

# MAINSTREAM

Official Quarterly Newsletter of the Coosa River Basin Initiative/Upper Coosa RIVERKEEPER®



## Dam Proposal in Paulding County Full Of Holes

**A** plan to build a water supply reservoir on Richland Creek in Paulding County may unnecessarily endanger protected fish species and flows to downstream communities on the Etowah River.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) received that message loudly and clearly during a recent public comment period in which CRBI, 14 other organizations and the Georgia Water Coalition, as well as the cities of Rome and Cartersville, submitted letters opposing the \$75 million, 305-acre project along the Paulding-Bartow county line. The reservoir would be filled with water pumped from the Etowah River downstream from Allatoona Dam.

Paulding County Commissioners are pursuing the project in an effort to secure water supplies for the county beyond 2050. The County contends that by 2035, residents and businesses will need 47 million gallons per day (MGD), but CRBI's analysis of the project shows that the County has failed to accurately project population growth and implement meaningful water efficiency and conservation measures.

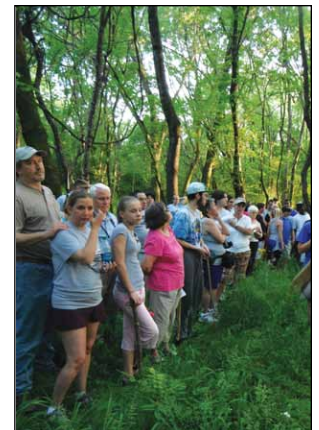
## Harbinger of Spring...Underwater



While wildflowers and trees sport the showy blooms that signal spring on terra firma, beneath the surface the fish of the Coosa River Basin are in full "bloom." In this photograph shot by CRBI Program Coordinator Amos Tuck April 7, a pair of Holiday darters gather to spawn in the Conasauga River. The brightly colored male gives *Etheostoma brevirstrum* its common name thanks to the red and green markings that it sports during the spawning season. Holiday darters are listed as endangered by Georgia's Department of Natural Resources and are found in Georgia only in the Conasauga, Coosawatee and Etowah rivers.

## Corps reconsiders permits for shopping center at Burwell Creek

**T**he fight to save Rome's Burwell Creek wetlands entered a new chapter in March as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) began reviewing the legitimacy of environmental permits it issued that would allow the construction of a 60-acre shopping center atop the creek's wetlands and floodplain.



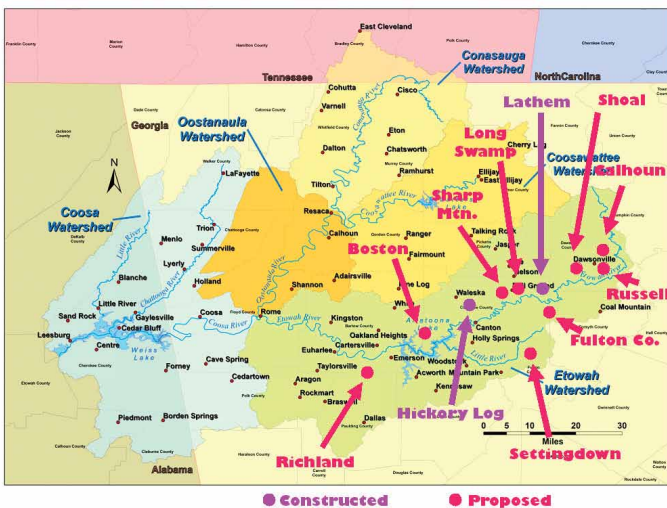
A CRBI-sponsored "Wetlands Walk" through the Burwell Creek property attracted 93 participants on April 2.

The review came at the request of CRBI after meetings with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in November in which EPA confirmed that it was not sponsoring the project as a Brownfield redevelopment. The Corps has defended the issuance of the permit because it claimed that EPA was a "sponsor" of the project.

The proposed building site includes a former City of Rome landfill, but also holds four acres of wetlands and nearly 50 acres of floodplain. Previously, the City of Rome was considering development of the property as part of Rome's "Central Park."

In a letter to the Corps, CRBI outlined EPA's consistent refusal to sponsor the project and raised questions about changes to Ledbetter Properties' site plan.

Constructed and Proposed Reservoirs in Etowah



Paulding water planners have bloated population projections by as much as 30 percent. Predicting a 2035 population of 445,600, the county estimates growth of more than 14,000 residents per year through 2025, but statistics show that during the past decade the county has grown by only 5,482 residents annually, with the recession dramatically slowing growth in the past three years. Building permits for single family homes in Paulding topped out at 3,070 in 2005. In 2011, there were only 132 permits issued.

The county's water conservation

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Mainstream is published four times a year by Coosa River Basin Initiative.

