



RIVERCHAT

Summer/Fall 2022

A publication of Chattahoochee Riverkeeper (CRK)

NEIGHBORHOOD WATER WATCH CREATING A COMMUNITY OF CARE FOR THE CHATTAHOOCHEE AND ITS CREEKS

When two grimy bags of water from Tanyard and Proctor Creeks were brought to Chattahoochee Riverkeeper's Atlanta office in 2010, Riverkeeper Jason Ulseth was shocked. Tests revealed high levels of bacteria in these urban waterways, which eventually join with the Chattahoochee River. How could CRK do a better job monitoring not just the river, but also its tributaries? The answer to this question was a project that has since grown into one of the most comprehensive and impactful community water monitoring programs in the country - Neighborhood Water Watch (NWW).



Now in its 12th year and encompassing more than 200 unique sampling locations, NWW is sustained by 135 dedicated volunteers, many of whom live near the very creeks they watch over. Together, these Neighborhood Water Watchers have helped hunt down 140 spills, and in doing so stopped contaminants like sewage, quarry dust, and soda syrup from filling our streams.

Supplies and training from CRK staff help equip volunteers with the knowledge and tools they need to collect weekly water samples and bring them to CRK labs, where they are tested for important water quality indicators like E. coli, typically a sign of sewage spills. While lab analysis can tell how much bacteria may be in a particular tributary, finding the spill, or source of the bacteria, is not always easy.

Sewage from a tiny rupture in a sewer line can be detected in samples taken downstream, but extensive upstream and downstream sampling is required to bracket the site of the spill and figure out where the bacteria actually enters the creek. CRK's rigorous testing and tracking methods, now replicated internationally, are crucial in leading teams to where the problem originates. To hunt down the spill's precise location, CRK staff and interns don boots and chest-high waders and wade through viny, snake-riddled creek channels, sometimes in the rain, sleet, or sweltering southern heat.

After the location has been confirmed, CRK reports the issue to the appropriate government agency, usually the local department of watershed management. Even after responsible parties begin addressing the issue and making needed repairs, CRK conducts follow-up sampling to confirm the repairs are effective and the waterway returns to normal, safe conditions.

"This has become like a very important thing to me; I didn't expect it to impact me this way," said Bryan Jenkins, a member of CRK's Board of Directors and NWW volunteer. "If it wasn't for us out here doing this, we wouldn't know half of what's going on in our river."

CRK's U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-approved laboratory and source-tracking methods have not only been proven accurate, but also effective at changing how local municipalities protect their waterways. When a problem is reported to the local government agency responsible for maintaining sewage lines and manholes, CRK has already done the legwork of identifying a source and collecting the data to prove that it's the origin of the problem. This means utilities do not need to spend time tracking and verifying where a spill is located. Instead, they can focus on fixing the issue as quickly as possible.

NWW is powered by the people and institutions who care deeply about securing clean water for their communities, and their work is paying off. CRK has documented major reductions in bacteria concentrations in the mainstem of the river as well as in many of its tributaries, leading to renewed life for all who depend on the Chattahoochee to enjoy.



Read more
about our
Neighborhood
Water Watch
wins.

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Thank you for supporting our efforts to protect and preserve the Chattahoochee River.

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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: WORLDWIDE
WATERKEEPERS REUNITE AFTER
FOUR-YEAR HIATUS

Each year, Waterkeepers from all around the globe connect at an international conference for a week of learning, camaraderie, and fellowship. That was until the COVID-19 pandemic put a halt to everyone’s travel plans.

There are currently more than 300 Waterkeeper Alliance-affiliated organizations worldwide - about half of them working within the United States. The other half are fighting for clean water in 45 countries around the globe. Collectively, we work together to protect 2.6 million square miles of waterways. Not every river in the world has a Waterkeeper (yet), but we are fortunate here in Georgia to have a Riverkeeper for every major river basin.

The annual international conference has always been an event that I looked forward to for inspiration and to recharge my water advocate batteries. Hearing stories of battles over clean water in places like China, India, and South America, as well as here in the US, motivates and educates me to be a better

watchdog for our Chattahoochee.

Due to Covid-19, we all missed out on travels and adventures, and I especially missed the annual Waterkeeper Alliance conference. Thankfully, earlier this summer in June, Waterkeeper Alliance thought it was time to bring the ‘Keepers back together. We met for a week in Washington, D.C. to reunite and celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act. It did not disappoint.

I quickly realized how much I missed my Waterkeeper brothers and sisters and how much we lean on each other for support. Waterkeepers are some of the strongest and most passionate guardians for our environment, and spending a week with them was exactly what I needed. With my batteries freshly recharged, I’m ready to continue to lead the fight for clean water here at home.


