

SLEDGEHAMMER AIMED AT CORNERSTONE OF CLEAN WATER

For close to 40 years, a federal safety net for water quality has guaranteed a minimum level of protection to all Americans, no matter where you live.

Known as the **Clean Water Act** (CWA) and adopted by the U.S. Congress in 1972, this federal law is one of our most important environmental statutes. It is a model for achieving a sensible balance between the state officials' familiarity with local conditions and the important role the federal government plays in protecting all citizens from a race-to-the-bottom by polluters and politicians who are focused more on short-term gain at the expense of long-term prosperity.

The burning Cuyahoga River in Ohio may be the sensational image most remembered from the early 1970s, but from coast to coast, communities were suffering from dangerously high levels of bacteria, mercury and other pollutants in their drinking water sources, including in Georgia.

Fear of a public health crisis spurred a massive outcry and led to legislative action.

Today, this cost-effective federal statute — a regulatory tool that has provided uniform expectations of safe and healthy waterways across the country — is under an unprecedented assault from new legislation and proposed cuts in appropriations to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) which administers the law working with states.

Dirty Water Bill fast-tracked

In June, the **Clean Water Cooperative Federalism Act**, known widely as the 'Dirty Water Bill,' was fast-tracked through a House committee without a hearing and passed the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 239-184, less than a week after it was introduced. The bill, H.R. 2018, would divest the EPA of many of its powers over water protection programs.

In response to a Congressional request for a legal analysis, the EPA wrote "[t]he bill would overturn almost 40 years of federal legislation by preventing EPA from protecting public

health and water quality." In a technical assessment, the EPA warned that "the bill would prevent the agency from providing its views on whether a proposed project that pollutes or even destroys lakes, streams, or wetlands would violate CWA standards.



Flowing through Midtown Atlanta, Clear Creek was polluted with extremely high levels of bacteria until significantly improved thanks to the Clean Water Act and UCR's 1995 lawsuit against the city.

The bill would remove EPA's existing state coordination role and eliminate the careful federal/state balance established in the current CWA. It would prevent EPA from protecting communities from unacceptable adverse impacts to their water supplies and the environment caused by federal permits, and would substantively eliminate the opportunity for EPA, the federal government's expert on water quality, to comment on federal permits impacting water quality and public health."

The Chattahoochee without the Clean Water Act

Without the Clean Water Act, Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper would not have had the necessary legal tool to file suit against the city of Atlanta in 1995 to stop the discharge of hundreds of millions of gallons of untreated sewage into the Chattahoochee River and its tributaries.

We wouldn't have been able to use federal water quality rules to defend Lake Lanier from increasingly high levels of nutrient pollution;

secure major upgrades to sewage plants in several towns in the Lanier watershed; or restore streams illegally impounded, channelized or otherwise damaged. We wouldn't have been able to stop massive soil erosion flowing from development at a state facility in south

Fulton County into a community's streams, lakes and wetlands; or stop polluted runoff from dozens of industrial sites.

These are just a few of the cases where UCR has employed the Clean Water Act in the past 17 years to advocate for the Chattahoochee River, and in each instance we relied on EPA's rules and role in protecting water quality.

What you can do

Along with the **Waterkeeper Alliance** (www.waterkeeper.org), UCR is urging our members to support this critical federal environmental law and EPA's role by communicating with Georgia's U.S. senators. UCR staff met earlier this fall with regional staff for Georgia U.S. Senators Saxby Chambliss and Johnny Isakson to ask them to vote no on H.R. 2018, if the bill moves forward in the Senate.

Let's all do our part to protect clean water by making our voices loud and clear that EPA's role is critical to the CWA and restoring and maintaining clean water in the Chattahoochee River basin and throughout our nation.

To contact Georgia's senators, visit Johnny Isakson's website (<http://isakson.senate.gov/>) and Saxby Chambliss' website (<http://chambliss.senate.gov/public/index.cfm>).

