

Thursday, June 4, 2026

LET'S CHATT: Atlanta Fish Kill

- These slides and a recording of today's webinar will be sent to all participants as a link.
- The Q&A session will begin after presentations by the CRK speakers.
- Please enter your questions in the Q&A chat box at any time.



**CHATTAHOOCHEE
RIVERKEEPER®**

Today's Speakers:

Jason Ulseth

Riverkeeper & Executive Director

Chris Manganiello, PhD

Water Policy Director

Jess Sterling

Technical Programs Director

About Chattahoochee Riverkeeper (CRK)

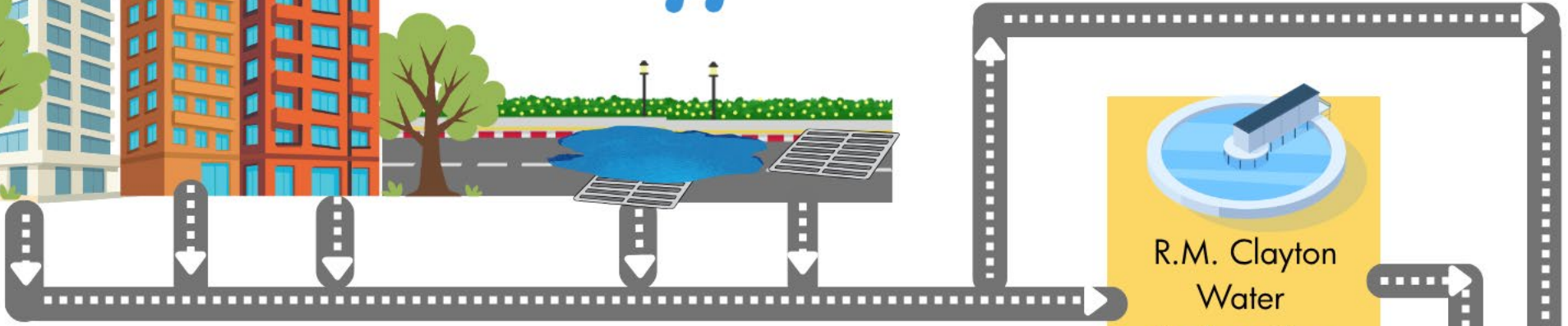
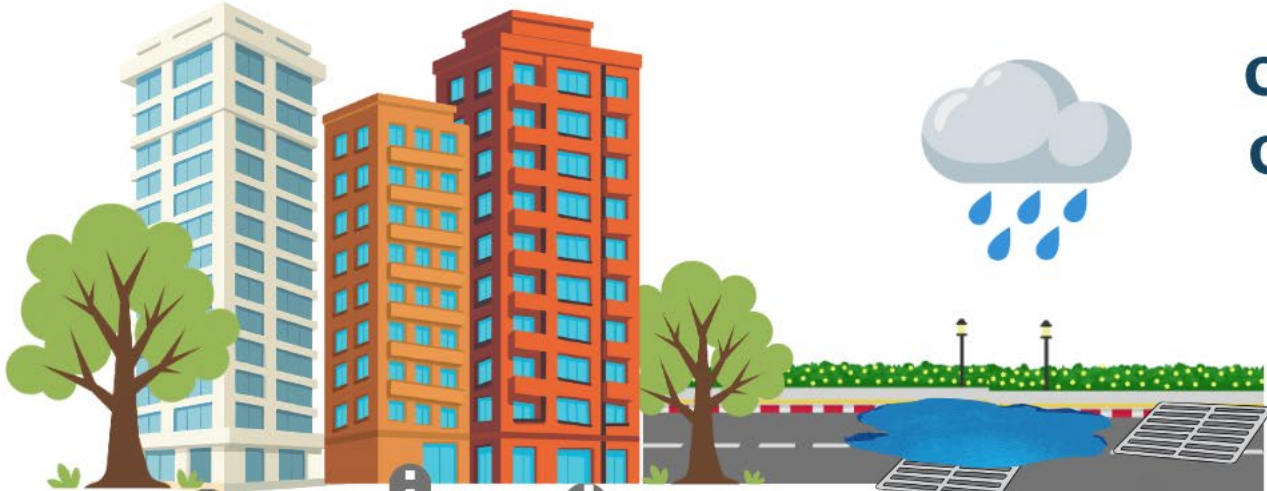
CRK is a nonprofit environmental education and advocacy organization focused on protecting and preserving the Chattahoochee River, as well as the surrounding tributaries and lakes in its watershed.