JASON ULSETH, RIVERKEEPER

FACES OF THE CHATTAHOOCHEE:
ROSA LOPEZ

Rosa Lopez was first introduced to Chattahoochee Riverkeeper in October of 2019 when she attended our Water Warriors Summit to learn about the plastic pollution crisis. Rosa has been volunteering ever since, including during her senior year at Villa Rica High



Rosa at the Becca Sue Klein All Kids Fish.

School as part of our inaugural Water Warriors on Campus program, where she participated in trash cleanups and other activities to help spread the word about CRK’s work. This fall, Rosa will be attending Dartmouth College on a full academic scholarship, majoring in Environmental Studies with a focus on Native American and Indigenous Studies. Rosa is “grateful to CRK for all the opportunities provided through the Water Warriors program, which have allowed me (and others) to grow our passion for water conservation and environmental issues.”

CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVERKEEPER



ON PATROL WITH CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVERKEEPER



Georgia Power Moving Away from Coal in Heard County

In plans recently filed before the Georgia Public Service Commission, Georgia Power indicated it will close remaining coal units at Plant Wansley in Heard County by the end of August. The information comes from the 2022 Integrated Resource Plan, the utility's 20-year roadmap for its power generation, which is updated every three years. Georgia Power also proposed excavating the 343-acre unlined pit at the site, where toxic coal ash has been stored for decades. The utility proposes transferring the waste away from the pit adjacent to the Chattahoochee River to a permitted, lined landfill that already exists on site, where it will no longer mix with groundwater.



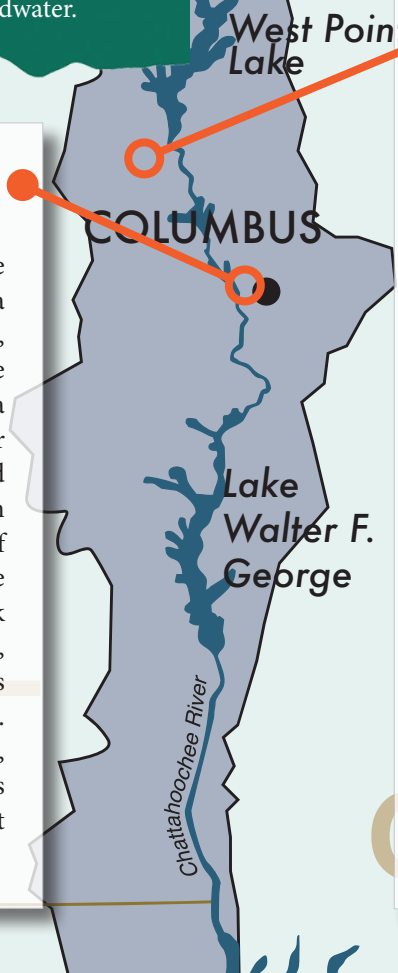
CRK Data Used in Worldwide Swim Guide Database



During the summer swimming season, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper takes extra steps to make sure our water quality data is as useful and accessible as possible. Bacteria data from some of the watershed's most heavily used locations - beaches of Lake Lanier, the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, and swimming holes south of Atlanta - is collected by CRK and shared via Swim Guide, a free resource providing clear, easy-to-interpret guidance on safe swimming conditions for beaches all over the world. Anyone can explore data for favorite summer swimming spots, along with weekly bacteria water quality data for 200+ locations year-round, at theswimguide.org.

Sediment Pollution in Cooper Creek Tributary

In early March of 2022, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper noticed discoloration of a tributary to Cooper Creek in Columbus, Georgia. CRK investigated and found the source of the sediment pollution was a bridge being constructed upstream. Water samples confirmed this as they demonstrated a significant increase in turbidity when construction was occurring. A number of governmental entities in Columbus were notified, and ultimately, CRK found a lack of best management practices (BMPs), which are meant to protect creek banks from erosion, being implemented at the site. Since CRK alerted authorities of the issue, new BMPs have been installed and CRK is continuing to monitor the site to ensure that water conditions improve.



LaGrange Trash Trap Relocated to Popular Public Trail



In January of 2022, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper moved an in-stream trash trap from Dixie Creek to the Granger Park Playground - just across the road from LaGrange High School. Beaver activity was impacting CRK's ability to maintain the trap at the original site. The trap's new location, located close to The Thread, a popular 12-foot-wide path designed for walking, running, and biking, is visible to passerby and more accessible for cleanouts. The new location is also more heavily littered and has collected more than 350 pounds of trash since installation. CRK will continue to monitor the trap's effectiveness as we expand the Trash-Free Chattahoochee program downstream of Atlanta.