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CRBI is a grassroots environmental organization that works to inform and empower citizens so that they may become involved in the process of creating a clean, healthy and more economically viable Coosa River Basin.

CRBI is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. All donations are tax-deductible.

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## DIRECTOR'S REPORT

### Bad Government Biggest Threat to Our Rivers

Another session of the Georgia General Assembly has ended, and unfortunately, proactive measures like regulating interbasin transfers and ending the General Assembly's raids of the state environmental funds to fill gaps in other portions of the budget failed to pass muster, leaving me pondering why: Why is it so difficult to enact laws to better protect Georgia's rivers?



Joe Cook

The answer lies in how our government, and its leaders, do business. In the end, bad government is a bigger threat to our rivers and land than the ugliest discharge from a polluting factory.

For instance, despite broad support from rank and file legislators, interbasin transfer (IBT) legislation has been kept bottled up by state leadership.

IBT bills supported by CRBI do one simple thing—they would change language found in existing IBT laws so that the laws would be enforceable. Current laws leave affected downstream communities at the mercy of the state's executive branch which has sole authority to approve or deny IBTs. Good government allows citizens to be part of the check and balance system; but to date, when it comes to IBTs, state leaders have steadfastly refused citizens that right.

The sordid story of our Hazardous Waste and Solid Waste Trust Funds is another tale of bad government. These Funds are generated by fees we pay when we purchase new tires or dump trash at a local landfill. The collections are supposed to be used to clean up hazardous waste sites and fund local solid waste programs, but since 2004, the legislature has stolen

\$123 million from these funds to fix the budget elsewhere.

It's the equivalent of buying a washing machine from your local appliance mart and getting instead a washboard and tub. What is fraud in the private sector is business as usual in state government. Said Senate Rules Committee Chairman Don Balfour: "We have been doing this for 20 years, and I still keep getting re-elected."

Finally, Gov. Nathan Deal earlier this year refused to allow water conservation projects (the most cost-effective water supply projects) to be eligible for funding under his \$300 million water supply program. Now, it appears one of the projects first in line for funding will be a dubious reservoir project in the Governor's home county.

That's bad government, and it's bad for our rivers.

## COORDINATOR'S REPORT Who Is This Guy?

Although I have met many CRBI members in my first weeks on the job, here's a formal introduction:

I developed a love for the Coosa River Basin at a very early age. Growing up in Cedartown I was always in the water, either swimming or fishing. In sixth grade, my parents gave me a field guide to identify a fish I had caught. I became obsessed with the book. From that moment, I wanted to know everything I could about the natural world, and more than anything, I wanted to know what was going on under the surface of the water.

My curiosities led me to the University of Georgia and the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources where I majored in Fisheries and Wildlife.

At UGA, I found that my passions were more than just learning about the environment—I needed to share what I had learned with others. Through various student organizations, I began presenting to school groups, college students,



Amos Tuck

professionals, friends of UGA, and anyone who would listen. Everyday I had extracurricular activities to balance with my countless hours of studying. I graduated summa cum laude in May 2011.

Professionally, I have worked with both the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the UGA Fisheries Department. Both positions involved extensive research in the Coosa Basin on fish and mussels. My experiences seemed to keep leading me back to the Coosa.

When I googled "jobs Coosa basin" and found the Program Coordinator position advertised, I knew from that first moment that I had found something catered to my unique skills and experiences. I am humbled to be part of an organization that transforms conservation advocacy from a complaint to a real action. I look forward to getting to know each of you. Stop by the office and let's talk fish!

## Volunteers, Supporters Honored at Annual Meeting

More than 100 people attended CRBI's annual meeting in January to hear a panel discussion about water supply reservoirs and honor key volunteers and supporters in 2011.

**Jonathan Bridges** of Rome was recognized as the Ray Kelley Volunteer of the Year. Bridges has served as a CRBI volunteer for more than eight years and in 2011 played important supporting roles at each of CRBI's four major fundraising events. The Volunteer of the Year award is named in honor of the late Ray Kelley of Gaylesville, Alabama who was one of the founding members of CRBI.



*Jonathan Bridges*



*Jamie Taylor*

**Jamie Taylor** of Rome was recognized as the Water Monitor of the Year. Taylor served as CRBI's volunteer boat captain before recently joining CRBI's staff in that position. During 2011, he collected and analyzed more than 130 water samples from Rome's rivers and helped CRBI rank in the top five organizations in Georgia's Adopt-A-Stream program.

**Marie Lewis**, a teacher at Coosa High School in Rome, was honored with CRBI's Environmental Educator Award. Lewis believes in getting her biology students out of the classroom and into the outdoors. For the past two years she has partnered with CRBI to get her students on local rivers through paddle trips and clean ups.



