

FINALLY, SEWAGE SPILLS UNDER CONTROL!

Close to *four billion* gallons of pollution will no longer flow into the Chattahoochee and tributaries every year as they have, on average, for decades. Instead, the mixture of untreated sewage and filthy stormwater from city streets and parking lots will be stored and then treated prior to discharge into the river.

On November 10, 2008, Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper (UCR) board and staff joined **Mayor Shirley Franklin**, Watershed Commissioner **Rob Hunter**, Federal Judge **Thomas Thrash** and many others to celebrate a significant milestone in Atlanta's Clean Water Program.

On Time and Under Budget

A decade after UCR signed the agreement that settled our lawsuit against the city for chronic sewer spills, Atlanta completed a major component of that settlement, the West CSO Tunnel project—on time and under budget. With 55 interim deadlines during the decade and a total cost of \$757 million, this was no small feat. (CSO = combined sewer overflow)

The deep sewer tunnel can hold up to 177 million gallons of rain and sewage, prior to treatment and discharge into the Chattahoochee. Before



Sally Bethea, Mayor Shirley Franklin, and UCR Board Chair Rutherford Seydel at the West CSO Tunnel opening celebration.

Photo Credit: Susan J. Ross

this project was completed, the system was often overwhelmed when it rained. Stormwater flooded the pipes, which already carried sewage, forcing overflows that sent undertreated sewage into the rivers and streams.

Officials opted for the tunnel because it could be done in a more timely fashion and with minimal disruption. The city estimates the tunnel should reduce the number of spills from the combined system, which now drains just 10% of the city's land area, from about 300 a year down to 16. One section of the tunnel runs about 200 feet below the surface, from northwest Atlanta, under Georgia Tech, to southwest Atlanta. The other section runs under the Downtown Connector and over to Piedmont Park in Midtown.

By 2014, Atlanta must complete the rest of the upgrades to its sanitary sewer-only system, which handles the remaining 90% of the property within the city. As of last November,

city personnel had inspected 73.6% of the sewer pipes (1,111 out of 1,530 miles); rehabbed nearly half the amount of sewer pipe that needs repair (280 miles); separated 33 miles of combined sewers; and replaced more than 60 miles of water pipes and mains.

see *Sewage Spills*, page 7

SIGNIFICANT FEDERAL INVESTMENTS NEEDED IN WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

As the economy spiraled downward last fall and the new Administration developed a stimulus package with green infrastructure jobs, a film entitled *Liquid Assets* debuted on local and national stations.

This excellent documentary raises the alarm that if we don't find a way to invest in our water infrastructure now, we will be paying a far greater price down the road when pipes begin to burst and clean water no longer flows from our faucets. With stories from communities across the United States, *Liquid Assets* explains how water and sewer systems are critical to public health, economic prosperity, and quality of life.

Atlanta Highlighted in Film

A segment of the film focuses on **Atlanta's Clean Water Program**, which was initially created in response to UCR's lawsuit (see above). Under the



Infrastructure failures, such as the broken pipe above, are more costly to repair than they are to prevent.

leadership of Mayor Shirley Franklin, the city has embarked on the \$3.9 billion program to upgrade the city's sewer and water systems. Despite progress in Atlanta, we still face major challenges throughout the metro region to maintain, repair and extend the pipes that provide us with clean drinking water and carry away our wastes.

To bring these challenges to light and create a community dialogue about the issues, Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper joined the city and others last December to sponsor a viewing of the film and panel discussion that attracted more than 100 citizens and water experts.

It was generally agreed that water services have been cheap for decades in Georgia and that utility rates will continue to rise to protect our communities and public health from system failures. Also acknowledged was the fact that the federal government must make a significant investment in our country's infrastructure. For example, only minimal federal funds have been provided to date to help the city of Atlanta with its massive water and sewer program.

What You Can Do

Georgia's Congressional Delegation needs to know that we expect them to provide the necessary funds to help communities keep their essential water and sewer systems in good condition. Our future and our quality of life depend on it.

To find out who represents you in Congress so you can contact them, see www.congress.org. If you would like to learn more about *Liquid Assets*, see <http://liquidassets.psu.edu/>.

Staff

Sally Bethea
Executive Director and Riverkeeper

Juliet Cohen
General Counsel

Christina Cooper
Office Manager

Bill Crawford
Business Manager

Mary O. Harrison
Communications Director

Laura Hartt
Policy Director

Darcie Holcomb
Headwaters Conservation Director

Mary Manson
Receptionist

Tammy Morrissey
Events and Outreach Director

Lynn Naylor
Development Director

Bonny Putney
Headwaters Outreach Coordinator

Harlan Trammell
Boat Captain

Jason Ulseth
Technical Programs Director

Board of Directors

Sonny Cohen

Denise Donahue

Dionne Driscoll

Mike Eckert

Gary Gaines

Billy Hall

Richard Jacobson

Ben Jordan

Dave Kirkpatrick

Jim McCaffrey

Steve O'Day

Audrey Peterman

J. Rutherford Seydel II, Chair

David Shaffer

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

ATLANTA OFFICE
3 Puritan Mill
916 Joseph Lowery Blvd.
Atlanta, GA 30318
404-352-9828

GAINESVILLE OFFICE
615 F Oak Street
Suite 1000
Gainesville, GA 30501
770-531-1064

www.chattahoochee.org
www.getthedirtout.org

REFLECTIONS

In late 2007, with the drought worsening and our leaders blaming others for the region's water crisis, UCR's Board Chair **Rutherford Seydel** challenged our organization to shed some light on the facts.