Since 1994, we've leveraged water monitoring, education, research, advocacy, communication, collaboration, legal action, and more to make sure our water stays protected for all who depend on it. Learn more at www.chattahoochee.org



City of Atlanta West Area Combined Sewer System

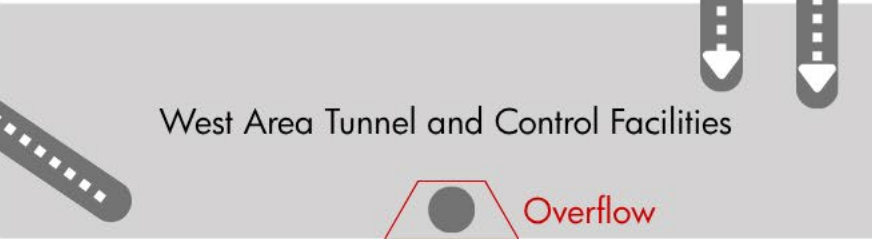
Chattahoochee River



R.M. Clayton
Water
Reclamation
Center



West Area
Water Quality
Control Facility



West Area Tunnel and Control Facilities

Overflow

Peachtree Creek









Chattahoochee
River National
Recreation Area

HELEN

Lake
Lanier

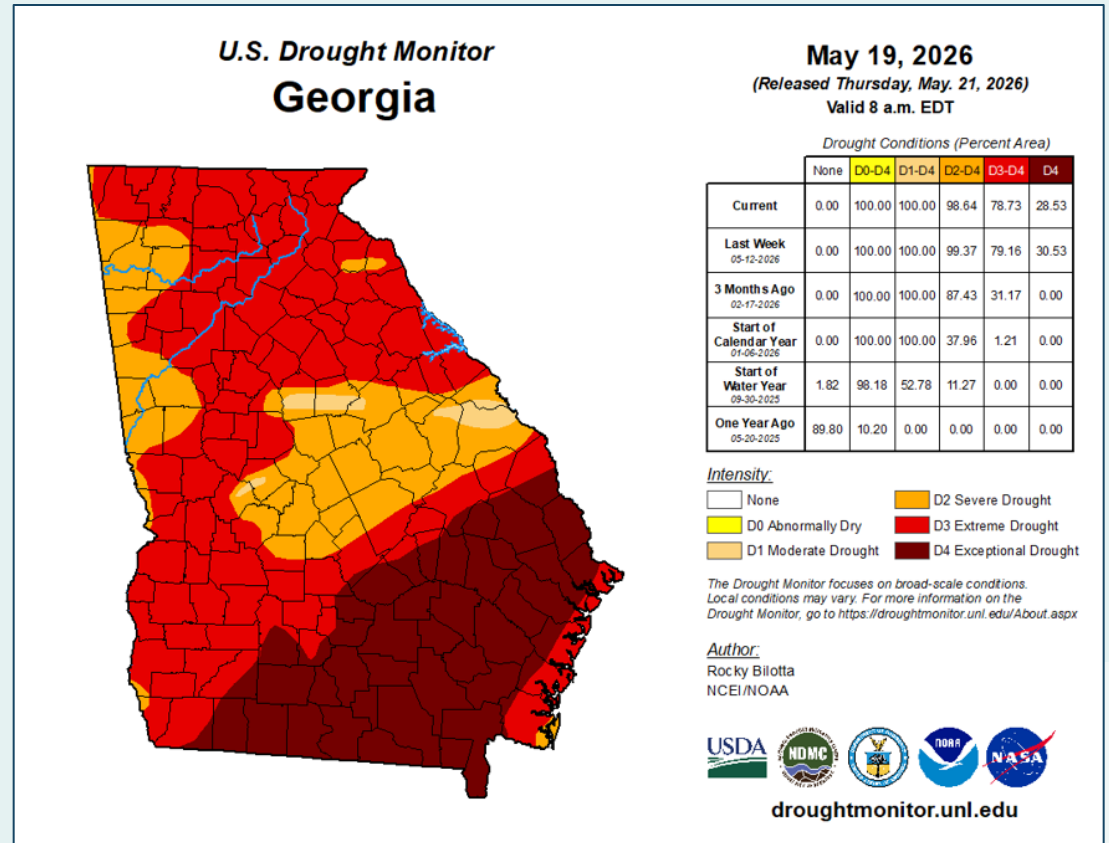