*Marie Lewis, biology instructor at Coosa High School, with a group of her students.*

**Redmond Regional Medical Center** in Rome distinguished itself as CRBI's Corporate Citizen in 2011. Redmond Regional Medical Center served as the lead sponsor for CRBI's 7 Hills 3 Rivers



*Redmond Regional Medical Center, winner of CRBI's Corporate Citizen award, sponsors an annual drug drop off day to collect unused and out-of-date medications.*

Adventure Race, fielded a team in the WATERFEST Canoe Tug-O-War contest, sponsored a "Redmond on the River" day and its employees lent many volunteers hours to CRBI events. Redmond also organized a "pill drop" event to help local citizens dispose of out-of-date and unused medications properly, keeping them out of local rivers, streams and water systems.

CRBI thanks **Gil Rogers** of the Southern Environmental Law Center, Rome City Manager **John Bennett** and **Scott Cole**, an attorney with Hall, Booth, Smith & Slover in Atlanta, for participating in our panel discussion.

## New Board Members Welcomed

In December, CRBI's Board of Directors welcomed three new members. They include Joanne Smith, a historic preservation advocate from Cartersville who works as assistant vice president, director of E & S underwriting with Great American Custom Insurance; Bill Norris, a resident of Ball Ground who works as vice president of production and materials management at Remington Medical Inc.; and Bruce Nadu of Summerville, a long-time WATERFEST supporter and Dyeing Supervisor at Mt. Vernon Mills in Trion.

## Nina Lovel Honored with Heart of the Community Award

CRBI Board President **Nina Lovel** in February was recognized as a Heart of the Community award recipient for her volunteer service to CRBI and numerous other organizations.



*Nina Lovel*

Lovel also volunteers with the Davies Women's Shelter and serves as a deacon at First Baptist Church. She is a member of the Seven Hills Rotary Club, a volunteer member of the Floyd County Community Emergency Response Team and a long-time member of the Coosa Valley Tennis Association.

In 2011, she was chosen by CNN to participate in its Fit Nation Triathlon Challenge; hundreds of thousands of viewers followed her training along with five other participants and saw her complete her first Olympic distance triathlon in August.

The Heart of the Community awards are sponsored by Redmond Regional Medical Center and recognize outstanding community volunteers while raising money to support heart health-related projects in Rome.

## CRBI, Fry Patrons Win Big at 10th Annual Fish Fry

Some 50 CRBI volunteers served up nearly 1000 plates of catfish, hushpuppies, cole slaw and cheese grits and several lucky CRBI supporters went home with great prizes as CRBI celebrated its 10th anniversary fish fry Nov. 12.

The Fry, sponsored by WLAQ and The Ridge 95.7 and a host of other supporters, helped generate more than \$11,000 for CRBI programs. Several lucky CRBI supporters went home with great prizes. **Jack Martischnig** of Rome and **Buddy Tanner** of Rockmart won Panama City Beach vacations courtesy of Jason Free Realty Beach Rentals. **Micah Zimmerman** of Rome won a Delta Airlines ticket courtesy of Travel Leaders by guessing "650" in the Coosa Plastic Population Guessing Game. The canoe holding plastic bottles collected from the Coosa River during our Rivers Alive clean up contained 646 bottles.

**Leigh Barrell** of Rome won a Wilderness Systems Kayak courtesy of Cedar Creek Park and **Donna Baxley** of Rome won a Glacier Bay high-efficiency toilet courtesy of The Home Depot in our "Toilet Toss" raffle. CRBI thanks its volunteers, sponsors and supporters!

# Governor's Water Program Wastes Dollars on Dams, Stiffs Water Efficiency

State tax dollars will be used to fund potentially unnecessary, expensive and environmentally damaging water supply reservoirs under Gov. Nathan Deal's new \$300 million water supply program approved in December.

The financing package failed to include water conservation and efficiency projects as among the water supply options eligible for funding under the Governor's Water Supply Program (GWSP), insuring that the bulk of the money is likely to be funneled toward dams and water supply reservoirs.

A task force of state agency directors organized by the Governor declined to include efficiency and conservation projects in the GWSP despite having been charged with identifying the "most cost-effective water supply projects" and despite having received more than 280 comment letters urging them to do so. Comment letters came from a diverse group of stakeholders, ranging from the Georgia Water Coalition to the Georgia Association of Water Professionals, the water utilities trade organization.

The Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) and the Department of Community Affairs have begun accepting applications from local governments and water utilities for a share of the \$74 million that will be made available in 2012. An additional \$226 million is expected to be directed to the program through 2015. The first grants and loans will be awarded in June.

Upon adoption of the GWSP, GEFA Executive Director, Kevin Clark, explained that conservation and efficiency measures were not included because GEFA already administers loan programs for such projects and local utilities do not take full advantage of them.

Yet, a review of GEFA's recent funding records shows that local governments have used some \$65 million in loans on efficiency projects since 2007. The bulk of this funding has come from federally financed programs; state funding for water conservation projects has amounted to about \$6 million annually since 2007.



