

Georgia's 2017

# CLEAN WATER HEROES

## Storm Water Systems

### GEORGIA'S COASTAL WATERS

Cleveland-based Company's Litter Traps Keep Plastics Out of Rivers, Oceans

#### INTRODUCTION:

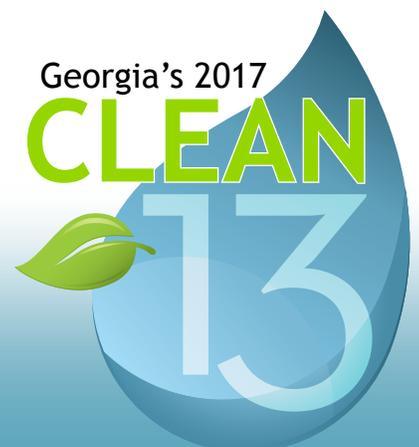
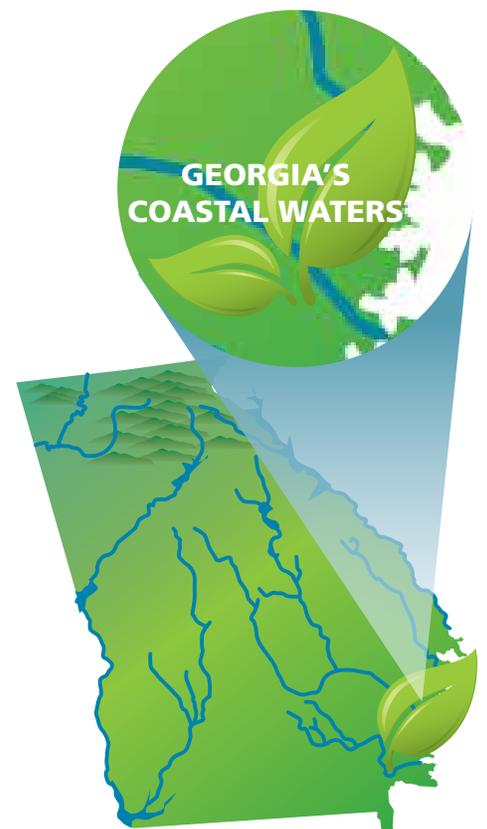
Earlier this year, researchers with the Dutch-based organization, Ocean Cleanup concluded that between 1.1 and 2.4 million tons of plastic are carried by rivers into the world's oceans each year—that's enough to fill up to 100,000 dump trucks. They estimate the cost of that pollution at \$8 billion in damage to marine ecosystems, claiming that plastic pollution ultimately kills one million seabirds and 100,000 sea mammals along with untold numbers of fish. There is now so much plastic pollution in the planet's oceans that during search and recovery missions associated with the disappearance of the Malaysian Boeing 777 in 2014, satellite images of giant mats of floating debris were repeatedly mistaken for parts of the missing airplane. One Cleveland-based company has found a solution to this litter in the form of the Bandalong Litter Trap. Storm Water Systems has installed these instream litter collectors in Georgia at locations in Gainesville, Waycross, Savannah and Griffin as well as locations across the country. The result: cleaner rivers and less trash in our oceans.

#### THE WATER BODY:

Georgia's 100-mile coast is a destination. Home to some 650,000 residents, it hosts an estimated 15 million visitors annually, bound for the state's beautiful beaches and historic cities. These natural amenities support 24,000 tourism and fisheries jobs for Georgia citizens. Wildlife also flocks to the Georgia coast. Federally endangered North Atlantic right whales use Georgia's coastal waters as their birthing suite each winter, while threatened sea turtles clamber up the state's beaches to lay eggs during the spring and summer. Meanwhile from the sky, millions of migratory and shore birds refuel and refuge in the area's 368,000 acres of salt marsh. Recognized as a globally significant ecosystem, Georgia's coast is one of the state's signature calling cards.

#### THE CLEAN:

When Gary Hopkins and Mark Kirves founded Storm Water Systems in 2008, they were, ironically enough, engaged in the business of plastics—performing plastic welding and fabrication for manufacturers in the U.S. and Central and South America. It was a call about plastic litter on Atlanta's Tanyard Creek that opened their eyes to the problem and changed the trajectory of their business.





Asked if they could build something to collect the trash, they began looking into the possibilities and found Bandalong Litter Traps being manufactured in Australia. Soon there after, they licensed the rights to manufacture, install and market the traps in North America and Storm Water Systems was born.

Since then, the company has built and installed devices manufactured in their Cleveland fabrication facility at locations across the country—each designed to remove floating debris from rivers and streams.

The Bandalong Litter Trap is a surface skimming device anchored in place that directs debris to a collection basket that is then emptied periodically with the collected debris either recycled or landfilled. Likewise, Storm Water Systems’ StormX is product that allows the capture of debris from stormwater outlets in large, reusable nets.

In 2010, they installed a Bandalong Litter Trap in Waycross when the city and Satilla Riverkeeper sought their help in cleaning up trash in the city’s canal system. In its first five months of operation, the trap kept 73 cubic yards of trash from entering the Satilla River, and today it continues to clear nearly 90 cubic yards from the river system annually.

“We feel like we are intercepting and removing at least 99 percent of floating litter from our canal system,” said Steve Pope with the City of Waycross’ Engineering Department. The trash would otherwise make its way to Georgia’s coast threatening the beaches of Jekyll and Cumberland Islands.

In Gainesville, a trap installed on Flat Creek in 2015 has been so effective that local authorities are looking to add traps on other creeks in an effort to keep the trash out of Lake Lanier. Not surprisingly, the Flat Creek trap fills most quickly after heavy rains when stormwater carries trash to the creek that has been thrown to the ground—rather than deposited in a trash can. The project helped win the City of Gainesville and Hall County a Technical Innovation Award from the Georgia Chapter of the American Public Works Association.

Other traps are at work in Griffin and Savannah.

While these projects are small and localized and represent only a “drop in the trap” compared to the global ocean plastic pollution problem, for Storm Water Systems its about protecting the planet one stream and river at a time.

“It’s a start,” said company co-founder Hopkins. “There’s no better place to stop trash from entering the ocean that upstream in the watershed.”



*Top: The StormX net collection systems were also developed by Storm Water Systems and are helping communities across the country eliminate litter in local streams. Left: Storm Water Systems litter trap on Gainesville’s Flat Creek has been so successful in removing trash from the urban stream that the city and Hall County are considering installing additional traps on creeks to help keep trash out of Lake Lanier. Above: The City of Waycross’ litter trap intercepts trash headed for the Satilla River and ultimately Georgia’s Golden Isles, preventing plastic pollution from reaching beaches and the Atlantic Ocean.*



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