Georgia's Industrial Stormwater General Permit Reissued After CRK Input

When rainwater falls on industrial sites, it has the potential to pick up contaminants that pollute our waterways. This polluted runoff is regulated by a set of rules under the Georgia Environmental Protection Division's (EPD) Industrial Stormwater General Permit (IGP), which requires industrial sites to implement ways to reduce or stop polluted runoff. In 2022, a new IGP was issued. The new permit was developed with input from various stakeholders, including CRK. CRK advocated for several positive changes to the permit's requirements including expanded water quality testing, resulting in a permit that is stronger than previous versions. CRK's work to ensure industries comply with the new requirements continues through our Protecting Streams and Communities from Industrial Pollution program.





NEIGHBORHOOD WATER WATCH

12 YEARS OF WINS

130

partners, community groups, and individual volunteers

140

sewage spills and pollution hot spots found and resolved

30,000

water samples collected, tested, and analyzed

3

state-of-the-art laboratories

206

active water monitoring locations

With more than one hundred successes, Neighborhood Water Watch (NWW) is now an internationally replicated model of community-based, clean water protection. Through NWW, communities are empowered to reclaim their public waterways with scientific data and knowledge sharing. As the program celebrates nearly a dozen years of measurable results, we look back and share some of our NWW watershed wins.

Proctor Creek August 2011

In 2010, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper (CRK) began working with residents near the decommissioned Greensferry Combined Sewer Overflow facility to test water quality in Proctor Creek, an effort that expanded to 20 monitoring stations throughout its urban watershed. Data from this site was sent to the City of Atlanta, which, combined with increasing pressure from the community, prompted officials to conduct extensive investigations around the decommissioned facility. More than 25 illegal sewer connections were found and disconnected as a result, leading to a 93% decrease in E. coli and significant improvements to water quality.

Tanyard Creek July 2013

Collier Hills-based NWW volunteers collect water samples from Tanyard Creek. When samples indicated bacteria contamination, CRK staff responded by conducting inspections upstream. Teams soon after identified a massive sewer leak and hundreds of dead fish. The City of Atlanta was notified and found that a nearby private apartment complex's sewage lift station was at fault. The spill was stopped, but not before nearly 10,000 gallons of raw sewage had been dumped into the urban waterway. Georgia Environmental Protection Division took enforcement action in response, and CRK continues to monitor this tributary.

Fish kill at Tanyard Creek as a result of pollution.



Flat Creek November 2013

Located upstream of Buford Dam, Flat Creek flows into Lake Lanier after passing through a busy industrial area including some of Gainesville's poultry plants. Long proven one of the most polluted creeks in our watershed, CRK began routinely testing its waters in 2012. NWW's data collection and pollution tracking initiatives have led to several enforcement actions, as well as various infrastructure investments to clean up industrial stormwater discharges into the

creek. Our data shows a 30% decrease in bacteria levels in Flat Creek since we began routine water quality testing, which is good news for the Gainesville community and the lake.

Wahoo Creek February 2016

As water samples of Newnan's Wahoo Creek began to test high in E. coli bacteria, CRK teams threw on waders and trekked upstream to locate a tough-to-track broken sewage line in need of repair. CRK notified the City of Newnan who responded quickly, conducting repairs that follow-up tests confirmed were effective. The discovery of this spill is due in large part to CRK's unique partnership with Newnan Paddlers - a local group of paddle enthusiasts who have collected water samples on Wahoo Creek since 2015.

South Utoy Creek February 2017

Not far from CRK's west Atlanta office, South Utoy Creek intersects with Dodson Drive. It was there that a NWW fellow noticed a dramatic increase in bacteria levels to more than 1,000 times the Environmental Protection Agency safety recommendation. Testing both up and downstream of the area of concern allowed CRK to hone-in on the hot spot, which was then identified by a walk through the waterway. Trackers spotted a tree that had been uprooted by an eroded streambank, snapping a roaring 36" sewer pipe and causing thousands of gallons of untreated sewage to flow directly into the creek. The City of Atlanta was quick to respond and contain the spill, vastly improving water quality in this important urban waterway.