Rutherford's idea? Develop a simple yet compelling PowerPoint presentation to explain why the region is continuing to have water problems and offer practical solutions—for citizens, business leaders, developers and elected officials. Then take it on the road.

I was initially skeptical, as I have been in the past with some of Rutherford's big ideas. We have learned to play this game over the past 15 years. He suggests a grand plan for a new way to protect the river. I'm glad that he can't see my eyes roll. Then, after I think about what he said, I realize it's pretty darn good.

After all, it was Rutherford and **Laura Turner Seydel** who had the vision to bring the right people together to create Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper in the first place.

From Peachtree Corners to West Point Lake

Rutherford's idea was implemented in 2008 with *Tapped Out: The Drying Up of Atlanta*. To date, more than 2,000 people have seen this PowerPoint, including hundreds of Kiwanians and Rotarians, students, women's clubs, lo-



Photo Credit: Beiq Honarvar/
Atlanta Journal Constitution

cal planning officials, business people, and downstream community leaders. In 2009, we plan to more than double that number, aided by our new *Tapped Out* DVD.

Thanks to the creative talent of **Turner Studios**, technical expertise of engineers with **NewFields**, and production skills of **Cool New Media**, the presentation, which is now just 15 minutes in length, never fails to engage its audience. The question and answer period is invariably longer than the PowerPoint itself, which is exactly our goal—to encourage people to think and then act.

There are expected questions: Why is the Corps of Engineers releasing so much water out of Lake Lanier? [Answer: The only water released for the past year has been to supply metro Atlanta needs and dilute the region's waste.]

And, the unexpected: Why is our watershed so small and can't we make it bigger? [Answer: No, only Mother Nature can do that...]

A big surprise to most audiences? That electric power production demands require large quantities of water and that saving energy saves water. People are also troubled to learn that construction of hard surfaces in metro Atlanta is covering the land at a rate of 55 acres per day, destroying the area's ability to absorb rain that would normally replenish streams during dry periods.

What people seem to understand most is that finger-pointing by elected officials won't solve our water problems—that we all need to roll up our sleeves and get to work.

Sally Bethea

OUTDOOR RECREATION ADVOCATE JOINS UCR BOARD

Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper's newest board member is **Audrey Peterman**, a leader in the movement to integrate our "great outdoors" and show how public lands are relevant to all Americans.

With her husband, Frank, Audrey became captivated with the beauty of our country after taking a 12,000-mile, 40-state trip around the United States. They hiked and camped in national parks from the Everglades to the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone and Yosemite.

Audrey is also president and co-founder of Earthwise Productions, Inc., a consulting and publishing company which has produced the travel and environmental news-



Audrey Peterman (center) hiking in Red Top Mountain State Park

letter, *Pickup & GO!*, for 13 years. This publication features African Americans enjoying the outdoors, emphasizes the legacy of people of color in the public lands system, and promotes awareness of global warming and climate change as incentives for Americans to become more involved in conservation.

She is serving her third term as a member of the board of the National Parks Conservation Association and is on the board of the Association of Partners for Public Lands. In Atlanta, Audrey and Frank, who works for The Wilderness Society, steer the "Keeping It Wild Program," noted for its racial inclusiveness in outdoor hikes and activities. See www.keepingitwild.org.



THANKS TO UCR VOLUNTEERS FROM TAMMY!

This past year was our most successful volunteer year yet. Thanks to the hundreds of you who gave your time and energy to help us protect the Chattahoochee River, its lakes and tributaries. Your generous, selfless dedication has been invaluable and we would not have been able to accomplish our goals without you. YOU helped us:

- Organize and run our events—Winter Film Festival, River Revival, Back to the Chattahoochee River Race and Festival, Patron Dinner, and Member Meeting,
- Manage nine river outings for more than 150 new and old paddlers,
- Represent UCR by tabling at concerts and festivals, and
- Remove more than 70 tons of trash from the river and its lakes.

Check out the volunteer opportunities we have for 2009! Look for my emails and consider introducing your friends and family to volunteering with UCR. All it takes is the time to register on our website at www.chattahoochee.org.

www.chattahoochee.org/volunteer or call me (Tammy Morrissey, Events and Outreach Director) at 404-352-9828, ext 12.



Volunteers help with EnviroScape demonstration at UCR's member meeting. The EnviroScape teaches children about drinking water, waste water and stormwater systems.

Photo Credit: Kent Ruby

CITY ILLEGALLY CLEARS BUFFER TO MAKE WAY FOR NEW PARK

Last summer, the **City of Sandy Springs** began clearing land along Bull Sluice Lake just above Morgan Falls Dam to create a new city park. According to the August edition of the Sandy Springs E-newsletter, “The area for the new Dog Park has been cleared and outfitted with erosion control materials. All permits are currently in place for work to continue.” The only problem was that the city, which is operated by the consulting firm CH2MHill, did not have all necessary permits. Specifically, the city failed to get approval, known as a buffer variance, from the state Environmental Protection Division (EPD) to remove vegetation from hundreds of linear feet of land along the lake that is protected by two state laws. UCR investigated the situation after being contacted through our Citizen Hotline and notified EPD of the buffer encroachment. EPD expects to take an enforcement action once its investigation is complete that will require restoration of the buffer area. UCR will continue to monitor this situation to ensure that proper actions are taken.