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

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Reflections

My early school years were spent in the Buckhead area of Atlanta — first at Sarah Smith Elementary School in the late 1950s and early '60s and then **North Fulton High School**, where I graduated in 1969.

I didn't know it at the time, but my home near Lenox Square and both schools were located in the **Peachtree Creek watershed**. This 87-square mile basin sprawls across north Atlanta, draining rainwater that falls on yards, rooftops and roads from the edge of Gwinnett County to Buckhead, Decatur and Midtown Atlanta, before flowing into the Chattahoochee River near Bolton Road in West Atlanta.



I have wonderful memories of playing in the creek behind our house, which I now know is a tributary to Nancy Creek, itself a tributary to Peachtree Creek. We weren't taught to make the connections back then, as a growing number of school children and adults are today. We tended to see things separately, isolated: the stream behind a house, the river miles away and the lake many miles upstream.

Real-world, real-water learning

For the past 12 years, Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper has been working in partnership with Gainesville's **Elachee Nature Science Center** to make sure that today's students understand how streams are connected and how they work — where the Chattahoochee starts in the mountains, how it gets bigger as it flows downstream, is dammed to create Lake Lanier, and then flows on downstream all the way to the **Gulf of Mexico**. Along the way, they learn, the watershed

provides drinking water, recreation, hydropower, irrigation for farms, and other important uses to millions of people.

Importantly, we talk with students about how the river system must be shared to benefit everyone, upstream and downstream.

With Elachee, we've brought **nearly 30,000 students and teachers** on board the *Chota Princess II* — our 40-foot catamaran on Lake Lanier since 2000 — for the only floating classroom in Georgia. They learn by engaging in hands-on activities, from water-quality testing and chemical experiments to wildlife observation and watershed mapping.

Three years ago, we expanded this highly successful on-the-water program to add a new scholarship component. With support from local foundations, we've been able to bring close to 2,000 disadvantaged and inner city youth on board to learn about their watershed (see page 5).

Do you know your watershed address?

Students aren't the only ones who love maps; look at the popularity of Google's various map programs. All of us like to see where we live, where we work and where we play — in relation to local landmarks and geography.

To find out where you are in the Chattahoochee River watershed, visit our **new interactive watershed map** at www.chattahoochee.org and click on the "You Are Where?" button in the right column. Then, bookmark this webpage and visit it again when you want to locate a favorite stretch of the river and crossroads, or to identify a potential pollution problem.

It's all about making connections.

Sally Betha
Executive Director and Riverkeeper

Watershed Moment

Nearly all of the parts of the Chattahoochee that I paddle, from a little below Helen to Franklin, can be paddled by anyone, no experience needed. This suits my wife, Cheryl, who likes to be on the high side of warm. She likes the calm, scenic paddles, on a hot day, little breeze, when the water is barely cooling. The river eases her along so she only paddles when she wants to. We see and hear the herons and kingfishers. We glide in the shade to inspect small tributaries and their waterfalls.

I look for otter, beaver and muskrat. On the kinds of days that Cheryl likes, the turtles are all over the place, on the bank, on logs and rocks, on each other. The debate is always who saw the biggest one. When these are the biggest arguments, nobody loses; we just plan to come out for a rematch.



— **Bill Hayn, Grayson**

On Patrol

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

CUMMING RESTORES STREAM AS PART OF SETTLEMENT

The only public park in the city of Cumming — on Pilgrim Mill Road — is one of the oldest in Forsyth County and serves as a gathering place for all ages. Until recently, the stream that runs through this park was not very healthy due to past impacts that included channelization (straightening) of the waterway, piping and removal of important natural vegetation beside the stream.

As part of a settlement agreement between UCR and Cumming, the city agreed to fully restore the stream at a cost of about \$100,000. The settlement stemmed from the city's failure to comply with environmental regulations when it cleared property to make way for a new aquatic center.