Camp Creek January 2020

Fats, oils, and greases (commonly referred to as FOGs) are known as some of the biggest culprits of pipe clogs and sewage spills; but baby wipes are also dangerous contributors to this growing problem, as aging infrastructure is simply not equipped to handle this fibrous, manmade material. Samples of Camp Creek brought in by NWW partner Fulton County Public Works and community volunteers prompted rigorous testing and meticulous tracking by CRK's trained interns and staff, uncovering a shocking overflowing manhole, an unfortunately common issue in the Chattahoochee watershed. A quick response from City of College Park led to the blockage being removed, restoring normal flow to the Camp Creek-adjacent sewer line.

Sewer pipe flowing directly into Utoy Creek.



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Ronald Pless
Jay Pollard
Ana Popp
Ann Poser
Charles Prevatte

Julia Prybys
Gail Pyle
Shannon and Josh Raglin
Leanne and Bill Rakers
Tori Ramsey
Eleanor Ravenwhite
Julie Reck
John Reddick
Steven Redmond*
Stephen Reid
Kelly Reilly
Sandra Rekemeier
Randy Reynolds
Corinna Richards*
Bonny Richardson
Tim Roberson
Sam Robertson
Danny Rock
Cibelis Rosado
Paul Rosenzweig*
Haley Rounsifer
Kristina Rowe
Robert Rozanski
Sydney Rubin*
Roy Rubin
Jennie Rudder
Jana Rudolph
Maria Salmon Rondon
Heydy Sanchez
Deborah Sandford
Rachel and
Josh Saulsbury
Javier Sayago
Richard Sayles
Leila Schatz
Joe Schoofs
Gary Schroeder
Jeanne Schultz
Tabitha Schwartz
Kaleigh and
Shaun Scruggs
Rebecca Seidel
Amanda and Ben Sellers
Victoria Sessions
Casey Sharp
Doug Shaw
Jeff Shelby
Joyce Sheperd
Jamie Shetler
Carol Shifflett
Doug Shipman
Amy Sibley
Stephanie Simmons
Wanda Sims
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Leonard Sinclair
Doug Singleton
Nancy Smith
Smoke Rise Garden Club
Mark Soll
Amy Somerville
Arthur Spalding*
Sue Spangler
Don Spencer
Erin Srivastava
Joy and Fred Staeck

Andrea and
Michael Stalemark
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Jack Stearns
Sarah Stein
Amanda Stentiford
Alyson Stober
Julie and Ray Stokes
Sue Stoudemire
Dwayne Stover
Larry Strain
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James Sweeney
Marco Talley
Kristen Taylor
Josie Taylor
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Texas Instruments
Foundation
The Kroger Company
Foundation
Sue Thiessen*
Carl Thomas
Corinne and Jim Thornton
David Todd*
Abbey Tomlin
Travis Towns
Charlene and
Stephen Triemer
Anita and John Turlington
Mary and Trey Turner
Rushi Vachhani
Marianne Varley
Kendra Velilla
Brian Versluys
Melissa Vickery
The Village at Deaton
Creek by Del Webb
Garden Club
Vera Vogt
Sherry Wade
Waverly and
Anthony Wahbeh
Clay Walker
Michael Wallace
Rebecca Wallace
John Wampler
Hoke Ward
Alicia Webb
Robert Weeks
Michael Wells
Carol Wernecke
Donna Werner
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Laura and Mark Wheeler
Jim Whooley
Lynne Wilbanks
Trudy Wilkerson
John Wilkerson
Sally and James Williams

Robert Williamson
Tonya Wilson
Julie Woo
Kasey Wooldridge
Catherine Wright
Tammy Wright
Deborah Xavier-Mis
Stephanie Yancey
Sharnage Young
Alyssa Bowers-Zamani
and Rad Zamani
Catherine Zilber

**IN HONOR OF/
MEMORIALS**

In honor of Tammy Bates
Bonny Putney

In memory of Julie Becker
John Dewosky
Dave Hendrick
Nancy Jenkins
Jenny Korstad
Ilene Levinson
John Lynch
Dan Stewart

In memory of Rick Bellows
Candace Allison
Daniel Bellows
Jeffrey Brown
Madison Copeland
Sandy and Mike Dols
Michele Rozeski and
Tony Erdmann
Wendy and
Brian Erdmann
Chad, Robert and
Beth Erdmann
Alan Hemani
KayLynne Kratzer
Patty Laine
Lynn Leonard
Linda and
Greg Olson
Joy Tu

In memory of
Manuel Chavez Sr.
Susana Chavez

In honor of the
Eversheds Sutherland
Accounting team
Aurora Fernandez

In memory of
Robert Daniel Gredys
Phillip Graham
Dinah and
Robert Grollman
Ethan Haase
Roy R Haase Jr
Laura Martin
Mary Saylor
Susan Tursky
Kathy Zimmerman