## Cost of Reservoirs

Shoal Creek=\$650 million  
Calhoun Creek=\$134 million  
Richland Creek=\$75 million  
Russell Creek=\$30 million

Total: \$889 million=194 MGD

*The cost of four proposed reservoirs in the Etowah River Basin is estimated at \$889 million, but studies show that the same water could be secured through conservation measures at a fraction of the cost.*

Given the opportunity through the GWSP to provide local governments and water utilities with a full tool box to implement the best projects for their communities—be they replacing water-wasting toilets or building a reservoir, the Deal administration seems bent on directing state tax dollars to water supply reservoirs—projects that are consistently the least cost-effective means of extending the state's water supplies.

In March GEFA employees were spotted at a meeting of Glades Reservoir planners in Hall County amid rumors that GEFA would be directing as much as \$30 million to the water supply project in Gov. Deal's home county.

That \$350 million project would dam Flat Creek, a stream that flows into Lake Lanier, to create an 805-acre reservoir, though Gainesville and Hall County currently get their water supplies from Lanier itself.

Meanwhile, local water utilities have begun reporting to the state the amount of water that leaks from their distribution pipes as mandated by the 2010 Water Stewardship Act. While the reporting mandate is a necessary step in the more efficient management of existing water supplies, the state has not yet provided funding to assist local

water utilities in repairing the leaks.

While the pipes continue to leak—often at a rate of more than one out of every four gallons—the Deal administration has deemed it "cost-effective" to invest millions in reservoir projects, only to have that expensive water pumped to systems where it will be spilled on the ground.

In recent months, CRBI has performed water conservation "audits" in local communities and met with city councils, city managers and water utility directors to advocate for investments in water conservation and efficiency projects. While locals need to identify water conservation opportunities, stronger leadership and financial investment at the state level is needed.

## Gov. Deal boots last "environmentalist" from Georgia DNR Board

The 18-member board of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is supposed to represent the interests of all Georgians when it comes to managing and protecting the state's land, water and air, but in recent years, the Governor-appointed board has shifted from a board representing the people to a tool used to implement the Governor's agenda.



In tossing the last remaining "friend of the environment" from the board in January, Gov. Nathan Deal

admitted as much. After the controversial removal of Newnan's Warren Budd, Deal spokesman Brian Robinson told the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* that the Governor was interested in members "who are excited team players ready to carry out his agenda for our state."

Budd, who was in line to become the board chairman, had criticized Gov. Deal's water supply program and questioned the state's handling of a massive fish kill on the Ogeechee River caused by discharges from a textile plant.

Deal replaced Budd with Rob Leeburn, a lobbyist with Troutman Sanders Strategies, the lobbying arm of an Atlanta law firm that represents Georgia Power Co. and other industries regulated by DNR.

In fact, of the DNR Board's 18 members, more than half have ties to business interests that are directly or indirectly regulated by EPD; yet there are no full-time environmental advocates, scientists or biologists serving on the board.

Previously, Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper Sally Bethea and Pierre Howard, now president of the Georgia Conservancy, served on the board, but were removed by Gov. Sonny Perdue.

## Private Pond threatens fish, stream flows in Pickens County

In March, CRBI, Georgia River Network and the Southern Environmental Law Center submitted comments to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers opposing a proposed private, five-acre recreational pond to be constructed on a tributary of Rock Creek in Pickens County.

The pond, an expansion of an existing one-acre pond on the property, would destroy additional stream habitat that is important for feeding aquatic fauna downstream and would alter flows into Rock Creek.

Rock Creek is known to support a population of the federally-protected Cherokee darters.



*A private pond threatens stream flows in Pickens County's Rock Creek which is home to the federally threatened Cherokee darter.*

Amenity ponds such as this invariably alter flows as evaporative losses from the surface of the pond reduce the amount of water available downstream. The destruction of stream habitat also reduces the nutrients (leaf litter and other debris) that begin the aquatic food chain that supports healthy sport fisheries.

While private ponds provide amenities for their owners, they often do so at the expense of the use and enjoyment of those downstream.

## CRBI urges reductions in pollution from Dalton sewage disposal system

In comments submitted to Georgia's Environmental Protection Division (EPD) regarding Dalton Utilities sewage land application system, CRBI urged the agency to require the company to remove more phosphorus from its discharge, monitor that discharge for perfluorinated chemicals (PFCs) and explicitly outline provisions that would prevent direct discharges to the Conasauga River during rain events.

Dalton Utilities, which provides water and sewer service to residents and businesses in Dalton and Whitfield County, operates a 9,200-acre property upon which treated sewage is sprayed, rather than being discharged directly to the river. The spray fields and forests allow the sewage to soak into the ground where pollutants are absorbed and processed by plant life.