UCR MEMBER GETS STOP WORK ORDER

A longtime UCR member contacted us last August regarding a developing industrial park neighboring his property called **Northwest Harris County Business Park**, which is operated by the **Harris County Board of Commissioners**. The 380-acre site lacked the proper best management practices (BMPs) to keep silt from running off the site and into streams. Guided by UCR’s technical staff, he wrote a letter to EPD describing the violations and requesting an enforcement action. In response, EPD issued a stop work order to the Board of Commissioners, halting all work until proper BMPs were installed, all sediment impacts remediated, and all affected streams and buffers restored. Located just north of Columbus and bordering the Chattahoochee, Harris County is expected to see significant growth associated with the new KIA plant in nearby Troup County and the major expansion of Fort Benning—all of which could result in harm to county streams unless the development is adequately controlled. To learn more about how you can get involved with UCR’s *Get the Dirt Out Program*, visit www.getthedirtout.org.



GEORGIA’S RIVERKEEPERS, OTHERS PROTEST METRO WATER PLANS

Frustrated with the failure of metro bureaucrats to develop bold plans to ensure we will have enough clean water in the future, Georgia’s riverkeepers and others rallied in downtown Atlanta in January.

The protest brought attention to the desperate need for measurable actions to protect our rivers, streams and lakes and highlighted the serious risks posed by the water plans to quality of life for all Georgians.

Plans Based on Faulty, Risky Assumptions

In December, the Metro North Georgia Water Planning District (District), which is staffed by the Atlanta Regional Commission, released draft updates to long-term water plans for the metro region—an area of 4,800 square miles with 4.8 million people in 15 counties and 92 cities.

Despite the continuing extreme drought in north Georgia, the proposed plans actually weaken the original water conservation goal—backsliding from 20% in water savings to just 13% by 2035, 27 years in the future. In addition, these documents rely on expensive solutions that we cannot afford, ignore ongoing court actions that may affect the use of Lake Lanier, and fail to protect water quality.

Instead of proposing practical, aggressive actions to be taken by all water users—with clearly stated, quantifiable goals against which progress can be measured—these plans continue business-as-usual in metro Atlanta. Millions of taxpayer dollars have been spent to produce these short-sighted plans at a time when we cannot afford to keep wasting money, water and time.

On Patrol

PARK SERVICE REQUIRES STUDY TO EVALUATE NEW DISCHARGE

A year ago, UCR submitted a comment letter to EPD regarding a proposal by Forsyth County to discharge six million gallons per day of treated sewage into the **Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area** about a mile upstream of McGinnis Ferry Bridge. UCR requested a public hearing, which was held in September, to express our concerns that the state’s draft permit for the **Fowler/Shakerag treatment plants** is too weak, allowing excess phosphorus and bacteria to be discharged into the river despite the advanced capabilities of the facilities. The lack of any temperature limit is also troubling since this section of the river supports a thriving trout fishery. Anglers and other recreational users attended the hearing, in addition to the National Park Service and the state Wildlife Resources Division. The National Park Service advised the county that it must prepare an Environmental Assessment, since the discharge apparatus will affect the bed of the river, which is part of the federal park.

CHRONIC SEWAGE PROBLEMS IN HOGANSVILLE

The city of **Hogansville** has a long history of problems with its sewage system, noted again in December when 600,000 gallons of partially treated sewage spilled into Yellow Jacket Creek. This was at least the third such spill into this major tributary to West Point Lake in five years. The city’s treatment plant was built in the 1950s and has reached its capacity of 650,000 gallons per day; after treatment, the waste is disposed at a land application system constructed in 1991. Although the city still owes millions of dollars for this facility, more than 15% of the 204-acre sprayfield is already unusable. Hogansville is purportedly operating under a consent order from EPD issued in 2002; however, it is clear that little if any progress is being made in correcting serious problems that continue to threaten area waterways. UCR is investigating this situation to determine the best course of action to take to ensure that Hogansville takes its responsibilities under the federal Clean Water Act seriously.



Given this region’s location in the headwaters of six of Georgia’s river basins, decisions about water management impact every downstream community across the state.

Recommendations for Improvement

Since the District was created by the state legislature in 2001, UCR has attended close to 100 meetings, submitted detailed comments, and testified at hearings in an effort to clarify and strengthen the 2003 and now 2008 versions of these long-term water plans. We recently provided written comments during the public review period which ended on January 31, outlining our concerns and including specific recommendations for improvement.

Governor Perdue has called for a culture of conservation and a goal of 20% water savings in state buildings by 2020. We believe the District water plans must be at least this bold. We recommend a 20% permanent water savings by 2020 in every municipality throughout metro Atlanta with a more aggressive goal by 2035.

Before the final water plans are approved this spring, regional and state business leaders have a chance to insist that Atlanta’s long-term water plans be revised to present best-in-class solutions for the very real water problems that threaten our future.



Carrying umbrellas and signs, 30 protesters marched outside the Atlanta Regional Commission office in early January to oppose its short-sighted water plans.

River Stewardship

GREEN POWER AND MORE AT UCR'S MEMBER MEETING

About 150 UCR members and guests gathered for our annual meeting at **SweetWater Brewery** on November 15 to celebrate the Chattahoochee and our community, as well as to learn more about how we can meet the challenges facing our river. The program included environmental exhibits and special guest **Rep. Dubose Porter**, House Minority Leader, who gave an assessment of our state's environmental challenges. Riverkeeper Sally Bethea gave the crowd an update on recent projects and UCR's work.

