,496 pounds of material recycled**. The scope of the event raised the level of awareness for the need for river maintenance.

While this is the first time we've undertaken a cleanup of this magnitude in one day, it won't be the last. And our volunteers couldn't agree more.

"You get to meet new people, go for a nature walk, get a little exercise, have fun, and get a wonderful-looking t-shirt all while cleaning up the Chattahoochee River," said volunteer **Brian C.**



Team captain Peter Fitzpatrick (left) and his crew found everything AND the kitchen sink at Powers Island!

McDonald. "But this river cleanup is also one of the most unselfish things you could do. It helps ensure the health of the river, for current and future generations of people and animals. What a wonderful sense of accomplishment afterwards. I can't wait for next year's cleanup!"

Thanks to our event sponsors who generously made contributions to support all 14 cleanup sites: **REI, ReMix Recycling, GreenPlate.org, Republic Services and orangehalo.com.**

We also appreciate the support of our site sponsors whose contributions made it possible to purchase necessary equipment: **REI, RBC Bank, Carter, Georgia Aquarium, Columbia Management and UBS Financial Services, Inc.**

Finally, a very special thank you to the teams that served as site hosts and helped us promote this inaugural event! **Atlanta Outdoor Club, Carter, Generation Green, Tailwater Chapter, Trout Unlimited, Oconee River Chapter, Trout Unlimited, Kanooka Chapter, Trout Unlimited, Upper Chattahoochee Chapter, Trout Unlimited, Cohutta Chapter, Trout Unlimited, Georgia Women Flyfishers, Flint River Chapter, Trout Unlimited, US Army Corps of Engineers, Georgia Kayak Fishing, GreenPlate.org, and Surfrider.**

FOND FAREWELL, WARM WELCOME

We are pleased to welcome UCR's new Communications Director **David Lee Simmons**, who has more than 20 years of experience in reporting, communications, public relations, and social media. You'll be hearing more from David Lee in the coming weeks and months; you can reach him at dsimmons@ucriverkeeper.org!



David Lee Simmons

Our former Communications Director, **Mary O. Harrison**, is now focusing full-time on her music career, which she has pursued "on the side" for the



Mary O. Harrison & Tracy Clark of Virginia Plane

past ten years. You can find her music and upcoming shows on her band's ReverbNation page here, (<http://www.reverbNation.com/virginiaplane>). Mark your calendar for her CD-release show on June 24 at the Highland Inn Ballroom!

For more information about these and many other river-related events, visit www.chattahoochee.org/calendar

May 19
15th Annual River Revival
Park Tavern, Piedmont Park, Atlanta

June 3-6
National River Network River Rally
Charleston, SC

June 4
Paddle Cleanup – Clean the Race Course
(for 9th Annual Back to the Chattahoochee River Race & Festival on June 11)
From Garrard Landing to Riverside Park, Roswell

June 11
9th Annual Back to the Chattahoochee River Race & Festival
From Garrard Landing to Riverside Park, Roswell

June 25
River Discovery Trip #1
From Buford Dam to Settles Bridge

July 9
River Discovery Trip #2
From Settles Bridge to Abbots Bridge

July 23
River Discovery Trip #3
Abbots Bridge to Jones Bridge

August 6
Paddle Cleanup
Lower Soque River

August 20
River Discovery Trip #4
Jones Bridge to Island Ford

August 27
River Discovery Trip #5
From Morgan Falls Dam to Paces Mill

CHECK OUT OUR NEW CHATTAHOOCHEE WATERSHED MAP

www.chattahoochee.org/watershed.php

Locate the cities and counties that drain into the Chattahoochee and find places of interest and areas where you think that pollution problems exist. It's an amazing new resource!

WATER ISSUES DOMINATE THE DOME DURING LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Pundits and political commentators throughout the state correctly predicted that, yet again, water would be among the most highly debated issues in the 2011 legislative session which ended in mid-April—from interbasin transfers of water (IBTs) to new reservoirs and attempted rollbacks of water protection laws.

House Natural Resources Chair Refuses to Allow Vote

After the Board of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources passed a weak rule in January, ostensibly regulating the movement of water from one river basin to another through IBTs, it was a near certainty that all sides would be ready for war under the Gold Dome.

Three bills aimed at strengthening the IBT regulation were introduced and assigned to the House Natural Resource Committee, where **Rep. Lynn Smith** (R-Newnan) presides as chairwoman. These bills met an untimely death, however, when Rep. Smith refused to hear a full debate with public testimony on the merits of the bills or allow a vote.

As the IBT bills languished in committee, the **Georgia Water Coalition** launched a mail and phone campaign in an effort to urge Rep. Smith to respond to the concerns of downstream communities that the water in their rivers could be piped to metro Atlanta without adequate review and evaluation of the facts by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD). Rep. Smith was unmoved.