However, the facility sits in a large bend of the Conasauga and is surrounded by the river and Holly Creek. Thus, polluted surface water run off from the property has a direct path to those waterways. Among the pollutants of concern is phosphorus which has been linked to algae blooms on the Conasauga and Oostanaula rivers as well as Weiss Lake. Georgia's EPD has been charged with the task of reducing phosphorus loads in the Coosa River Basin by 30 percent to protect Weiss Lake.

Monitoring of the Conasauga River by Dalton Utilities show that phosphorus levels increased in 65 percent of the water samples collected downstream of the facility. Dalton Utilities reports an average phosphorus level in its spray field effluent of 5.5 mg/L—a concentration more than five times greater than the 1 mg/L limit that EPD requires at facilities that discharge directly to the Coosa and its tributaries.

CRBI also urged EPD to require Dalton Utilities to continue monitoring for PFCs, a potentially hazardous byproduct of carpet manufacturing. The area's carpet industry has ceased the processes that create these contaminants, but 2009 studies showed PFCs in soil, groundwater and surface water around the land application site.

A study of PFCs in the Conasauga, Oostanaula and Coosa rivers presented in 2011 by the U.S. Geological Survey, the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, the University of Georgia and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency concluded: "Concentrations of PFCs appear to be decreasing compared to past surveys, but periodic monitoring of surface waters and sediments from these systems will be required to determine long-term trends."

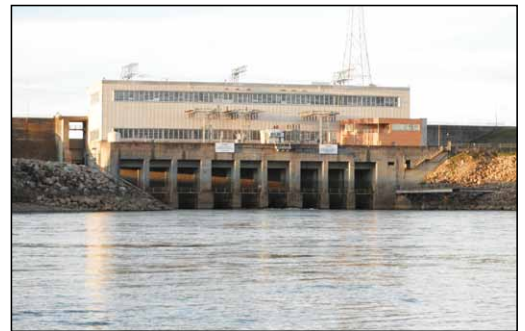
Finally, CRBI urged EPD to outline when and how spray fields could be operated during rain events.

## Judge Rules Against Clean Water in Chatsworth, Coosa, Weiss Lake

A Georgia administrative law judge ruled against CRBI in its appeal of the City of Chatsworth's permit to discharge treated sewage to Holly Creek.

With assistance from GreenLaw, CRBI had petitioned the court to force EPD to require the city to remove more phosphorus from its wastewater flow into the creek. While implementing a new phosphorus limit of 1 mg/L in the permit, EPD also allowed the facility to increase the volume of its discharge—an oversight that could result in a 30 percent increase of phosphorus discharges to the river system.

EPD has been charged with reducing phosphorus entering Weiss Lake from the Coosa by 30 percent to protect the Alabama lake from algae blooms and fish kills.



*Weiss Dam holds back the Coosa River near Centre, Alabama to form Weiss Lake. The lake is threatened with high levels of phosphorus caused in part by discharges from upstream wastewater treatment plants in Georgia. The State of Georgia has been charged with reducing phosphorus entering the lake by 30 percent.*

The judge ruled that the mandate to reduce phosphorus entering Weiss

Lake by 30 percent did not mean that EPD had to reduce phosphorus discharges from individual treatment facilities by any specific amount.

After the ruling, CRBI met with the City of Chatsworth to suggest ways that it could improve the efficiency of its treatment facility to free up funds to reduce phosphorus discharges from the facility.

Chatsworth residents enjoy some of the lowest water and sewer rates in the state; meanwhile the water utility operates the sewer treatment plant at a loss each year, making it difficult to improve wastewater treatment processes and meet more stringent permit requirements.

Chatsworth's struggles are common throughout the Coosa River Basin where water and sewer customers typically do not pay the real costs of operating water delivery and sewage treatment systems.

# Environment Emerges from Georgia General Assembly Unscathed

CRBI and other members of the Georgia Water Coalition helped Georgia's environment come out relatively unscathed during the 40-day session of the Georgia General Assembly which ended March 29.

Most notably, bills that would have permitted the mining of dead-head logs on South Georgia rivers and the introduction of invasive tilapia fish in Georgia ponds were defeated. Unfortunately, an effort to protect state funds intended for the Hazardous Waste and Solid Waste Trust Funds was unsuccessful.

SB 362, the deadhead logging bill sailed out of the Senate with little opposition, but the GWC lobbied the House of Representatives heavily, prompting an hour-long debate over the measure. The bill was soundly defeated by a 93-67 vote.



The proposal would have allowed the removal of logs from the bottom of South Georgia rivers, and through a bidding process, let the loggers set the price for this state property. In South Georgia rivers, woody debris is critical habitat for fish and the critters they eat. Disturbing long sequestered sediments at the river bottom could also redistribute harmful pollutants from past.