In addition to **SweetWater** tours and tastings and **Pop-eye's** new Louisiana Nuggets and famous biscuits, we were treated to live music from **The Darlings**, a "super group" of some of Atlanta's finest singer/songwriters, including Tony Caporale, Emily Kate Boyd, Christopher Alan Yates, Brian Bisky and Gareth Asher.

Local Studio is Walking the Walk

We were especially delighted to have **Tree Sound Studios** providing power for The Darlings through an ingenious, economical and pollution-free method developed by recording studio owner **Paul Diaz**. His unit consists of a power trailer containing a wind turbine and solar panels that charge batteries inside. This power is then cleaned up and inverted and sent out for use through outlets and power cords. A 6kw back-up biodiesel generator was converted from an old light tower.



Photo Credit: Kent Ruby

The Darlings, powered by Tree Sound Studios, perform at UCR's fall member meeting.

Diaz's equipment is hauled to music festivals by a biodiesel-powered car and truck, using a product from Refuel Biodiesel Company which makes its fuel from cooking grease collected from local businesses, such as Ted's Montana Grill. The solar and wind power trailer is easy to move, easy to set up, and has no engine noise or pollution. With an average load of enough power for a 500-person gig, it will run eight full hours at night on batteries or indefinitely if the wind is blowing. In good sun it will run 3-4 days with the same.

This green power set-up has been used at Virgin Mobile Festival, Rock for Cancer, Green Jobs Now, and Eco-Project, as well as at SweetWater events and live recordings at Tree Sound Studios. Diaz plans on doing more large festivals in the future, such as Spirit of Suwannee.

ATLANTA RESTAURANTS GO GREEN!

Metro Atlanta restaurants are joining the growing "green movement", as demonstrated by last year's creation of the **Green Foodservice Alliance**. This collaboration of the Georgia Restaurant Association, American Culinary Federation, Georgia Organics, and the Georgia Department of Agriculture is focused on promoting sustainable best practices in the food service industry. (www.greenfoodservice.org)



Photo Credit: Ann States

Ted Turner and George McKerrow at the Green Restaurant Revolution breakfast.

At its "Green Restaurant Revolution" breakfast last fall, **Ted Turner** and his Ted's Montana Grill business partner **George McKerrow** offered advice to industry peers on ways to make their own establishments more eco-friendly.

A longtime UCR supporter, McKerrow noted that restaurants use five times more water than other retailers. He

recommended that restaurants ask patrons if they want water and install low-flow toilets and waterless urinals for greater efficiency and a better bottom line. Attendees received a brochure entitled "10 Ways to Go Green," highlighting tips such as: get rid of plastic bottled water and sodas, repair leaky faucets, and use energy efficient appliances and light bulbs.

Another way to go green is for restaurants to use local, organic food, which not only supports the growing local community of organic farmers, but also reduces the carbon footprint from shipping food thousands of miles. Equally important, restaurant patrons love the fresh, tasty and nutritious food. The **Local Food Stop** in the city of Roswell offers fresh organic produce at a fair price to residents and local businesses such as **The Roswell Tea House**.

EMPLOYEES BUILD CAMARADERIE WHILE CLEANING UP THE HOOCH

Attention, businesses and organizations! If you're seeking a way to build camaraderie in your workforce or among your members, while helping save our river, Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper has a great program for you! In 2008, our cleanup partners included **REI, Coca-Cola, Hewlett Packard, TBS, Starbucks, Georgia Power, RIOT Atlanta** and **UPS**.

Join us for a cleanup at Lake Lanier or elsewhere in the Chattahoochee Basin. With lake levels at historic lows, shorelines are littered with debris that has accumulated over decades. While we and others have removed a lot of this trash in the past year, we need as many volunteers as we can find to help get the rest of it out of our waterways.

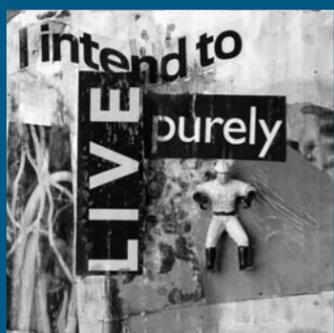
Cleanups usually last 3-4 hours and all that's required is for participants to be willing to get dirty and dress for the part. To find out more, contact **Tammy Morrissey** at tmorrissey@ucriverkeeper.org; 404-352-9828, ext 12.



Mark Gialanella and Natalie Molnar of REI lend a hand.

REI AND UCR TEAM UP FOR LAKE LANIER SHORELINE CLEANUP

Premier outdoor gear store, **REI**, teamed up with UCR to collect trash at Mary Alice Park on Lake Lanier last fall. In addition to the company's financial support of our floating classroom program, REI decided to involve its employees in one of our community service projects. In four hours, a dozen people collected more than 2,000 pounds of trash, including an antique cast iron cook stove!



Eco-Friendly Art Auction to Benefit UCR

Local broadcast studio **RIOT Atlanta**, which provided pro-bono support for UCR for most of 2008, will be holding an art auction to benefit UCR in March. After participating in a river cleanup last August, **RIOT** staff constructed a conceptual art mosaic made from recycled materials and refuse from the cleanup, assembled with eco-friendly glues and paints. The 5x10 mosaic is made up of 200, self-standing, eco-themed collages, a selection of which will be auctioned off.