Developers Gain Major Concessions in Reservoir Bill

Private interests working with the Metro Atlanta and Georgia Chambers succeeded in passing a bill that will help developers use taxpayer

funds and secure expedited permits to dam streams for water supply reservoirs (read: subdivision amenity lakes). Under the threat of a poor economy and losing access to Lake Lanier, bill proponents were able to move this bad water policy which also allows non-state-funded reservoirs to ignore watershed protections laws. Reservoir boosters won

by only two votes; however, after stiff bipartisan opposition mounted late in the session. (See *Reflections*)

This bill will also allow a local government to condemn property by eminent domain and then convey it to any developer who applies to be a “public water utility”. Additionally, the bill creates a loophole to provide an end-run around the weak IBT rule mentioned above.

Road Builders’ Attempt to Weaken Clean Water Law Defeated

A legislative session would not be complete without a dirt bill. Yet again, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and its contractors, the largest

dirt movers in the state and habitual violators, tried to get a pass on the enforcement of erosion control laws. When bill proponents failed to gain passage of their legislation in the House by Crossover Day, they were successful in amending another bill with the language that would allow GDOT and all state agencies to violate the law several times each year before EPD could take any enforcement action. The Georgia Water Coalition and allies worked successfully to remove the exemption language from the final bill.

For more information, contact Juliet Cohen, UCR’s general counsel, at jcohen@ucriverkeeper.org.



UCR’s general counsel Juliet Cohen (L) and environmental lobbyist Neill Herring work with Rep. Debbie Buckner on water bills during the 2011 legislative session.

Thank You to our 2011 Film Festival Sponsors!

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INSPIRING FILMS A HIT WITH SOLD OUT CROWD!

Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, Georgia River Network and Georgia ForestWatch partnered for the fourth consecutive year to bring great award-winning environmental films to Atlanta at the Wild & Scenic Film Festival.

Located again at the Tara United Artists Cinema, the program offered a mix of films addressing environmental issues from energy, food systems, and biodiversity to climate change and the protection and restoration of wild lands and waters. *Eastern Rises*, a film about fly-fishing in the ultra-removed Kamchatka Peninsula in Eastern Russia and featuring Atlanta native Frank Smethurst, was a particular crowd-pleaser.

The program concluded with a special local feature *Chattahoochee: From Water War to*



The Wild & Scenic Film Festival entertained hundreds of environmentally conscious movie-goers.

Water Vision, a film by Rhett Turner and Jonathan Wickham. Wickham attended the film festival and introduced the film to our audience. As an added bonus, and what has become a tradition, our guests of appropriate age enjoyed sipping complimentary SweetWater beer while watching these inspiring films.

For more information about our annual film festival, contact Tammy Bates, UCR’s events and outreach director, at tbates@ucriverkeeper.org.

UCR OPENS NEW OFFICE IN LAGRANGE, WELCOMES JILL SISTINO

A water enthusiast who has enjoyed the Chattahoochee River and its lakes for years, **Jill Sistino** is excited to join Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper as our new Regional Outreach Manager. In this part-time position, she will be responsible for building UCR's presence and programs in the West Point Lake area working out of a new satellite office in LaGrange that will open later this summer. Her territory will include Troup, Heard and Harris Counties, and eventually a portion of the watershed in Alabama.

While living in Atlanta for 20 years after graduating with a B.A. in Communications from Oglethorpe University, Jill spent a great deal of time on the Chattahoochee River and Lake Lanier. Four years ago, she and her husband relocated to LaGrange with their two young daughters. Since then they have spent precious time on West Point Lake and have enjoyed getting to know that part of the watershed, along with the people and businesses in their new community.

Former Corporate Marketer to Promote Water Protection

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

"For those already familiar with UCR, we are a well-respected organization, and I have received positive responses to our increased commit-

ment to this area," Sistino continued. "Those who do not know much about us have told me they're eager to learn more about our mission and our role in the community."

Along with the support of long-time LaGrange resident and UCR board member **Charles W. Smith** with Hutchinson Traylor Insurance, Jill will be working with local community groups, businesses and foundations in the coming months to actively engage them in our outreach programs and grow our membership.

To learn more how you can get involved in UCR's efforts in the middle Chattahoochee region, contact Jill Sistino at jsistino@ucriverkeeper.org.



Jill Sistino will work with local community groups and businesses to actively engage them in UCR's outreach programs and grow our membership.

NEW PHANTOM SPORT PATROL BOAT JOINS UCR FLEET

UCR's river monitoring and patrol program recently received a major boost with a serious upgrade from our old jet boat to a new state-of-the-art model that can carry more passengers.

With generous support from two local private foundations, we acquired a 21-foot Phantom Sport Jon boat powered by a 200-horsepower inboard Mercury jet drive. Originally designed to navigate the remote and very shallow rivers in Alaska, the Phantom Sport Jon is one of the most versatile shallow-water jet boats ever made.

The capabilities of this new craft — the first one of its kind to be used in Georgia — will improve our efforts to conduct routine river patrol trips, perform water quality tests, and conduct investigations and site visits on the river.