Among other violations, the city destroyed a tributary to Lake Lanier and allowed large amounts of sediment to enter the stream and lake without appropriate permits and use of best management practices. When attempts to work with the city failed, UCR filed suit, which eventually led to a settlement that included the stream restoration and other supplemental environmental projects.

Public educated on importance of stream buffers

To complete the stream restoration project, the city hired experts who reshaped the stream channel, added structures to aid in stability and enhance aquatic habitat, and planted native vegetation along the banks and in the stream buffer.

Since the stream is located near a playground and covered pavilion, we saw this as a perfect opportunity to add an educational component. A large sign has been installed that teaches park patrons about the importance of healthy streams and buffers to the rivers and lakes that supply our drinking water — and how restoration projects can improve water quality for people and wildlife.



As part of a settlement agreement between UCR and Cumming, the city agreed to fully restore a stream that runs through its only public park — at a cost of about \$100,000.

State considers new temperature standards for trout

Georgia's Environmental Protection Division (EPD) has outlined a plan to revise temperature standards for trout waters in the Chattahoochee River below Buford Dam. Currently, wastewater discharges that increase temperatures in primary trout waters are prohibited, while only a two-degree increase is permissible for discharges into secondary waters. The Chattahoochee from Buford Dam to Peachtree Creek is classified as a secondary trout stream. A recent study showed that brown trout are reproducing below Buford Dam, meriting the upgrade from secondary to primary trout waters. EPD proposes designating the Chattahoochee from **Buford Dam to Island Ford Shoals** near Roswell as primary trout waters. Below the shoals, EPD proposes a seasonally variable standard to protect both coldwater and warmwater fish (striped bass, shoal bass). UCR will monitor the development of the rule, advocating for the most protective standard.

UCR supports Atlanta's rainwater harvesting ordinance

In July, UCR testified in support of an ordinance that permits rainwater harvesting for indoor potable use (e.g., showering, dishwashing). The ordinance will **help reduce future water demand**, lowering energy and water consumption. Rainwater harvesting also helps reduce demands on stormwater systems, alleviating runoff and keeping our streets safer and streams cleaner. Some proponents of the ordinance sought a waiver for all sewer fees. Although UCR recognizes the need to provide financial incentives to encourage water conservation, we think it's fair to charge users a modest fee if they rely on the sewer system to carry away their wastewater. In September, the city council passed the ordinance as proposed — among the first in the nation. UCR remains committed to supporting local governments that **pursue innovative water savings measures**.

DeKalb convenes advisory group to oversee sewer repair

Earlier this year, the U.S. Attorney General and EPA issued a consent decree, ordering DeKalb County to improve its sewer system. The consent decree follows years of failing collection and treatment infrastructure that resulted in thousands of gallons of untreated sewage, including fecal matter and industrial waste spilling into local waterways. The consent decree calls for about \$700 million in repairs and upgrades. In an effort to be transparent and provide open communication with the public, DeKalb has convened a **Watershed Capital Improvement Program Advisory Group** made up of leaders from watershed and neighborhood associations, including UCR's Sally Bethea. The advisory group meets quarterly and meetings are open to the public. The consent decree also requires DeKalb to perform stream cleanup projects with at least \$600,000 in funding.

Sewage spills ongoing in Connally Nature Park

During an annual inspection visit to Connally Nature Park, located in **East Point**, UCR discovered a sewage spill that coated the creek's channel with white sludge and smelled throughout the park. Connally Park is protected by a conservation easement held by **America's Watershed Landkeeper**, a supporting organization to UCR whose mission is to protect natural and open-spaces that enhance water quality in the Chattahoochee Basin. East Point, which has been under a state-issued consent order to make system-wide sewer repairs and upgrades, responded to the spill the same day; however, the problem was not fixed and we are working with the city and the state to get this health hazard resolved. The forest and a stream in the park were protected a decade ago, after school construction was proposed on the site.