ATLANTA

West Point Lake

Chattahoochee River

Setting the Stage: Drought conditions have been building since 2025

- Since September 2025, the region has not experienced significant rainfall and has accumulated a rainfall deficit of at least 14 inches.
- Beginning on April 1, 2026, the Chattahoochee River regularly dropped to minimum flows.
- Beginning on April 7, Fulton County and the City of Atlanta were classified as experiencing “Extreme Drought” conditions.
- On April 27, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division declared [Drought Response Level 1](#).



May 20, 2026 Rain Event



Brad Nitz
@BradNitzWSB



Check this out: Atlanta's official rainfall total for today was ZERO even though over 3 inches fell with flash flooding downtown. That's how scattered storms affect our area, and this pattern will continue for many days.

... THE ATLANTA CLIMATE SUMMARY FOR MAY 20 2026 ...
VALID AS OF 0800 PM LOCAL TIME.

CLIMATE NORMAL PERIOD: 1991 TO 2020
CLIMATE RECORD PERIOD: 1878 TO 2026

WEATHER ITEM	OBSERVED VALUE	TIME (LST)	RECORD VALUE	YEAR	NORMAL VALUE	DEPARTURE FROM NORMAL	LAST YEAR
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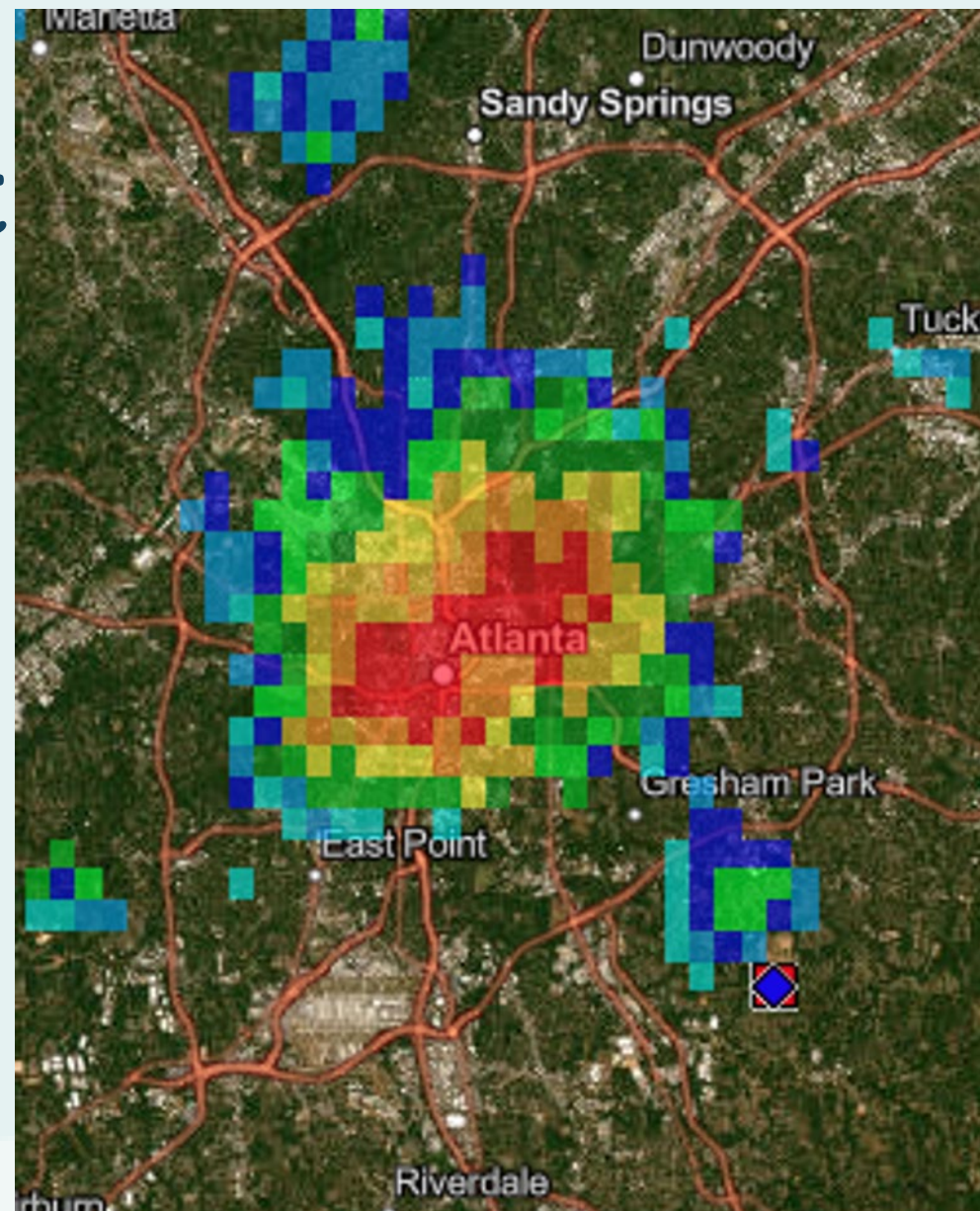
.....
TEMPERATURE (F)

