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### **Chattahoochee Riverkeeper releases feasibility study of in-stream trash traps**

**ATLANTA, GEORGIA** — The volume of garbage in our rivers, lakes, and oceans has become a global crisis. Stormwater carries litter from roads, parks, and sidewalks into streams where it can break down and harm critical habitats.

Solving the problem will require data-driven strategies that are both scalable and simple for communities to implement. For more than a year, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper has been studying the effectiveness of in-stream technology called "Litter Gitters." The organization's newly-published study, "Litter Gitter Feasibility in Urban Waters," outlines not only data on trash collected, but best practices to consider when implementing similar programs in the Chattahoochee watershed and beyond.

The Litter Gitter is a small-stream litter collection device designed to catch floating trash that has made its way into creeks and streams after being carried by stormwater runoff. It uses floating booms to guide trash into a wire-mesh container, which is emptied regularly and after rainstorms.

Funded through a grant from the Coca-Cola Foundation, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper was introduced to these devices in June 2019 as part of a collaboration with Groundwork Atlanta, a nonprofit focused on community partnerships, and Osprey Initiatives, who manufactures the Litter Gitters.

Now, after a year of testing in Atlanta's Proctor Creek Watershed, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper is presenting their findings into the effectiveness of these devices for preventing trash pollution. Their newly released report details the year-long pilot project and its impact on the Proctor Creek watershed.

This study highlights factors non-profits and municipalities must consider when implementing trash traps as part of a trash reduction plan. It outlines the labor and financial requirements of operation and analyzes the Litter Gitter's trash collection ability in Proctor Creek.

"This report will serve as a tool for cities, businesses, and nonprofits looking to implement trash traps in their watershed," said Jordan Yu, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper's Watershed Protection Specialist. "With this resource, more informed decision-making can take place, reducing litter contamination in our rivers and oceans."

Compared to land-based trash cleanups, the Litter Gitters and other similar technologies are designed to remove trash that has already entered the aquatic environment. Tien Yee, Assistant Chair of the Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering at Kennesaw State University believes such projects could have enormous impacts. “An ounce of plastic removal now may equate to tremendous effort and dollars to remediate microplastics and its byproduct after degradation,” he said, “not to mention the potential healthcare cost and issues associated with the ingestion of the byproduct chemicals.”

Since June 2019, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper’s Litter Gitters in Proctor Creek have collected over 1,100 pounds of trash. Of that, 31% was recyclable. Consistent with the findings of land-based cleanups, the most frequently found items were plastic beverage bottles, water bottles, plastic bags, and Styrofoam products.

The feasibility study explores recommendations for program managers regarding trash trap site selection, hydrological concerns, maintenance requirements, and more. Despite the success of the pilot program, the Litter Gitters represent only a facet of Chattahoochee Riverkeeper’s response to plastic pollution in urban waters.

“These devices are part of a larger effort to ensure trash free waterways,” says Chattahoochee Riverkeeper Jason Ulseth. “In-stream litter collection, public cleanups, and education are all key.”

The report is available to read and download online at <https://chattahoochee.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Trash-Trap-Feasibility-Study-DIGITAL-FILE-9.22.2020.pdf>

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*Chattahoochee Riverkeeper’s mission is to protect and preserve the Chattahoochee River, its lakes and tributaries for the people, fish, and wildlife that depend upon it.*

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