River Stewardship

TROUT UNLIMITED LAUNCHES ADOPT-THE-HOOCH PROGRAM

Trout Unlimited (TU) is developing a new program called “Adopt-the-Hooch”, a comprehensive water quality monitoring project in the metro section of the Chattahoochee basin. Kevin McGrath, president of TU’s **Upper Chattahoochee Chapter**, announced that the organization will partner with UCR and **Georgia Adopt-A-Stream (AAS)** to educate the public and protect the highly productive trout sections of the Chattahoochee River below Buford Dam.

Members of several TU chapters based in north Georgia learned about chemical and bacteria monitoring at two adopt-a-stream training programs held during the summer at Johns Creek Environmental Campus on the Chattahoochee. UCR Technical Programs Director Jason Ulseth joined AAS Co-directors Allison Hughes and Pam Keel, and Sharon Smith from **Fulton County Adopt-A-Stream** to lead the training sessions.

Members certified to monitor streams

The volunteer training focused on monitoring for temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen, conductivity, and *E. coli* levels. After passing two written tests, nearly 40 TU members were officially certified to do chemical and



Kevin McGrath (left), president of TU’s Upper Chattahoochee chapter, said the organization will use Adopt-A-Stream certifications to educate the public and protect its trout streams.

surface waters and are relying upon the assistance of volunteers more than ever. Georgia’s Adopt-A-Stream Program (www.georgiaadoptastream.org) is an excellent way to get involved in protecting your local water resources, and provide quality data that can be used for a variety of purposes.

To learn more about UCR’s water quality monitoring programs, contact Jason Ulseth at julseth@ucriverkeeper.org.

bacterial testing in Georgia’s waters.

Volunteers will be divided into teams of two to three members focused on monitoring major tributaries to the Chattahoochee, including **Suwannee Creek, Johns Creek, and Crooked Creek**, at least once a month. With routine monitoring stations at a dozen locations, they will be able to collect valuable data to help assess the quality of the water flowing into the river from these major tributaries. The data also can be used to determine if any potential sources of pollution exist in these watersheds that need to be identified and remedied.

Due to dwindling budgets, local, state, and federal governmental agencies are not capable of monitoring all of our

UCR VOLUNTEER IS PASSIONATE PROTECTOR OF CITY STREAMS

With a biology degree and a passion for justice, **Mike Meyer** is focused on protecting Atlanta’s urban watersheds as a volunteer coordinator for UCR’s **Neighborhood WaterWatch (NWW)**. This collaboration between UCR and neighborhood groups in our watershed seeks to improve water quality in urban streams and protect human health in the surrounding communities.

Meyer developed a strong interest in stream protection while testing urban waterways with **Southeast Waters**, an AmeriCorps program. It was while working for Southeast Waters that he learned about Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper and subsequently contacted us in the spring of 2010, after graduating from Oglethorpe University.

“When I was told I’d be able to work with the riverkeeper, I think I was happier than I’d ever been in my life,” Meyer said. “I noted UCR’s ability to effectively bridge citizens with other NGO’s [nonprofit organizations] and government agencies, and to be effective in solving some of Atlanta’s toughest conservation issues.”

‘We are what can make this world great’

By working with the Neighborhood Water-Watch Program and volunteers from 16 urban watersheds, Mike says that he’s been able to combine the lab experience he gained in college with his passion for justice and making things better. He likes collecting data that can be analyzed and applied to the real problems facing the Chattahoochee and its tributaries.

“Mike has been one of the most dedicated and involved volunteers I have ever worked with,” said Jason Ulseth, UCR’s technical programs director. “His accomplishments at UCR have made a significant impact on local water quality and have resulted in improved public health and awareness.”

Meyer believes that by keeping watch on what goes into our local streams we keep ourselves and our ecosystem healthy and help reclaim the Chattahoochee, with all its life and splendor. He hopes to one day devote all his work hours to the issues facing our urban ecosystem and help to lessen the impacts of our great city.