TODAY

MAXIMUM	91	1:21 PM	94	1941	82	9	88
MINIMUM	70	6:00 AM	39	1894	63	7	72
AVERAGE	81				72	9	80

PRECIPITATION (IN)

TODAY	0.00		3.28	1888	0.10	-0.10	0.00
MONTH TO DATE	0.53				2.27	-1.74	3.11
SINCE MAR 1	6.64				10.76	-4.12	10.20
SINCE JAN 1	12.35				19.90	-7.55	18.59



May 20, 2026 Rain Event

- On May 20, 2026, at 4:00 PM, the temperature peaked at about 89.6 degrees Fahrenheit, capping a 5-day streak with temps above 87 degrees, at [Bobby Dodd Stadium](#) on Georgia Tech's Midtown campus.
- About 4:45 PM, rain began falling at Bobby Dodd Stadium. 2.62 inches fell over two hours, mostly in the Peachtree Creek basin.
- About 5:30 PM, the I-75/85 Connector began flooding.

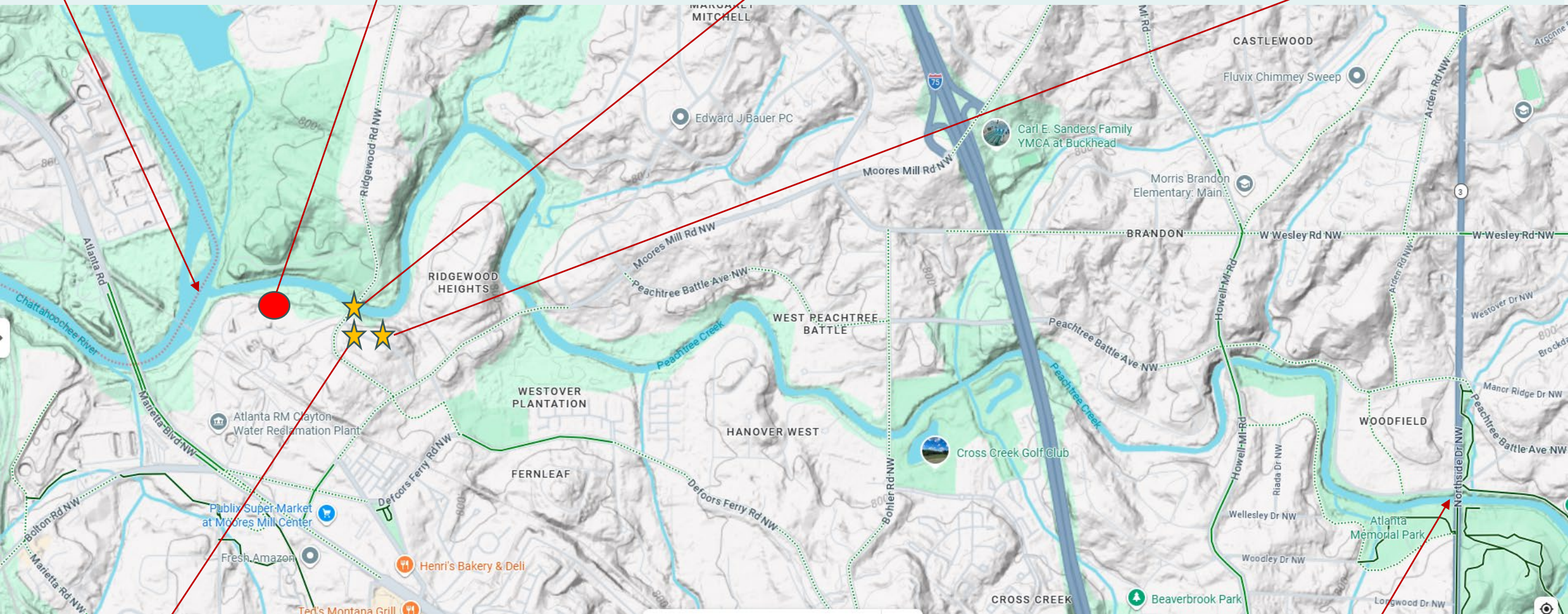


1. On Wednesday, May 20, 2026, at 5:00 PM, the Chattahoochee River at Peachtree Creek was flowing at approximately 780 cfs.

2. On May 20, approx. 5:00 PM, the West Area CSO Tunnel Emergency Overflow began to discharge into Peachtree Creek until approx. 9:00 PM.

3. On May 20, approx. 5:35 PM, a video submitted to CRK's Hotline showed Peachtree Creek flowing with black water in reverse direction (upstream) while standing on the Ridgeview Rd. NW bridge.

4. On May 20, at approx. 5:47 PM, a video submitted to CRK's Hotline showed Peachtree Creek flowing with black water in reverse direction (upstream), and the Creek may not have resumed its normal course until 6:30 PM.