In honor of
Mary B. Griffin
Elsa Bisset

In honor of
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Melissa and Pete Raack

In memory of
Bonnie Jackson
Andrew Schock

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Jeannie and
Charles Smith

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In memory of
Michael Scott Rosen
Cindy Custer

In honor of
Ceil Thompson
Lynn and Michael Briggs

In honor of
Captain Mike Tracy
Peter Gordon

In honor of
Lisa Brooke Sassemann
D Sassemann

In memory of
Ben Simmons
Kathy and Ben Daniel

GIFTS IN-KIND

Accent Cellars
Allison's Honey and
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Ameris Bank
Amphitheatre
Anne Holifield Art
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Atlanta Botanical
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Avaloo Hemp Shop
Becca Sue Klein
Best Friends on the Lake
Pooch Pontoon
Bluefin
Bruster's Real Ice Cream
Chattahoochee Golf Club
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CMC Jewelry
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Cox Enterprises, Inc. /
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Custom Crafted
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Hall County Soil and
Water Conservation
District
Hardman Farm State
Historic Site
Harvest Moon Plants
The Home Depot -
Buford
The Home Depot -
Dahlonega
The Home Depot -
Gainesville
Johnny's BBQ
Kimberly Clark
Corporation
Lake Lanier Sailing Club
The Lavender Lamb
The Lodge at Amicalola
Falls State Park
Maddy Risser Pottery
My Favorite Photo
Nacoochee Adventures
Nantahala Outdoor
Center
New Vision Tattoo
The Orvis Company
Peachtree Waste
Management
Pet Pleasers Bakery
Rahab's Rope
Republic Services
Royal Lakes Golf and
Country Club
The Schoolhouse
AirBNB Rental
Smith, Gambrell and
Russell, LLP
Smithgall Woods
State Park
The Spa on Green Street
Stormwater Systems, Inc.
The Stout Brothers
Tallulah 1882 Cafe
Tallulah General Store
Tantrum Brewing
Company
The Cottage Vineyard
and Winery
Truelove Bakery
Unicoi Outfitters
Wildewood Shop
Wildwood Outfitters
Zen Ramen and
Sushi Burrito

*Monthly sustainers

To become a member, visit chattahoochee.org/become-a-member.



*CRK RECEIVES 100% BOARD
AND EMPLOYEE GIVING



SUPPORT A HEALTHY CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER

Chattahoochee Riverkeeper is the only nonprofit organization dedicated entirely to protecting and preserving the Chattahoochee River for all the people and wildlife that depend on it. Through a variety of unique projects like those shared in this edition of RiverChat, CRK has been making a meaningful, positive impact on the Chattahoochee watershed since 1994.

You can help fund these and more initiatives to care for the Chattahoochee River by scanning here:



SCAN TO DONATE

Or, make a donation at chattahoochee.org/donate.



DON'T TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT



OTR CAPITAL CORPORATE CLEANUP, MAY 13 "We had fun, but also a great cause! It's amazing to me the critical resource that is flowing below us every day that needs our help to stay clear and clean. What a serene spot we got to see yesterday that just happened to be under the busiest traffic spot in the state." -Peter Corrigan



ALL KIDS FISH, MAY 14 "I had never been fly fishing before, but Sylvia helped me learn. I was so excited I caught a rainbow trout on my second cast!! I am so happy to have learned to fly fish. I also learned you have to be patient. The trout can jump out of the water, run away, or spit out the hook. I learned a lot about fishing, clear water, and the environment. I had a great time and can't wait to go back there in the water." -Matthew Boenig

CREEKSIDE CHAT WITH WEST ATLANTA WATERSHED ALLIANCE, MAY 19 "It was just a great event and atmosphere; I learned a lot. I've been collecting the water samples for a few years now and it was good to sit with Mike and others just to learn more about why we're collecting the water samples and how you are able to track down the really dirty spots in the water. It was a good learning experience for me and my children - the kids really enjoyed it as well." -Fred Erwin

WATER WARRIORS SUMMER BREAK PROGRAM SHADOWING, JUNE 2 "Shadowing with Chattahoochee Riverkeeper as part of their inaugural Water Warriors program was an invaluable opportunity to learn how laboratory analysis of water samples from the Chattahoochee River watershed keeps local communities safe. Seeing the process of water quality analysis motivated my mom and I to want to volunteer with the Neighborhood Water Watch to collect water samples for analysis." -Ella Kaufman