Mike Meyer takes a sample out of the Chattahoochee River.

YOUTH GAIN WATERSHED APPRECIATION ON FLOATING CLASSROOM

Georgia's only floating classroom has helped UCR serve nearly 30,000 students and teachers across metro Atlanta since its inception in 2000. Provided in partnership with the **Elachee Nature Science Center** and called the Lake Lanier Aquatic Learning Center on UCR's *Chota Princess II*, the classroom teaches children about our watershed and water quality. But don't take our word for it; read what our participants have to say!

"It makes learning fun. It's a sneaky way for kids to be thinking about math and science without them knowing it. I know of a couple cases where the kids will come back from the trip and get on the computer to learn more. It ignites a spark in our kids, instead of turning on the TV when they get home!"

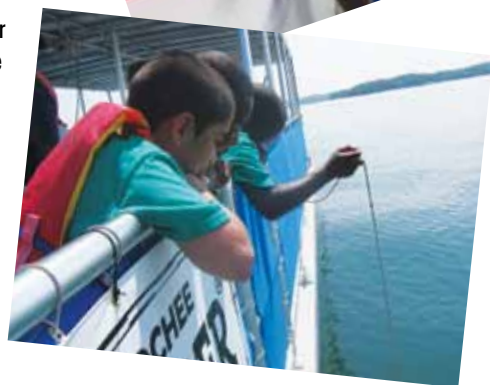
— *Claire Guitton, Vice President of Strategic Programs, Boys and Girl Club of Metro Atlanta*

"Thank you for inviting us to Lake Lanier. If it wasn't free my mom probably would have never let me go. The first time I got on the boat I was scared, but now there's nothing to be afraid of. I like how the water got deeper and deeper. I hope one day we can come again."

— *Milan*

"I felt like we were going around the world, on the ocean."

— *Aaron*



"Thank you so much for the wonderful experience provided to us at Lake Lanier. I especially enjoyed the boat ride. Some of my favorite experiments were when the oxygen dissolved, and the purity of the water. I was impressed with the results of the water purity test. They ranged from 6.8-7.0. I think the difference originated from how well the chemicals were mixed. The results give us the conclusion that the water in Lake Lanier is practically free of acid." — *Keeley*

"I really enjoyed doing the experiments and learning about all the different things that made up Lake Lanier. We have to share because every animal needs water, and if those animals don't get water, we don't get to eat certain types of food." — *Londy*

"The most important thing I learned is that Lake Lanier is a man-made lake, and that the majority of us live in a watershed. I hope I can come back soon." — *Kyra*

UCR NETS \$93,000 FROM SWEETWATER CAMPAIGN

Sweetwater Brewery's Save the Hooch Campaign has always hauled in significant support for UCR's river patrol and water monitoring programs. But, this year turned into a record harvest, netting \$93,000 from the annual fundraiser and river awareness campaign.

SweetWater presented UCR with the check at the annual End of Summer BBQ held at **Canoe Restaurant** on the banks of the Chattahoochee in Cobb County. The amount far surpassed last year's contribution, thanks in part to increased participation from **United Distributors** and **Taco Mac**.

"What an unbelievable success!" said SweetWater Big Kahuna **Freddy Bensch**. "Through the support from SweetWater's fans and participating retailers we were able to raise nearly \$100K. It's inspiring to see the people of Atlanta come together to help save this region's most precious natural resource. Which of course, we love because a clean Chattahoochee River gives us the clean water we need to keep making great beer!"

Since 2006, the Save the Hooch Campaign has raised nearly \$350,000.



SweetWater's **Freddy Bensch** (left) and **Steve Farace** (right) present **Sally Bethea** with a check for \$93,000 at the End of Summer BBQ at Canoe Restaurant.

River Matters

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

October 22-23
McIntosh Reserve Paddle and Camping Trip

McIntosh Reserve in Carroll Co. to the U.S. 27 Bridge in Franklin Co.