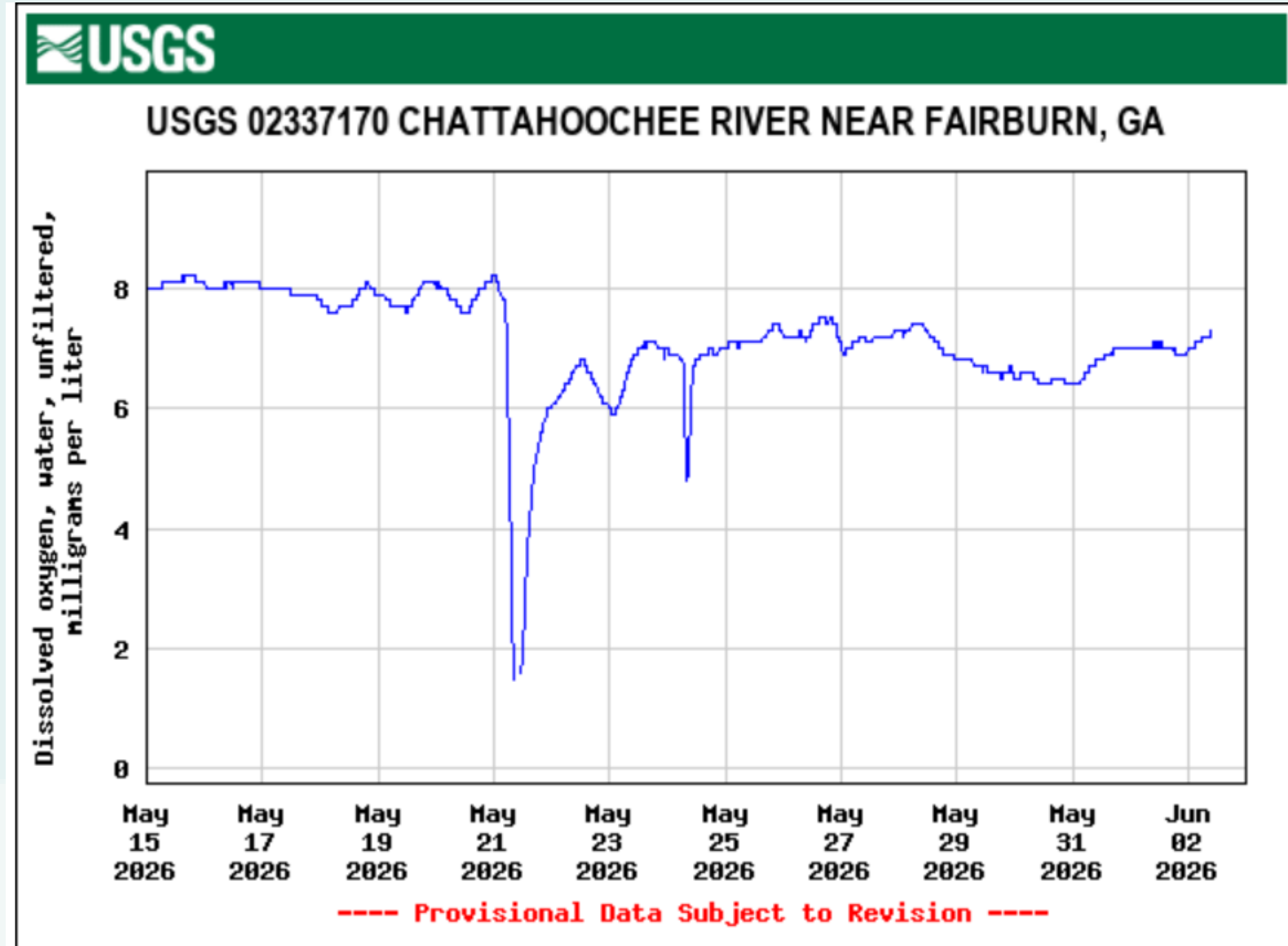


5. On May 20, a message submitted to the CRK Hotline Report indicated Peachtree Creek was flowing with black water in reverse between 5:45 PM and sunset.

6. On May 20, the flow at the USGS gauge at Peachtree Creek and the Northside Ave. Bridge began climbing at approx. 5:30 PM from approx. 100 cfs to a maximum of 619 cfs at approx. 7:00 PM.

How did the fish die? “Hypoxic Flood”

- Fish and other aquatic life need oxygen from the water to survive.
- Influx of chlorinated, hypoxic water from the tunnel, combined with a high load of organic “black stuff” likely caused the crash in oxygen.



What did CRK test?