SB 360, the tilapia bill, was stopped before reaching the House for a vote. This bill would have allowed Georgians to stock tilapia (a non-native sunfish) into farm ponds, to grow larger trophy bass, but House legislators on the Game, Fish and Parks Committee sided with GWC, recognizing the dangers of this bill.

Tilapia, dubbed the "kudzu fish," could easily escape farm ponds during flood events and take up residence in rivers and streams, out competing native sunfish and disrupting river ecosystems.

## Dam Proposal, *continued from page 1*

program is also poorly developed. The county has failed to implement all the provisions of the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District (District) conservation and water supply plan and has not developed a county-specific plan to reduce water demand. Since the District implemented a high efficiency toilet rebate program, Paulding County has invested just \$13,000 to replace 280 water-wasting toilets.

County figures show that indoor household water use averages 66 gallons per day per resident, but a water efficient household uses only 45 gallons per resident per day. If the county achieved this level of efficiency, it could realize water savings of 32 percent and reduce county-wide water use by as much as 20 percent.

While the need for the reservoir seems dubious, there's no doubt the project will impact federally protected fish in Richland Creek.

Wildlife biologists who studied Cherokee darter populations in the creek concluded if the reservoir was constructed it was "unlikely that sufficient free-flowing stream habitat would be available to support a population of Cherokee darters indefinitely."

The project also threatens water supplies to downstream communities. The City of Rome has demanded a public hearing on

Farming of tilapia for human consumption in contained aquaculture settings is already permitted in Georgia.

HB 811, the effort to prevent the General Assembly's budget writers from raiding the Hazardous Waste and Solid Waste Trust Funds, did not pass.

Since 2004, the General Assembly has stolen \$123 million from these funds to fill other holes in the budget. The result has been a strain on local governments and a weakening of protections for human health and the environment associated with hazardous waste sites and illegal dumps.



HB 811 passed the House almost unanimously, but the Senate passed a version that gutted its effectiveness. A conference committee called on the last day of the session could not reach a compromise and the measure died.

Efforts to regulate interbasin transfers failed as Senate and House leaders and the Governor's office instructed legislators not to pursue these measures.

The GWC also worked to stop bills that would have...

- rolled back enforcement of the Clean Water Act
- allowed sewer plants to be built without first acquiring discharge permits
- repealed a prohibition preventing landfills to be sited over aquifers
- deregulated the disposal of septic waste
- allowed water transfers from the Tennessee River Basin in North Georgia to Metro Atlanta

the project and environmental studies to determine the project's impact on the Etowah River (one of Rome's water sources).

CRBI's analysis of the project's proposed protections for downstream flows show that Paulding County has used incorrect minimum flow data to calculate how much water should be released from the reservoir. Furthermore, these calculations are based on a minimum flow standard that is not designed to protect aquatic habitat.

CRBI also urged the Corps to conduct a programmatic Environmental Impact Statement that would analyze the impact of all the recently completed and proposed water supply reservoirs in the Etowah River Basin. In the past 20 years, two reservoirs have been constructed; another nine are proposed. To date, no study has been conducted to assess the impact of these multiple reservoirs.

The Corps is considering the comments received, and based on these comments, will determine if the permit should be issued.

The Southern Environmental Law Center, with assistance from American Rivers and CRBI, drafted the 10-page comment letter to the Corps, detailing the objections of the various groups. This letter can be reviewed at [www.coosa.org](http://www.coosa.org)

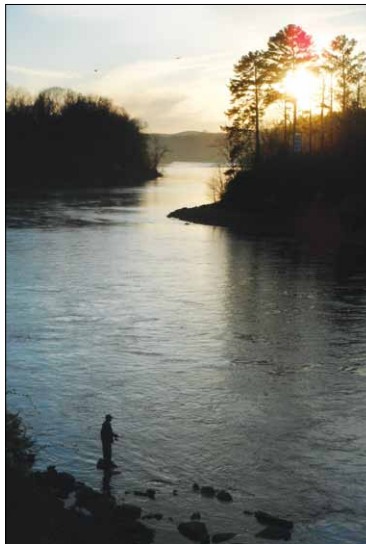
# Weiss Lake Sewer Ordinance Adopted

The illegal dumping of sewage into Lake Weiss from recreational vehicles will soon end under an ordinance passed unanimously by the Cherokee County Commission April 9.

The ordinance addresses a long-standing pollution problem on Weiss Lake where recreational vehicles and semi-permanent structures surrounding the lake have inadequate or ineffective sewage disposal systems.

In many cases these systems consist of buried pipes that discharge directly to the lake. In 1996, the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs estimated that there were 12,000 RVs around Weiss Lake.