November 4-6
Hemlock Fest (Lumpkin Coalition)
Murrayville

November 5
"Autumn on the River" (Trout Unlimited)
Ippolito's Italian Restaurant, Roswell

November 5
Riverview Landing Fall Festival
Mableton

November 12
Adopt-A-Stream Workshop (Elachee)
Hall County

Ray Anderson (1934-2011)



Ray Anderson, a Georgia textile manufacturer who became one of the world's pioneers in sustainability practices, died in mid-August at the age of 77. The man who once called himself a "recovering plunderer" is now regarded as the first to apply green business practices like biodegradability, recycling and reduction to a large-scale industrial company. "Sustainability is living within the care and capacity of the earth, and for an industry that's a very big challenge because we very naturally have huge environmental footprints," Anderson once said. "We truly need a new model if we are to live sustainably and operate our businesses in a sustainable way." A former member of UCR's board of directors, Anderson founded **Interface, Inc.**, a worldwide leader in design, production and sales of environmentally responsible modular carpet for the commercial, institutional, and residential markets. For his efforts, Anderson was honored by UCR last year with our **River Guardian Award** at the 2010 Patron Appreciation Dinner. UCR's Sally Bethea praised Anderson's commitment to the environment in the video: "The Chattahoochee runs through Ray's veins, and he does everything he can to give back to our river."

CORPS TO TAKE A HARD LOOK AT GLADES RESERVOIR

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Savannah District made a long-overdue decision in July requiring a comprehensive analysis of the environmental impacts of the proposed **Glades Reservoir**. This analysis is among the first mandated by the Corps for a Georgia reservoir and will require a thorough evaluation of the reservoir's potential environmental, social and economic impacts on the human environment.



Photo courtesy: Jeff Davis/Creative Loafing

Hickory Log Reservoir in Cherokee County took a dozen years to build, cost four times the original price tag (more than \$100 million), and is still not supplying water to any customers.

Before construction may begin, applicants must get a permit from the Corps for projects affecting federal waters, including Lake Lanier, the Chattahoochee River and their tributaries. This requirement applies to Glades because the project involves damming one Lanier tributary and pumping water from the Chattahoochee itself to fill the new reservoir.

Traditionally, the Savannah Corps has issued these permits with little agency oversight or public input. However, the **National Environmental Policy Act** directs the Corps and other federal permitting agencies to require an environmental impact statement (EIS) whenever an action may significantly affect the human environment. An EIS also provides the public with a greater opportunity to participate during the decision-making process.

UCR has long advocated that proposed reservoirs, which are costly, controversial and environmentally destructive, should trigger an EIS.

Review of cumulative impacts required

Notably, the Corps decided that the controversy over water allocation in the **Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) basin** triggers an EIS because of potentially significant cumulative impacts arising from Glades and other reservoirs proposed across the ACF basin. The Corps gave the applicant a choice of either an individual Glades EIS or a regional EIS to consider all reservoirs proposed for the ACF basin simultaneously. The applicant chose the former option.

During the EIS process, the Corps will evaluate the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of Glades on water quality, hydrology, aquatic resources and socioeconomics. The Corps also must identify a reasonable range of alternatives and adequate mitigation to address unavoidable adverse impacts.

UCR will monitor the EIS process, taking full advantage of this opportunity to continue advocating for aggressive water conservation as a means of maximizing water supply while minimizing costs and environmental impact.

To learn more about UCR's efforts to resolve the tri-state water conflict, visit us at <http://www.ucriverkeeper.org/tri-state-issues.php>.

TO WATER OR NOT TO WATER — THAT IS THE QUESTION DURING DROUGHT

Then-Gov. Sonny Perdue signed **Georgia's Water Stewardship Act** in June 2010, designed in part to reduce outdoor water loss. On its face, the law appears reasonable in its attempt to reduce water loss; unfortunately, the law's exceptions render the rule virtually meaningless.