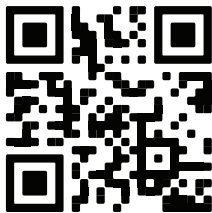


COLUMBUS PRIDE FESTIVAL, JUNE 4 "It was a joy to see the Chattahoochee Riverkeeper presence at Pride. It was a reminder that the Chattahoochee River is a resource for everyone to enjoy. The Riverkeeper presence at Pride was also a reminder that everyone needs to join together to protect this natural resource for future generations to enjoy." -Paul Lee

WILD & SCENIC FILM FESTIVAL, JUNE 11 "The Wild and Scenic Film Festival in Gainesville allows us to see and hear why the work Chattahoochee Riverkeeper does is so important. Each community has the option to step up and come together when needed, and films that highlight community efforts across the world help us feel more connected and encouraged to keep protecting this watershed." -Andrew Linker

LIKE WHAT YOU SEE?

You can also share your thoughts about our work, the Chattahoochee River, and this edition of RiverChat in our quick online survey. Visit chattahoochee.org/summersurvey2022 to learn more.



SCAN FOR SURVEY



NATIVE PLANTS USED IN SUSTAINABLE STREAM RESTORATION IN LAGRANGE

If someone was asked to imagine the perfect creek, they might describe a softly flowing stream, tumbling over smooth stones, with a lush, green canopy overhead, filled with a cacophony of bird song; but urban creeks do not always match this life-sustaining, idyllic ecosystem.

In the spring of 2022, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper partnered with LaGrange College to transform a section of Park Creek in LaGrange, a waterway once surrounded by a grassy lawn and eroding banks, into a thriving waterway that promotes a healthy ecosystem.

On March 19, two dozen LaGrange College students joined CRK staff and volunteers to plant nearly 1,000 native, pollinator-friendly grasses and shrubs along a 600-foot section of the creek as it flows through the college campus. Rather than a major restoration project involving heavy equipment and restructuring of the creek bank, CRK took an affordable approach that involves identifying, purchasing, and planting native pollinator-friendly vegetation.

The biggest issue at the site was erosion of stream banks, which can lead to muddy water and poor conditions for wildlife such as fish and macroinvertebrates. The native plants strategically selected for this site have extensive root systems that will stabilize the creek banks and prevent further erosion. They will also help restore habitat for wildlife and provide food and shelter for both aquatic and terrestrial species. Leveraging native plants to restore the riparian zone of Park Creek will not only help the stream look better, but doing so may even lower maintenance costs by reducing landscaping that needs to be mowed.

This project also provides an educational opportunity for LaGrange College students to study the effects of a sustainable stream restoration. Current and future students will be able to use this section of Park Creek to better understand how critical a role a healthy stream plays in a well-balanced ecosystem.

“Having this stream restoration project on campus provides opportunities for students to watch the impact of the work we did; how changes in the plant community help to model aquatic environment of the stream,” says Dr. Mark Yates, Associate Biology Professor at LaGrange College.

With the success of the initial planting, CRK is excited to continue working with LaGrange Collect to add more native species to this site and ensure its success in the coming months and years.

NATIVE FLORA PLANTED ALONG PARK CREEK INCLUDE:

- Virginia sweetspire
- Button bush
- Wax myrtle
- Elderberry livestakes
- Big bluestem
- Fox sedge
- Swamp sunflower
- Orange coneflower
- Soft rush
- River oats
- Blue mistflower
- Lance-leaf coreopsis
- Southern blue flag iris
- Cardinal flower
- Lizard’s tail
- Soft stem bulrush



CREEKSIDO CHAT INCLUDES DATA AND DISCUSSION IN WEST ATLANTA

On Thursday, May 19, 2022, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper (CRK) and West Atlanta Watershed Alliance (WAWA) hosted the first Creekside Chat, a Neighborhood Water Watch (NWW) forum and review of data from the Westside River Rendezvous hosted just a few months earlier.

NWW is a community-based, water quality monitoring program that engages volunteers in collecting water samples from neighborhood creeks and sleuthing and resolving sources of pollution. Data from the samples is then published to a publicly-viewable online database, ensuring that everyone in the community is able to understand the health of waterways in their own backyard. The Westside River Rendezvous, which CRK also hosted in partnership with WAWA, organized residents of west Atlanta and other volunteers in a one-day snapshot of water quality taken at 63 stream sites in the area. The Creekside Chat explored insights gleaned from both NWW and the Westside River Rendezvous, including several since-resolved pollution events and spills.