The new ordinance applies to all structures in Alabama Power Co.'s flood easement and will require that all structures be connected to proper sewage disposal systems or holding tanks. The ordinance further requires that holding tanks be pumped out on a regular basis. A permit fee will be charged



*A fisherman casts his line in the Coosa below Weiss Dam. A new ordinance regulating sewage from recreational vehicles and semi-permanent structures around Weiss Lake is expected to improve the health of the lake.*

to owners of all structures in the flood easement area and will fund enforcement officers with the Cherokee County Health Department. The ordinance allows fines of up to \$5000.

The passage of the ordinance ends an 11-year effort on the part of Weiss Lake Improvement Association (WLIA) and other lake advocates. A law adopted by the Alabama legislature in 2001 mandated that resorts and recreational areas around Weiss Lake connect to available sewage systems if their private systems fail or become inadequate, but enforcement of the law languished because of uncertainty about who was responsible for enforcement.

During the next several months, the Cherokee County Commission, Cherokee County Health Dept. and WLIA will hold meetings to inform local residents about the ordinance, according to Carolyn Landrem, WLIA president and CRBI board member who led local efforts in support of the ordinance.

## 2012 Paddle Trips Explore New Places, Old Favorites

CRBI's 2012 guided paddle trip schedule includes old favorites and new explorations with 16 excursions planned from April through November. Guided paddle trips are free to CRBI members, and CRBI provides canoe and kayak rentals and shuttle service for guided trips as well as trips on your own.

To register for a guided paddle trip visit [www.coosa.org/events/paddle-trips](http://www.coosa.org/events/paddle-trips) or to learn more about our rental and shuttle service, call 706-232-2724.

Highlights of this year's guided paddle schedule include:

**April 21 – Earth Day on the Etowah Part I Euharlee to US 411**--This 10-mile jaunt from Euharlee to US 411 is arguably the most scenic stretch of the Etowah in Bartow County.

**April 22 – Earth Day on the Etowah Part II Floyd's Landing to Euharlee**--This seven-mile paddle shows off some of Bartow County's best Native American fish weirs and riverside springs.

**May 12 – Armuchee Creek & Oostanaula River**--Follow the water on its path from tributary to mainstem on this combo creek-river paddle. Start on Armuchee Creek in Armuchee and then venture down the Oostanaula to Ridge Ferry Park.

**June 2, June 16, July 14 and Sept. 1 – Chattooga River** – On this

series, you can paddle the length of "Georgia's Other Chattooga" from Trion to Weiss Lake in Alabama.

**July 28 – Lake Allatoona Backwater Paddle**--This eight-mile journey through Lake Allatoona's backwaters includes a side trip to visit the historic Donalson Furnace, a Civil War-era iron furnace.

**Aug. 4 – Indian Mound Paddle Allatoona to Floyd's Landing**--This 11-mile journey is a crowd-pleaser, including Thompson Weinman Dam, the Etowah Indian Mounds Historic Site and multiple fish weirs.

**Aug. 11 – Oostanaula River Paddle Ga. 156 to Ga. 140**--This 10-mile journey carries you through a beautiful stretch of Northwest Georgia's Ridge and Valley landscape.

**Sept. 8 – Fish Weir Paddle on the Etowah River**--Traditionally one of our most popular paddles, this trip plots a 17-mile course from US 411 to Grizzard Park in Rome.

**Sept. 29 – Harvest Moon Paddle**--Catch the Harvest Moon over the Coosa River on this 6-mile, moonlight paddle from Heritage Park in Downtown Rome to Lock and Dam Park.

**Nov. 3 – Fall Foliage Paddle Etowah & Coosa Rivers**--View the fall colors along a 12-mile stretch of the Etowah and Coosa rivers as you journey from the outskirts of Rome, through downtown and on to historic Lock and Dam Park on the Coosa.

## *Burwell Creek*, continued from page 1

The original development proposal included a relocation and restoration of Burwell Creek that was deemed necessary to protect the creek from contamination by the landfill. That perceived benefit played a role in the Corps issuing the permit. Now, site plans include no relocation or restoration of Burwell Creek.

The Corps permit issued in June 2008 for this project expired March 18, meaning that Ledbetter Properties does not have permission from the Corps to begin construction.

CRBI has objected to the project because the potential benefits of

closing the city landfill do not outweigh the adverse impacts of filling wetlands and floodplain. Tests of the landfill show limited contamination. Furthermore, the Corps approved the project without a public comment period.

On April 2, CRBI hosted a "Wetlands Walk" at the site which was attended by 93 people. CRBI has also initiated a new online Burwell Creek petition which automatically sends a message to each of Rome's city commissioners when someone signs the petition. To join the effort, visit [www.coosa.org](http://www.coosa.org).