Learn more by visiting the **Buzz** section of **RIOT's** website at www.riotatlanta.com/?section=buzz and check back in late February for auction details.

HATHORN HELPS THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS MANAGE THE RIVER

James Hathorn never thought he'd end up working on some of the most challenging water supply issues in the region. In college, James studied engineering, spending a semester in Washington, D.C. doing cartography for the Department of Defense.

It wasn't until Christmas Eve 1990, when he got the call from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Mobile District office offering him a job, that he even thought about water. Born, raised, and educated in New Orleans, James seized the opportunity to return to the Southeast with his family.

An Accomplished Man

James is the Corps' lead reservoir modeler for the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) and Alabama-Coosa-Talapoosa (ACT) river basins. He credits a high school physics teacher with his aptitude for making difficult concepts simple and relevant. In 2008, the Corps honored James for his extraordinary service, awarding him the Lieutenant General John W. Morris Civilian of the Year Award—the agency's highest honor awarded to just one civilian each year.

Work alone does not define James—he comes from a very large, yet close-knit family. Although many members were forced to relocate in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, his family still gathers together for its annual crawfish boil. A devoted husband, father, and grandfather, James loves kids and is very involved with the local Cub Scouts, Little

League, PTA, and church. He's also served as an advisor to war-torn Iraq, helping that nation grapple with its water supply issues.

We Need to be Smarter, Listen to Our Neighbors

James agrees that the most pressing water issue facing our region is increased demand placed on a finite supply. Recognizing that we can't just rely on more rain, he

emphasizes the need to be smarter about how we use this limited resource. Although he cautions that all reservoirs are not necessarily bad, he emphasizes that before building new ones, we ought to make sure we've "done right" by the environment.

One of the Corps' biggest challenges is managing its reservoirs for multiple purposes, especially during times of low flow. James often reminds stakeholders that Corps' deci-

sions aren't subject to popular "vote"; instead, the agency must manage for all purposes, giving due diligence to public health, the environment, and water quality concerns.

When we asked James what action he would urge each Georgian to take to help alleviate our water crisis, his response was simple: he would ask us to walk in someone else's shoes, whether next door or downstream, to gain a better understanding of the water needs of our neighbors. We think that's good advice.



James Hathorn (right) accepting the Lieutenant General John W. Morris Civilian of the Year Award in 2008.



RETIRED HATCHERY MANAGER TELLS FISH TALES

The Chattahoochee River, one of "America's 100 Best Trout Streams," is a great place for beginners and experts to tempt a trout. The river below Buford Dam receives cold, clear water from the bottom of Lake Lanier, even on hot summer days, which is the recipe for a great trout fishery.

Before Lake Lanier was built in the 1950s, the Chattahoochee below the lake was a warm water river, but now it's the country's southernmost trout stream. Georgia's Wildlife Resources Division has stocked trout in the river since the mid-1960s and some of these fish have begun reproducing naturally. The river's water is so suitable to coldwater fish that the state constructed and operates a trout hatchery on the river just a couple of miles below the Buford Dam.

Something for Every Angler

There is something for every angler in the river. "Catchable" 9-10 inch and "Big" 11-13 inch trout are stocked between Buford Dam and Morgan Falls Dam all year. Anglers can also target naturally reproducing brown trout or larger "carryover" trout that have lived in the river and grown. In fact, Georgia's state record brown trout is an 18+ pound fish taken from this section of the Chattahoochee.

Three kids fishing events are held on the upper river each year. Two to three thousand trout are stocked the day of the events and kids can try their hand at catching a first fish or sometimes a stringer full. The best fishing is generally between mid-March and mid-September.

The lower river, between Morgan Falls Dam and GA Hwy. 41, is heavily stocked for a Delayed Harvest fishery from November through April. This section gets more and larger trout. While anglers cannot keep fish during the Delayed Harvest season, this is a great area for catch-and-release fishing, to develop your skills, and to catch lots of stocked fish. Although the river faces some challenges from overuse and pollution, fishing on the Chattahoochee in Atlanta is still great.



On a River through Atlanta Guide Service trip in the CRNRA, Donna Creel shows off a brown trout while Peter Pelosi looks on.

For more information, contact local groups like Trout Unlimited (www.georgiatu.org), Atlanta Flyfishing Club (www.atlantaflyfishingclub.org), Georgia Womens Flyfishers (www.georgiaflyfishing.com) or check out the discussions on-line at North Georgia Trout Online (www.georgia-outdoors.com/ngto). And, don't forget to make sure you understand state fishing regulations.

For more information about the fishery, call 770-918-6418; for a map, call the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area at 678-538-1200.

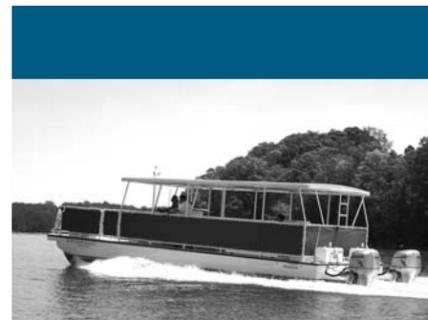
See you on the river!

Bill Couch

Couch served as the manager of the Buford Trout Hatchery from 1982 to 2008.