Patrol Program Essential to River Protection

UCR is the only organization – government or nonprofit – that regularly patrols the industrial and remote sections of the river between Buford Dam and West Point Lake. As a result, we've found and reported numerous broken sewer lines, dumping, illegal encroachments into the river buffer, and erosion problems that otherwise would have gone



UCR Technical Programs Director Jason Ulseth stands proudly beside our new boat.

unchecked. We also use our jet boat to take government officials, business leaders and major donors on the river to learn about our issues.

Certain parts of the river can be very difficult to navigate and were previously impassable in our old boat. Our new Phantom Sport is capable of operating in as little as four inches of water and has a protected hull that will allow us to go where no other boat on the river can. The thick hull liner is made from the same material that the military

uses to protect troops from improvised explosive devices.

For the past decade, we've conducted our patrols aboard a 17-foot aluminum hull boat with a 35-horsepower outboard jet drive motor; she served us well over the past ten years, but her usable lifespan is at an end and we are in the process of selling her. Let us know if you might be interested!

We're confident that our increased patrolling capabilities will help identify and remedy even more pollution problems than we've handled in the past.

For more information about UCR's river patrols and our Phantom jet boat, contact Jason Ulseth, our boat captain and technical programs director, at julseth@ucriverkeeper.org.

Get Out

River in Heard County Offers Wildlife, Shoals

Looking for a new river section to paddle? Experience the Chattahoochee River downstream of Atlanta from the Hollingsworth Ferry boat ramp to the town of Franklin. This 12-mile paddle on a remote stretch of the river in Heard County has long straight sections, broad looping bend, islands and several nice shoals.

On a recent trip, we spotted two bald eagles, a pair of peregrine falcons and a rookery of nesting great blue herons. Bush Head Shoals at mile 7 can be Class 1+, and Daniel Shoals, at mile 9, can be Class II depending on the water level; scout them before entering. Several waterfalls may be visible from the river at Hilly Mill Creek and Red Bone Creek. Both creeks are on river left and can be entered when the water is high, however, do not trespass on adjacent private property.

Directions to Hollingsworth Ferry Rd. boat ramp:

Hwy 20 West from Atlanta. Exit 19 for GA-113 toward Temple/Carrollton. Left at GA-113 S/Carrollton St. Left at GA-1 S/US-27 S/Martha Berry HWY/N Park St. Left at W Ferry Rd. Continue into Hollingsworth Ferry Rd. Right to stay on Hollingsworth Ferry Rd.



Keeping Watch Over Our Waters

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If you prefer to receive RiverCHAT electronically, contact David Lee Simmons at dsimmons@ucriverkeeper.org.

REGISTRATION OPEN FOR THE 9TH ANNUAL RIVER RACE & FESTIVAL!

Paddlers of all ages and skill levels will take to the water on **Saturday, June 11**, for the 9th Annual Back to the Chattahoochee River Race and Festival. Hosted by Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper (UCR) in partnership with the **National Park Service**, the **city of Roswell**, and **Fulton County**, the event is organized to celebrate the Chattahoochee and foster a sense of community around the river that serves 3.5 million Georgians, more than 70 percent of the population in metro Atlanta.



Advanced registration for the race and festival runs through June 7.

and a one-year membership in UCR. See www.chattahoochee.org/river-race-festival.php.

Awards will be presented in all categories at the conclusion of the race, including awards for Best Costume and Best Boat Decoration. The race also includes a Team Challenge as a way to build pride, morale and camaraderie among groups such as companies, schools, and clubs. Race fans can cheer on their favorite crafts from several locations: Island Ford,

Don White Park and the take out at Riverside Park.

The race course begins at **Garrard Landing Park** on Holcomb Bridge Road and ends at **Riverside Park** in Roswell, the site of the FREE family-friendly festival, music and awards presentation.

THE RACE begins at 9am and includes open and recreational categories, various age divisions, solo and tandem canoe divisions, as well as kayak and sea kayak divisions. Paddlers who want a more competitive race will traverse a ten-mile course, while recreational paddlers use an eight-mile course. Both include Class I-II rapids and conclude at Riverside Park. Timing officials are provided by **Georgia Canoeing Association**.

Advanced registration is available through June 7 – \$40 for solo boats and \$60 for tandem boats. After June 7, onsite registration costs are \$50 for solo and \$70 for tandem boats and will be available based on capacity. All registered paddlers will receive a gift bag, a race T-shirt, lunch

As a special treat for racers only, paddlers will be greeted at the end of the course by the **SweetWater Beer Barge**, UCR's own pontoon boat. Paddlers can enjoy sodas, water, or a SweetWater brew (for patrons 21 and over carrying a valid ID) before going ashore.

THE FAMILY-FRIENDLY FESTIVAL at Riverside Park is FREE from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Racers and others will enjoy live music plus Riverside Park's "spray ground," face painting, balloon artists and other family-friendly activities, as well as vendors and an array of environmental exhibits.

Proceeds go to support UCR's mission to protect and preserve the Chattahoochee River system for the people and wildlife that depend upon it.

For more information, contact Tammy Bates, UCR's Events and Outreach Director at tbates@ucriverkeeper.org