# Snakes, Raptors Headline WATERFEST XII May 4-5

**W**ATERFEST, CRBI's paddlesports and environmental education extravaganza, splashes down May 4-5 at Ridge Ferry Park featuring a Canoe-a-thon fundraising competition, a 13-mile race on the Oostanaula River, Canoe & Kayak Tug-O-Wars and an Environmental Fair with live birds of prey and reptiles shows, exhibits, children's activities, great food and the Environmental Quiz Bowl.

The Canoe-a-thon competition is already underway with winners announced May 5. In the Canoe-a-thon, CRBI members and supporters solicit donations to CRBI from friends, family and business associates with the goal of generating \$10,000.

Those raising the most money will win prizes, including a new canoe and kayak from Cedar Creek Park and Johnson Outdoors, vacation getaways at the Villas at Coosawattee in Ellijay, clothing from Patagonia and much more. Those interested in competing can set up their own online fundraising page at [www.firstgiving.com/coosa](http://www.firstgiving.com/coosa) or download a printable pledge form at [www.coosa.org](http://www.coosa.org)

WATERFEST weekend kicks off Friday, May 4, at 5 p.m. with Kayak Tug-O-Wars for children and adults. Saturday, the fun continues beginning at 10 a.m. with the Oostanaula River Race, Canoe Tug-O-Wars and the Environmental Fair.

The Tug-O-Wars will be held in a mammoth pool erected at the



James Schroeder celebrates a winning tug at WATERFEST XI.

park by sponsors Cedar Creek Park and Johnson Outdoors.

New this year will be a special canoe tug-o-war tournament for local Boy Scout troops. Registration fees are just \$20 per team. Troops interested in participating should contact CRBI at 706-232-2724. Competition in the adult division will return. Registration fees for the four-person, co-ed adult teams is \$80. Cash prizes and gift certificates to local restaurants will be awarded to the winners.

The Race will launch from Ga. 140 in Armuchee on a beautiful rural stretch of the Oostanaula. With funding from the Outdoor Foundation and local businesses Walker Orthotics & Prosthetics and Brinson, Askew, Berry, Seigler, Richardson & Davis, LLP, CRBI is sponsoring 24 local youth and several persons with physical disabilities to participate in the Race and Kayak Tug-O-Wars.

The Environmental Fair will host birds of prey from Winged Ambassadors and reptiles from Southeastern Reptile Rescue.

The annual Environmental Quiz Bowl competition for fourth grade students from across Northwest Georgia will include ten schools with the winner of the tournament becoming eligible for a grant of up to \$2500 from the Captain Planet. Captain Planet is scheduled to make an appearance.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Learn more on our calendar of events at [www.coosa.org](http://www.coosa.org)

- April 21-22**  
Earth Day Paddles on the Etowah River
- April 28**  
Cedar Creek Paddle
- Redmond Regional Medical Center Pill Drop**
- May 4**  
Renew Our Rivers at Brushy Branch
- May 4-5**  
WATERFEST XII at Ridge Ferry Park
- May 12**  
Armuchee Creek & Oostanaula River Paddle
- May 17**  
Rain Barrel Workshop in Cedartown
- May 20**  
Pig Paddle Fundraiser
- June 3**  
Chattooga River Paddle
- June 9**  
Etowah River Family Paddle
- June 18-22**  
ECO Summer Camp
- June 25-29**  
ECO Summer Camp

## Model senior organizes fundraiser paddle

When Model High School senior Lauren Carroll had to come up with a community service event to satisfy requirements of her Honors Prep Senior Project she looked no further than her passion for paddling down the Etowah River.

On March 17, Carroll organized a fundraiser paddle for CRBI attended by more than 50 canoeists and kayakers and generated \$427 to support CRBI programs.

Paddlers donated \$5 each to participate, and Carroll and her family and friends

sold t-shirts and lunch to raise additional funds. CRBI provided complimentary canoes and kayaks and shuttle service.

Floyd County Honors Prep program challenges students with advanced level courses to prepare them for entry into college and requires students to organize a community service event to earn an honor seal on their diplomas.

CRBI would add a Musselhead seal to that diploma as well! Thanks Lauren for loving your river.

## Blue Sky Outfitter Kayak Raffle

Win this Crescent Splash sit-on-top kayak from Blue Sky Outfitter in Rome at WATERFEST! This \$530 boat is a great all-purpose recreational kayak—from surfing waves on the coast to paddling the Coosa Basin's rivers and streams! Raffle tickets are \$5 or 5 for \$20 and can be purchased at CRBI, Blue Sky Outfitter or at [www.coosa.org](http://www.coosa.org) The drawing will be held May 5 at WATERFEST in Ridge Ferry Park. Or Support one of our WATERFEST Canoe-a-thon fundraisers. Every \$20 donation receives 5 raffle tickets. Visit the Canoe-a-thon fundraising page at <http://www.firstgiving.com/coosa>