Photo courtesy of River through Atlanta



Chota Princess II - Now Available for Charter

Whether it is a special occasion with family and friends or a relaxing company cruise - the Chota Princess II can be chartered for all kinds of events. This custom-built 40-foot catamaran includes a glass bottom viewing well and holds up to 49 passengers.

Contact Tammy Morrissey for additional information and pricing at 404.325.9828 x12 or tmorrissey@ucriverkeeper.org.

RIVER AT RISK FROM REDUCED FLOWS

Last October, Georgia's Environmental Protection Division (EPD) requested a six-month deviation from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) in their operation of Buford Dam.

Specifically, EPD asked that the 750 cubic feet per second (cfs) flow target for the Chattahoochee at Peachtree Creek be lowered to 650 cfs. The 750 cfs target, in place since the 1970s, forms the basis for the pollution limits placed on discharges from wastewater plants in metro Atlanta.

Record Lows at Lake Lanier

The request to raise Lake Lanier at the expense of flows downstream in the Chattahoochee was made in response to ongoing drought concerns. We are in the midst of a 24+ month drought—the longest drought in the history of Corps dam operations on the river system. Lake Lanier came close to reaching a historic low in December and may pass the previous record this winter.

We recognize the important role that Lake Lanier plays in storing and releasing water for downstream needs; however, we are not convinced that such a drastic lowering of flow requirements in the river is necessary or prudent, especially because water conservation measures have not been fully exhausted.

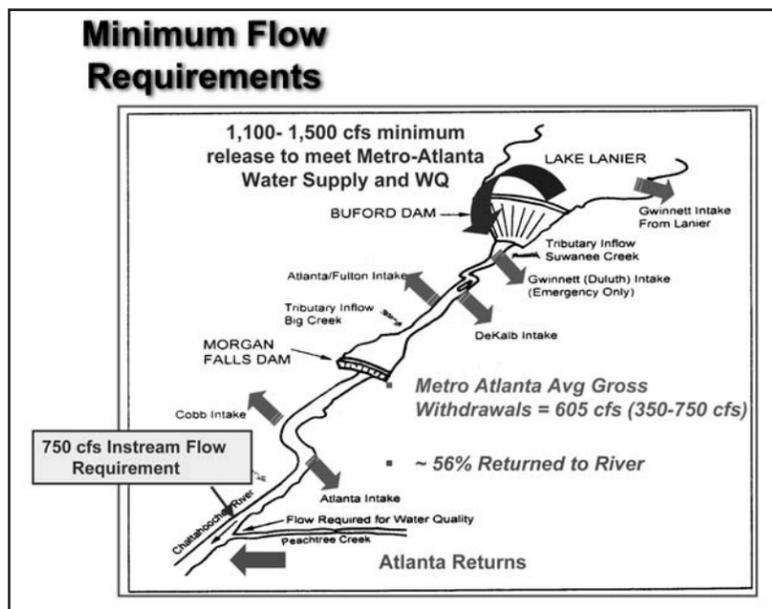
UCR Remains Vigilant

UCR submitted extensive comments objecting to the state's flow reduction request and outlining three primary reasons. First, we are concerned about the absence of real-time water quality monitoring data and instantaneous flow measurements needed to demonstrate that instream quality standards are met at the reduced flows. Without this data, EPD's claims of employing adaptive management to protect water quality are baseless. In fact, EPD has acknowledged that by the time the agency discovers that conditions warrant the need to resume 750 cfs flows at Peachtree Creek, more than a week will have elapsed.

Second, none of the state's requests have received full vetting in the form of an Environmental Impact Statement. Notably, the request made last October was EPD's third in 2008. These repeated reductions in instream flows threaten to further stress a waterway that is already close to being tapped out in its ability to supply drinking water, dilute treated waste, and offer quality recreational opportunities throughout the Chattahoochee basin.

Waterways Impaired

Finally, we have no evidence that downstream waters can tolerate the reduced flows at Peachtree Creek, especially in warmer months next spring. In fact, just the opposite is likely.



The Chattahoochee runs for 48 miles between Lake Lanier and Peachtree Creek.

A review of Georgia's 2008 list of impaired surface waters shows that segments of the Chattahoochee below Buford Dam are already impaired and do not support their designated uses. Notably, below Peachtree Creek, the river is impaired for temperature and fecal coliform bacteria; fish consumption guidelines have been issued due to toxic levels of contaminants in aquatic species. Additionally, the City of LaGrange has documented nutrient

problems in West Point Lake, including nitrogen levels in excess of standards set for the lake.

In November, the Corps authorized the reductions in releases from Buford Dam. In spite of this setback, UCR remains committed to securing real-time monitoring for the Chattahoochee River at and below Peachtree Creek. We continue to track the data that is available, and conduct our own sampling to spot check the river's water quality. We also are actively engaged in water planning at the local, state, and regional level, urging all agencies to fully embrace water conservation and efficiency as an affordable and environmentally-sound alternative to flow reductions in the Chattahoochee River.

Map Courtesy of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



UCR's Boat Captain Harlan Trammell

CAPTAIN'S CORNER

LOW RIVER LEVELS = BOATING TROUBLE

With the recent drop in river flow (see article above), boaters are going to have a tough, potentially dangerous, time navigating the Chattahoochee in all stretches below Buford Dam.

Boaters may opt to trailer elsewhere for spring fishing trips to avoid damage to vessels and potential personal injury that can be caused by attempting to navigate the rocks in unsafe water levels. Boat traffic has pretty much decreased to a non-existent level; I haven't seen another boat on the river in a while.