For example, you may water yards any time between 4 p.m. and 10 a.m. on any day if you use an automated irrigation system, a hose without a shut-off nozzle, or sprinklers. However, if you want to wash your car, hose your driveway, top off your swimming pool, or pressure wash your home, you may do so any time as long as you abide by an odd/even schedule. That is, odd-numbered households may use water for these purposes on Tuesdays, Thursdays or Sundays; even-numbered households are limited to Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays.

If you want to irrigate sports fields, golf courses, vegetable gardens or new turf, you may do so any day, any time. The new law also doesn't apply if you are a commercial pressure washer; if you use drip irrigation, a soaker hose, or a hose with a shut-off nozzle; or if you use private well water.



Confused by the new irrigation restrictions? You're not alone.

Confused? You probably aren't the only one.

Local governments unable to monitor water use

Adding to the confusion is the lack of adequate resources to monitor outdoor water use. UCR recently surveyed water utilities in metro Atlanta. While nearly all have codified the outdoor watering restrictions, few have sufficient resources to do more than respond to customer complaints and provide information in bill inserts.

During the spring and summer, we use up to 60 percent more water because of increased outdoor use. This consumption can be reduced by limiting outdoor water use to the cooler time of the day, every day, when evaporation rates drop significantly. As Georgia enters yet another drought, we all must do our part to sustain our finite water resources.

For a handy guide to Outdoor Water Use, visit Cobb County Water System's website, <http://water.cobbcountyga.gov/PDFFiles/h2o%20quick%20guide.pdf>. To learn what more you can do to conserve water, visit us at www.ucriverkeeper.org/no-time-to-waste.php.

CHICKEN PROCESSING PLANT, OTHER INDUSTRIES TO CONTROL POLLUTION

Twenty-six hundred industrial facilities in Georgia — from food processing operations, landfills and auto salvage yards to chemical, metal and petroleum plants — are regulated by the **federal Clean Water Act** to control discharges of polluted stormwater; yet, many of them are contaminating our waterways.

These facilities are often exposed to rain, which can pick up pollutants and transport them untreated into a nearby storm sewer system or directly to a creek, river or lake, unless adequate best management practices (BMPs) are installed and maintained.

The regulation that governs the control of industrial stormwater is detailed in a “general permit” that must be renewed every five years by the administering agency, which in Georgia is the Environmental Protection Division (EPD). This summer, UCR’s Jason Ulseth was asked by EPD to represent the environmental community in the negotiation of the new permit.

Endless cycle of failure halted with new permit

In the past, regulated facilities that failed to meet benchmarks for pollutants of concern have been allowed to cycle through an endless series of revising and implementing BMPs, regardless of whether those practices realized a reduction in pollution.

During the course of the permit negotiations, UCR reviewed annual reports for permitted facilities in the upper Chattahoochee basin. Our research and investigations confirmed that some facilities have operated under this ineffective system for years, contributing to the impairment of local waters. One such facility is **Pilgrim’s Pride Corporation**, a chicken processing facility in Gainesville which drains to Flat Creek, a tributary



UCR advocates for more stringent permit requirements for facilities such as Pilgrim’s Pride, which will require proper best management practices to keep pollutants out of adjacent waterways.

to Lake Lanier. Another is **Metalplate Galvanizing** in west Atlanta, which drains to Utoy Creek.

UCR used the records of poor performance at facilities like Pilgrim’s Pride and the continued impairment of local waters to make the case that more stringent permit requirements were needed, and EPD listened. The new general permit will require facilities that exceed the pollutant benchmarks for two cycles of BMPs to face a more stringent compliance program including adherence to enforceable numeric limits for the pollutants of concern.

This outcome represents a major victory for cleaner waterways statewide and provides a much-improved tool for citizens and watershed groups.