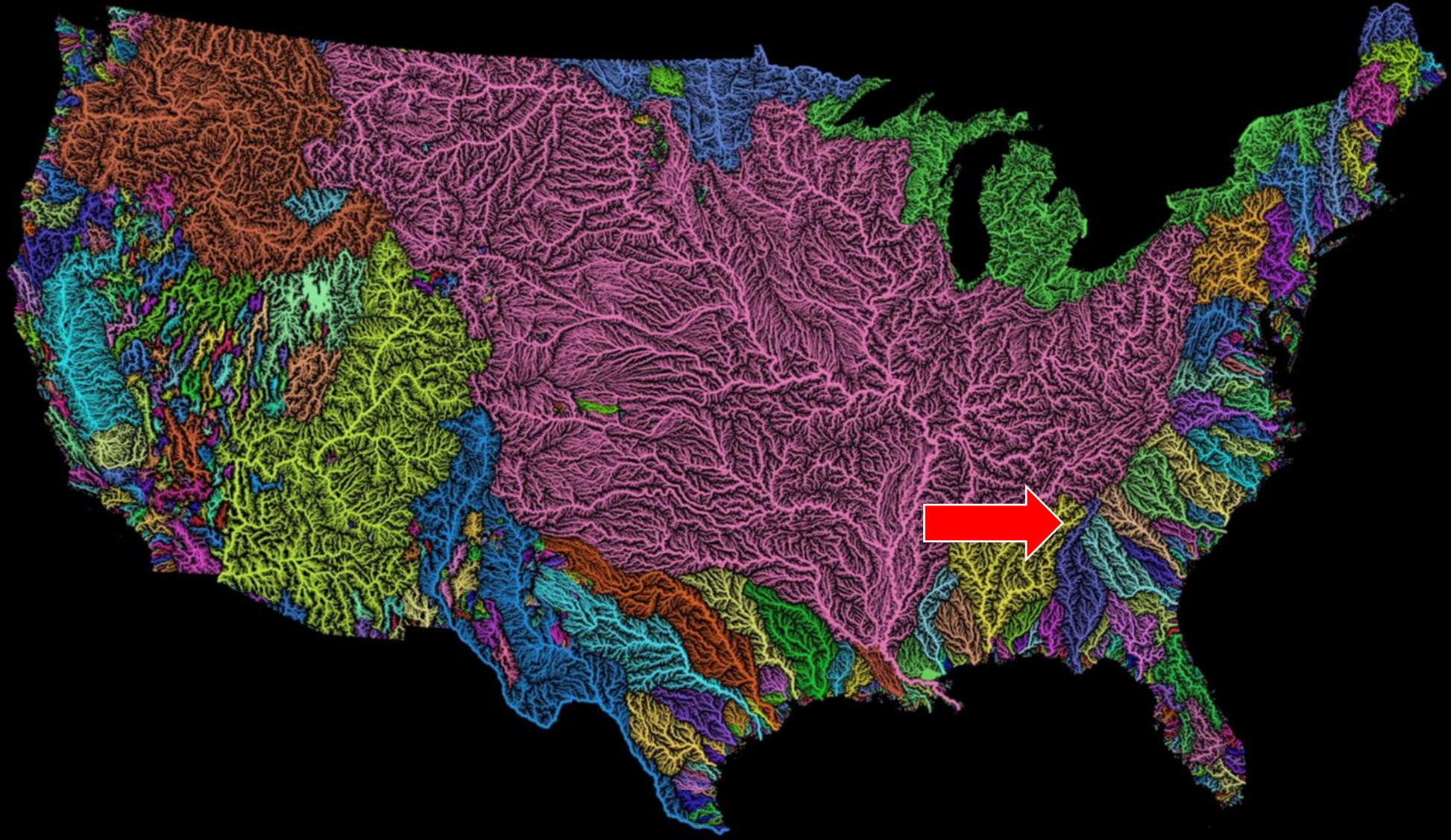
- Dissolved oxygen in the river on May 22
Levels were safe for aquatic life (>7 mg/L)
- Discharge from the West Area Water Quality Control Facility
Levels were within permit limits.
- The organic “black stuff” for nutrients, biological and chemical oxygen demand
Results pending.
- E. coli bacteria
No evidence that high E. coli in the tunnel discharge caused the fish kill.