Low water makes boat ramps all but impossible for launching. There is not one good ramp downstream of Atlanta that can be safely used in these conditions until you enter West Point Lake in Franklin. Caution is also needed at all of the ramps upstream in the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area.

Boating in Low Water

Should you attempt the river when it's low: take a 4x4 vehicle, shovel, paddle, additional towing ropes, and plan to get wet wading your boat in. It is very easy to break an

axle by backing off the end of a concrete slab. Ease your trailer in nice and slow, even slower coming out. Make sure the motor is trimmed all the way up when ramping in and out. Get out and inspect all ramps before using.

Once in the water, you will need to reduce speed to idle with the motor trimmed up to avoid impact with underwater hazards. Stay close to the ramp. When the river is low, do not even attempt to boat through the following: Franklin Shoals, Vinings Shoals, Palisades, Cochran Shoals, Island Ford, Jones Bridge Shoals, Bowman's Island, and this is not all-inclusive. These areas should be reserved for ankle-deep wading.

It's not clear what the low water will mean for fish migration. Fish may not run upstream this spring as a result of the extreme low water levels as they do at normal flow. I hope the crappie and striper runs at Morgan Falls are not affected and that water temps remain cool enough for the trout. I always enjoy catching my 25+ pound striper there in warmer weather.

Until then, don't take chances and use caution. Boats and trailers are expensive and don't repair themselves.

SEWAGE SPILLS *Continued from page 1*

Example for National Infrastructure Program

Although all of Atlanta's plumbing work is not yet finished and the city still needs major financial help to fix these critical systems (*see below*), the Atlanta Clean Water Program is serving as a great example of the kind of green infrastructure work envisioned by the Obama Administration as part of the national economic stimulus package. This program includes upgrades to the city's drinking water system as well as its sewage system.

The city started its water leak detection and repair program more than six years ago at the urging of Mayor Franklin who knew that efficiency was the cheapest and smartest way to "find" more water. Now, instead of leaking close to 20% of the water from its distribution system, Atlanta is reducing that loss one percent per year; the city is currently at 14% according to Commissioner Hunter.

Like Atlanta, other communities throughout our country have crumbling and outdated water and sewer systems that are in serious need of upgrade and repair to safeguard public health and economic well-being. In fact, the American Society of Civil Engineers has given a grade of D- to our country's wastewater and drinking water systems, the lowest grade of any infrastructure category. Floods and droughts associated with global warming present an additional threat to these systems.

Many believe that the new Obama Administration and changes in Congress mean that clean water programs will get more funding and a higher priority than they have for the past eight years. Our country needs a new 21st century vision for water, so we can invest in green solutions that work with nature, not against it—not just to protect the environment, but also as a matter of economic security, jobs and public health and safety.

Green Solutions that Work with Nature

UCR has been working with **American Rivers** and others to promote solutions at the local, regional and national level that are more effective and

less expensive—instead of relying on the over-engineered, one-size-fits-all approach of the last century. We have also provided specific recommendations for infrastructure investments in the Chattahoochee River Basin.

For more information, see www.americanrivers.org and click on *Greening Water Infrastructure* or *Publications* to access the new report on the Southeast entitled "Hidden Reservoirs."



City workers use pipe-bursting, a trenchless method of pipe reconstruction, on Piedmont Road in Atlanta.

Photo Courtesy of City of Atlanta Department of Watershed Management



WATER COALITION POLL FINDS GEORGIANS ENGAGED BY WATER QUESTIONS

Last fall, before the November election, the **Georgia Water Coalition**, of which UCR is a founding partner, commissioned The Schapiro Group to find out what Georgia voters think about water. The participants were asked a number of questions, covering a fairly wide range of water issues, which differ over the regions of the state because of its size and the variations in water supply sources.

Designed to sample opinions throughout Georgia, 600 people were asked to participate in the survey—half from metro Atlanta and the others from the rest of Georgia, a distribution that mirrors our population. The participants stated political preferences that split pretty evenly between Republicans and Democrats with about one-third each; the remainder said they were Independents or did not wish to state a preference. Half of the people were suburbanites, while the remainder was split between urban and rural.

Water Shortages, Most Important Environmental Issue

When the poll was taken last September, "the environment" ranked third in voters' priorities, following "the economy," and "fuel prices," but ahead

of "health care, education and transportation," as matters of importance. The most important environmental issue the voters identified was "water shortage," at 87%, followed closely by "water quality," at 75%. But "loss of natural areas to new development" and "air quality" also scored above the 70th percentile. Even "climate change" was selected as important by 63% of voters.

One interesting discovery was that the respondents place a great deal of trust in Governor Perdue on water questions, with a score of 77%. Not far behind the Governor, at 74% and 72%, respectively, are state legislators and environmental groups. Trailing these in the public trust were business groups, which are trusted by 60% of the respondents.

The poll found that people are divided fairly evenly on the question of "who or what is most responsible for Georgia's water struggles in the current drought?" 21% said "no rain" was the main problem, while 56% evenly split their blaming among "metro Atlanta, Tri-state water wars, federal government and agriculture." The remaining responses faulted state government and power and other industrial plants.