Friends and volunteers gathered for the Creekside Chat at riverside Whitter Mill Park, where leaders from CRK and WAWA shared meaningful updates on water quality work being done throughout Metro Atlanta. Representatives from the Chattahoochee Brick Company Descendant Coalition, Collier Hills Civic Association, and the Watershed Learning Network weighed in on community efforts to track, understand, and protect local water quality. The Creekside Chat also involved a hike to the Chattahoochee River.

The event ran over by nearly an hour, with all participants excited by the opportunity to connect with new neighbors, dive into data they helped collect, and hear updates on work being



done to improve conditions across the watershed and in their own streams. The next Creekside Chat is expected to be held in spring of 2023.

“It was just a great event and atmosphere,” said Fred Erwin, a weekly NWW volunteer who attended the Creekside Chat event with his children. “I learned a lot. I’ve been collecting the water samples for a few years now and it was good to sit with Mike and others just to learn more about why we’re collecting the water samples and how you are able to track down the really dirty spots in the water. It was a good learning experience for me and my children - the kids really enjoyed it as well.”

FAUNA FEATURE: BROWN TROUT THRIVE IN THE CHATTAHOOCHEE’S CHILL

The Chattahoochee has always been a warm-water river home to warm-water fish species like bass, bream, and catfish. That changed for one stretch of the river in the 1950s when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built Buford Dam and in turn created Lake Sidney Lanier. Built for multiple purposes including flood control, power generation, water supply, and recreation, the dam also created a release of unnaturally cold water downstream.

Water that moves through Buford Dam and released into the Chattahoochee River comes from deep below the lake’s surface at a depth of 150 feet where the water is far from the reaches of

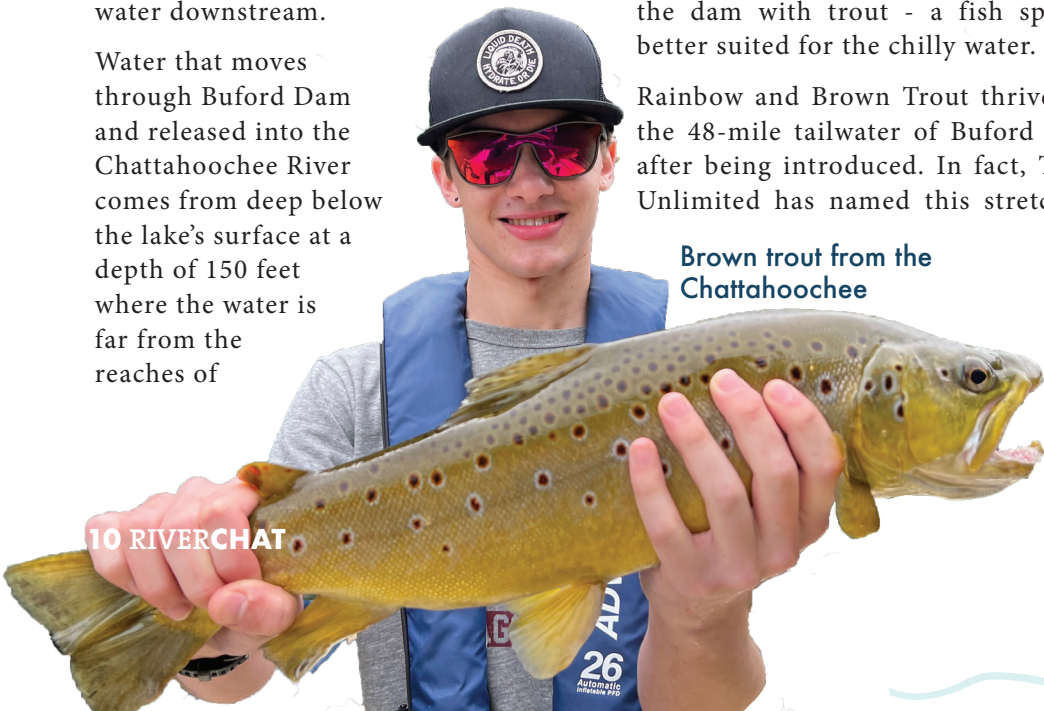
the sun’s rays, making it extremely cold year-round. While previously populous natural fish species that were used to warmer temperatures could no longer survive immediately downstream of the dam, the new conditions presented opportunities for other fish species to thrive. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) soon began stocking the stretch of river immediately below the dam with trout - a fish species better suited for the chilly water.

Rainbow and Brown Trout thrived in the 48-mile tailwater of Buford Dam after being introduced. In fact, Trout Unlimited has named this stretch of

the Chattahoochee as one of the top 100 trout fisheries in the nation. The Chattahoochee River is one of the most southern cities with a trout fishery in the country; and most importantly, it is the United States’ southernmost river with a self-sustaining population of Brown Trout.