FINDING WAYS TO RESTORE WATER QUALITY IN LAKE LANIER

In 2006, UCR reported that Lake Lanier did not meet water quality standards for chlorophyll *a*, a pigment found in algae that grows in the lake. Higher chlorophyll levels indicate increased algae growth, which can deplete oxygen in the water and lead to serious water quality problems. Chlorophyll *a* levels increase as nutrients, such as phosphorous from wastewater discharges and stormwater runoff, enter the lake.

Once Lake Lanier was officially listed as “impaired” in 2008, a state-sponsored modeling project was undertaken to understand how nutrients enter the lake and affect algal growth. The **Upper Chattahoochee Basin Group**, a group of municipal and utility representatives and other stakeholders in the Lanier watershed including UCR, participated in the state’s modeling work by contributing data and reviewing model results.

In August, Georgia’s Environmental Protection Division (EPD) completed the lake models, which demonstrate that two changes are needed to Lanier’s water quality standards.

EPD proposes to raise the standard for chlorophyll *a* at **Browns Bridge**



UCR volunteer Woody Williams prepares to deploy a Van Dorn sampler, which is used to collect water samples from different depths in the lake.

station, one of the five lake stations with standards, because the model confirms that this location is a transition zone between the upper and lower portions of the lake. EPD also proposes to change the Total Nitrogen standard from an anytime reading of 4 mg/L to a growing season average of 1.5 mg/L to include a magnitude, frequency, and duration component to the standard. The Board of Natural Resources is expected to vote on these changes in February 2012.

Utilities, watershed residents must take action

The next step is to reduce the amount of nutrients entering the lake through management strategies that tighten limits in wastewater permits, such as those for

the Cornelia and Baldwin water pollution control plants.

Other strategies will target runoff from agricultural and residential land uses; a preliminary calculation of the “total maximum daily load” of nutrients in the watershed shows that substantial reductions must be made to keep Lanier clean now and in the future.

UCR will continue our lake monitoring program and advocacy for a cleaner lake through implementation of the state’s cleanup plan.

PATRON DINNER HONORS ADVOCATES, RAISES \$167,000 FOR PROGRAMS

UCR honored some of our most impassioned supporters and partners, while raising over \$167,000 for our river protection programs at the 17th Annual Patron Appreciation Dinner in mid-September. About 350 supporters attended the event, which was held at The Foundry next to our Atlanta office.



(L-R): UCR board member Billy Hall, SGR partner Andy Thompson, Sally Bethea, SGR partner Steve O'Day



The event drew about 350 guests.

NewFields CEO and board member Billy Hall presented our River Guardian Award to **Smith, Gambrell & Russell** law firm for tireless legal representation that has led to key victories for the river. JouleX CEO/President **Tom Noonan**, whose support of UCR's strategic communications programs including our *Tapped Out* presentation, received our River Benefactor Award from UCR Co-founder **Rutherford Seydel**.



Tom Noonan

Upper Chattahoochee Chapter of Trout Unlimited, which collaborated with UCR in our inaugural Sweep the Hooch cleanup this past spring and on many other projects, received our River Advocate Award from board member **Richard Jacobson** of Cox Enterprises. (Chapter President **Kevin McGrath** accepted the award). UCR Events and Outreach Director **Tammy Bates** kicked off the ceremony by giving the River Partner Award to **Darryl Haddock** with West Atlanta Watershed Alliance.



UCR board chair Rutherford Seydel, TU's Kevin McGrath, Sally Bethea

Photos courtesy of Spark St. Jude/MagicOnFilm



Keeping Watch Over Our Waters

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UCR Executive Director **Sally Bethea** remembered the late **Gandy Glover** with our Legacy Recognition Award in a poignant speech before presenting the award to Gandy's brothers Peter and Taylor Glover.



The late Gandy Glover

In a special fund-a-need request during the event's live auction, more than \$8,000 was raised to support UCR's floating classroom program.

THANKS TO OUR 2011 PATRON DINNER SPONSORS!

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