Strong Support for Water Efficiency, Ensuring a Clean Supply

Another interesting division of opinion came when people were asked to choose between water efficiency versus investing in new ways to get water into our communities. The question can be crudely reduced to one of "save water," or "build reservoirs." 32% wanted more efficiency, while 27% wanted more supplies. 37% wanted to try both strategies at the same time. This level of support for efficiency, even though no arguments about the relative costs of the two methods was presented, is very encouraging to those interested in reducing the financial burdens of meeting our water needs.

On the question of what should Georgia's legislative priorities for water be, a whopping 87% think that "ensuring a clean water supply" is the highest. 59% believe that priority to be "extremely high." 74% want the state to finally develop a water plan and the same number supports efficient use of water.

Georgians are ready to support sound water policy. Are their leaders ready to provide it?

For more information about Georgia Water Coalition, see www.georgiawater.org.



Photo Credit: iStockphoto.com/rmieives

2009 EVENTS OFFER SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE



March 4 and 5 - Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival

Since 2003, the Wild and Scenic Film Festival, the largest traveling festival of its kind in North America, has grown to receive local, regional, and national applause for celebrating the spirit of environmental activism.

UCR, Georgia River Network and Georgia ForestWatch have partnered to bring the best of these award-winning films in a four-hour total event. Presented March 4 and 5 from 7pm to 9pm, each night offers a different program of six to seven films of varying lengths, concluding with a local interest piece. *Tickets go on sale February 6.*

May 14 - 13th Annual River Revival

Each year, UCR's members and supporters join together to celebrate the river and enjoy an exceptionally fun evening of specialty foods, beers brewed by Park Tavern and SweetWater brewery, wine, live music, entertainment, dancing, and live and silent auctions. Last year's event set records for attendance (over 700 people) and funds raised (\$80,000). We are expecting nothing less than a spectacular evening for 2009!

This year's River Revival will again kick off the **Save the Hooch Campaign** sponsored by SweetWater Brewery. Through this campaign, a portion of proceeds from the sale of SweetWater beers between Memorial Day weekend and July 4th, as well as sales of paper fish at participating bars and restaurants, will go to support UCR's mission. *Tickets go on sale April 3.*

June 13 - 7th Annual Back to the Chattahoochee River Race and Festival

Paddle from Garrard Landing Park on Holcomb Bridge Road to Riverside Park. Race includes open and recreational categories, various age divisions, solo and tandem

canoe divisions, as well as kayak and sea kayak divisions. *Race Registration opens April 3.*

The Festival is where race participants and the general public alike can enjoy live music, great food, activities for kids, and visit over 50 environmentally-focused exhibits. The festival is free and open to the public.

Paddle Trips

The **River Discovery Series** is hosted by UCR in partnership with the National Park Service's Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (CRNRA) and is designed for beginners and advanced paddlers as a fun and educational way to get to know the Chattahoochee River. All together the five consecutive trips cover 37 miles of the Chattahoochee within the CRNRA from Bowman's Island to Paces Mill.

In addition to the River Discovery Series, UCR offers other paddling adventures to explore and experience the Chattahoochee. From the Upper Hooch to south of Atlanta, we have paddling and camping trips scheduled from April to November. *Find specific paddle dates and more at www.chattahoochee.org.*



Paddlers enjoyed a beautiful fall float trip from McIntosh Reserve to Franklin in October 2008.

Become a UCR Event Sponsor!

With the continued threats our river faces, UCR needs your support now more than ever. If you or your organization would like to pledge your support for North Georgia's most valuable natural resource as an event sponsor, contact Tammy at tmorrissey@ucriverkeeper.org or (404) 352-9828 x12.

For more information on all UCR's upcoming events, go to www.chattahoochee.org.



Keeping Watch Over Our Waters

Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, Inc.
3 Puritan Mill, 916 Joseph E. Lowery Blvd. NW
Atlanta, GA 30318-5280
404-352-9828

Address Service Requested

Non-Profit
Organization US
Postage Paid
Permit No. 3363
Atlanta, Georgia



a member of Earth Share
OF GEORGIA

River Matters

Georgia River Network Annual Conference February 20-21
Athens, GA
www.garivers.org
706-549-4508

Chattahoochee Headwaters Day Hike February 21
Chattahoochee Nature Center
770-992-2055 x232
camp@chattnaturecenter.com

Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival March 4-5
Tara Theater, Atlanta
www.chattahoochee.org

Environmental Education Alliance Annual Conference March 13-14
Tifton, GA
www.gaprojectwet.org

West Palisades Early Spring Wildflowers Hike March 21
CRNRA, Atlanta
www.gabotsoc.org/?p=393

Southface Energy Institute's Greenprints Conference 2009 March 25-26
Atlanta, GA
www.southface.org

Adopt-A-Stream Workshop March 27-28
Elachee Nature Science Center, Gainesville
770-535-1976
judith@elachee.org

Flatwater Paddle on Lanier April 11
www.chattahoochee.org

SweetWater 420 Festival April 18-19
Atlanta, GA
www.sweetwater420fest.com

Earth Day 2009 Party in the Sky: The Air Up There April 22
Atlantic Station
www.earthsharega.org

Paddling and Camping in Upper Chattahoochee April 25-26
www.chattahoochee.org

13th Annual River Revival May 14
Park Tavern, Atlanta
www.chattahoochee.org

Intro to Whitewater and Camping Adventure June 6-7
www.chattahoochee.org

7th Annual Back to the Chattahoochee River Race and Festival June 13
www.chattahoochee.org

River Discovery Series Begins June 27!
www.chattahoochee.org



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