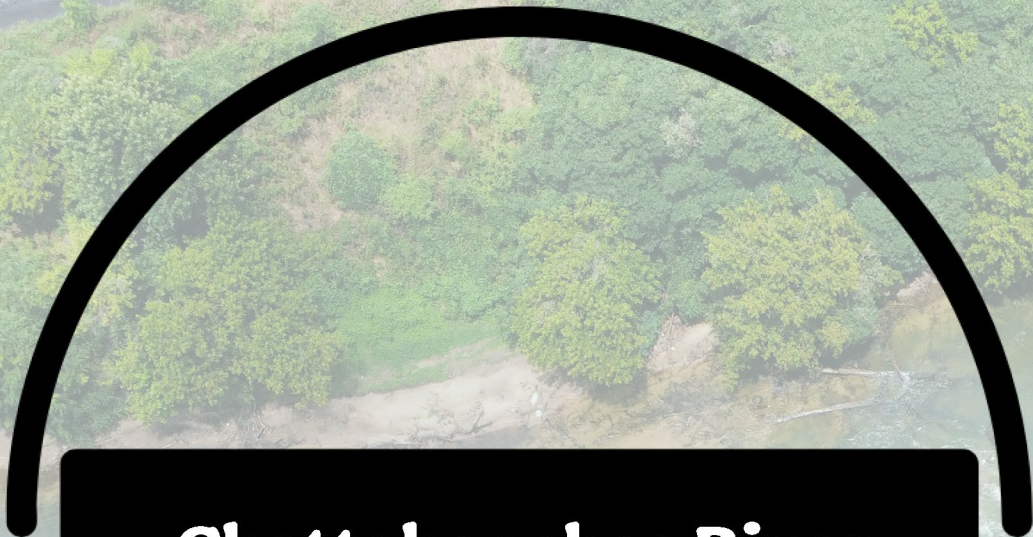


What are the local, state and federal agencies doing in response?

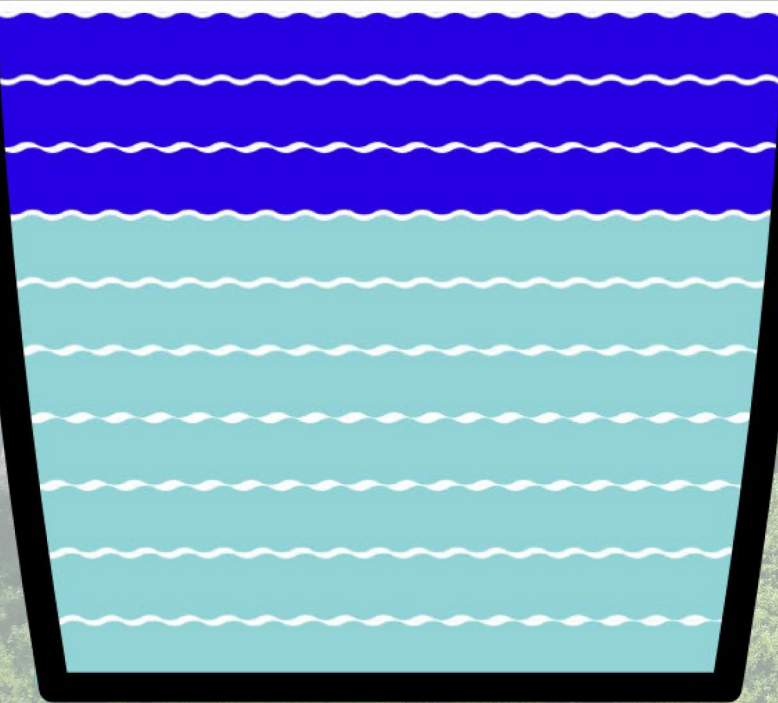
- City of Atlanta
 - Evaluating internal operations, WQ and soil testing, submit report to EPD
- Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR)
 - Responsible for on-river fish kill investigation on 5/22/2026
- Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD)
 - Responsible for overall state response, data/evidence collection, enforcement, final report
- US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)







Chattahoochee River



33% of river volume at Peachtree Creek at base flow is treated wastewater

67% of river volume at Peachtree Creek at base flow is not treated wastewater



Stay informed for next steps

- Follow CRK for updates on social media and sign up for our e-newsletter updates
- Submit a hotline report to CRK when you see water quality problems in the river, lakes, or creeks
- Volunteer your time at a trash cleanup or a water sampling event
- Support CRK's work by donating, joining the Ripple Effect, or becoming a member
- Speak up for clean water in your communities!



Q&A

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