While the Rainbow Trout need to be continuously restocked, the Brown Trout have not been stocked since 2005, due to their being able to successfully reproduce along the mainstem of the river. Because Rainbows lay their eggs in the river’s warmer tributaries, and not in the cold waters of the mainstem, they cannot naturally reproduce in the Hooch.

While dams can cause varied ecological harms, Buford Dam’s influence on the survival of trout species in Atlanta’s backyard is a surefire testament to the quality of the dam’s tailwater.



Brown trout from the Chattahoochee

HISTORIC CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER PROGRAM TO BRING CHANGE, COLLABORATION TO CHATTAHOOCHEE

Members of Georgia’s delegation to the United States Congress are working hard to pass a new law and create the Chattahoochee River Program. Originally introduced by Senators Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock in cooperation with Representatives Carolyn Bourdeaux, Henry “Hank” Johnson, Nikema Williams, Lucy McBath, and David Scott, the new program will improve water quality, protect essential public works, and restore ecosystems along the river - all of which are vital to Georgia’s drinking water supply, agricultural industry, power generation, and more.

The Chattahoochee River Program is a small part of a massive piece of federal legislation called the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2022. The WRDA authorizes federal spending and management of water projects all over the United States.

In and around the Chattahoochee River, the WRDA presents the opportunity to develop a comprehensive plan for important restoration projects led by the United States Army Corps of Engineers. Federal, state, and other stakeholders like Chattahoochee Riverkeeper will have the chance to provide input on potential projects within the plan that must be completed within two years of passage of the WRDA.

Water resource protection and restoration projects that may be evaluated during the development of the comprehensive plan could address sediment and erosion, eroding shorelines and riverbanks, ecosystem restoration, water quality, non-point source nutrient pollution, the protection of essential public works, and uses of dredged material. The plan could also consider other initiatives “that may enhance the living resources of the Chattahoochee River Basin” anywhere in the Chattahoochee River basin, including in Georgia and/or Alabama.

The Chattahoochee River Program will receive \$90 million in funding for its projects. No one single project may exceed \$15 million in cost, and every project will require a cost-share: 75% in federal funds and 25% non-federal.

The best outcome of the Chattahoochee River Program would be to bring together state, federal, and other stakeholder partners to work as one for the future



of the Chattahoochee River. After decades of legal conflict over the Chattahoochee’s water, collaboration would be a welcome change.

National Park Service Superintendent Ann Honious, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper Jason Ulseth, and Sen. Ossoff tour the river on the CRK patrol boat on February 23, 2022.

CONSERVING THE CHATTAHOOCHEE

There are always a few extra steps we can take to conserve our water resources. Every drop counts when it comes to making sure there’s enough of the Chattahoochee River to go around.

8 Tips to Reduce Your Water Use at Home



Take showers (they use less water than baths)

Turn off the tap while shaving or brushing teeth

Use a dishwasher - and when you do, make sure it's fully loaded

Scrape your plate instead of rinsing it before loading it into the dishwasher



If you have a pool, use a cover to reduce evaporation when it's not being used



Install energy-efficient fixtures and appliances to save energy, which saves water

If landscaping, plant native plants and low-water grasses and shrubs

Use a rain barrel to collect rain, which you can use to water plants and wash cars



Recycled rain barrels are on sale now at chattahoochee.org/shop. Made from recycled soda syrup drums, each barrel comes complete with everything needed for installation and a step-by-step guide.



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Keep up with all of CRK's events and learn more about how to get involved at chattahoochee.org/events.

WATERSHED WINS A Patron Celebration

SAVE the
DATE

This fall, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper and friends will celebrate 28 years of Watershed Wins thanks to the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act, the bedrock law that has enabled CRK to do so much good for our waters and communities.

The event will feature special guest speaker Jennifer Dorian, President and CEO of WABE Atlanta, and honor three distinguished awardees. Ilene and Ken Kreadle, owners of Reduce, are our honored recipients of the River Guardian Award for their leadership in the environmentally-sustainable market and for their community activism. Juanita Wallace exemplifies what is represented in our River Hero Award by serving as a Neighborhood Water Watch volunteer for nearly a decade. The Georgia Water Coalition has earned our River Steward Award for providing leadership on our state's water policies for 20 years.

WATERSHED WINS, A Patron Celebration October 13

The Stave Room, Atlanta
and livestreamed
to participants at home

For more information, visit
CHATTAHOOCHEE.ORG/PATRONDINNER.

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