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<https://www.gawater.org/clean-13>

**Leading Water Protection Coalition Announces
Clean Water Heroes in 2019 Clean 13 Report**

Today, Georgia's leading water protection coalition released its Clean 13 report for 2019. The report highlights individuals, businesses, industries, non-profit organizations and governmental agencies whose extraordinary efforts have led to cleaner rivers, stronger communities and a more sustainable future for Georgians.

"Georgia is faced with many water challenges involving problems that effect the health of our rivers and the availability of clean water for us and wildlife," said Jesse Demonbreun-Chapman, executive director with the Rome-based Coosa River Basin Initiative. "Those recognized in the Clean 13 report are on the front lines of meeting those challenges. From innovative wastewater treatment projects to important clean water education efforts, these entities are developing solutions to these challenges."

The work highlighted in the report includes:

Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta

Mercedes-Benz Stadium is meeting the challenges of managing stormwater to protect intown, downstream neighbors. A model of sustainability, the stadium employs multiple green-infrastructure projects, including cisterns capable of holding some two million gallons of rainwater, that help prevent flooding in the Vine City neighborhood and help keep pollution out of Proctor Creek and the Chattahoochee River.

Georgia Association of Water Professionals in Marietta

Similarly, the Georgia Association of Water Professionals, a trade group based in Marietta and most closely associated with training water and wastewater treatment plant operators, has also turned its attention to stormwater. The association is filling a void by offering classes and workshops to teach water managers and local governments across the state how to implement green infrastructure projects.

Flint River Working Group in Fulton, Clayton, Fayette, Spalding and Coweta counties

On the south side of Atlanta, stakeholders ranging from conservation groups to local water authorities have teamed up as the Upper Flint River Working Group. Working cooperatively, the group is developing projects that will restore flows on the Flint River, a waterway that has seen its flows depleted through water withdrawals, wastewater infrastructure and an ever-urbanizing landscape.

Walton Electric Membership Corporation in Monroe

In Atlanta's eastern suburbs, the Walton Electric Membership Corporation is addressing climate change and the need for clean energy through innovative approaches that make solar power more accessible to customers. With 4,000 solar customers already, Walton EMC is expected to show more solar growth per customer than any other power provider in the southeast during the next three years.

Gwinnett County Department of Water Resources

In another nod to innovative energy sources, Gwinnett County is using restaurant and food waste in the form of fats, oils and greases to power a portion of its state-of-the-art F. Wayne Hill Water Resources Center, a wastewater treatment plant that turns phosphorus removed from the county's sewage into fertilizer. The only project of its kind in Georgia, Gwinnett's nutrient recovery system is now being adopted by other wastewater treatment facilities. The innovation will help keep rivers and lakes clean and close the loop on an economically important mineral.

Terrapin Beer Company in Athens

Meanwhile in Athens, Terrapin Beer Company is doing its part to protect the city's drinking water sources in the Middle and North Oconee rivers. One of the largest craft brewers in the state, it is setting an example for other small breweries by reducing its water use and ensuring that its waste streams find new life as animal feed and compost.

Fulton County Commission

Aside from climate change, probably no other environmental challenge has received more public attention recently than the plague of plastic pollution fouling our waterways and oceans. In July, the Fulton County Commission became the first local governing body in Georgia to take a stand against plastic pollution, adopting a resolution aimed at eliminating single-use plastics in all government properties.

Truck Carlson in Augusta

Further east in Augusta, 30-year Marine and Army veteran Truck Carlson of Savannah Riverkeeper is enlisting the area's large veteran population in protecting the Savannah River from plastic pollution. Carlson and his Veterans for Clean Water volunteers regularly clean litter traps on the city's urban streams to remove plastics before they reach the big river. Nearly two years into the effort, Carlson is discovering that in saving the Savannah, many of the veterans are also saving themselves.

Georgia ForestWatch in Dahlonega

Looking to the north Georgia mountains, citizens of Augusta, Atlanta and Rome can be thankful for more than 30 years of advocacy work by the Dahlonega-based Georgia ForestWatch. A watchdog of the U.S. Forest Service since the late 1980s, the group's work has helped protect the public lands of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest. Those forested mountains hold the headwaters of the Savannah, Chattahoochee and Coosa rivers that provide drinking water for millions of Georgians.

The Len Foote Hike Inn in Dawsonville

Nestled amidst these mountains is The Len Foote Hike Inn, a Georgia Department of Natural Resources-owned eco-friendly lodge in Dawson County that can only be reached via a 5-mile footpath. A model of smart water and energy use and waste reduction, workers at the Inn spread the gospel of sustainability to their 10,000 guests that visit each year.

Amerson River Park in Macon-Bibb County

In Middle Georgia, Macon-Bibb County, with the development of Amerson River Park on the Ocmulgee River, has transformed the region's relationship with the river. Now, local residents and visitors alike flock to the river for tubing, canoeing and kayaking. The park's success has spawned further investments in river access and supported the development of the Ocmulgee River Water Trail.

Rep. Debbie Buckner of Talbot County

Among the champions of Georgia's water resources at the state capitol is Talbot County's Rep. Debbie Buckner. The Junction City Democrat cut her teeth on environmental issues impacting her hometown as a citizen activist in the early 1990s. Those battles, in part, propelled her to run for office. Now, the 17-year veteran lawmaker is a respected and knowledgeable voice for Georgia's water and natural resources.

Flint River Soil and Water Conservation District in Camilla

Finally, in southwest Georgia, the Flint River Soil and Water Conservation District is helping lead the way toward more sustainable agriculture in the heart of Georgia's breadbasket. The group is responsible for bringing millions of dollars in private and public funds to improve irrigation efficiency impacting some 13 million acres of cropland in the area.

Together, the efforts of these "Clean 13" are adding up to cleaner rivers, stronger communities and a more sustainable future for Georgia.

The entities recognized in this report will be honored at the Georgia Water Coalition's Clean 13 Celebration set for March 12, 2020 at Mason Fine Art Center in Atlanta.

The Georgia Water Coalition publishes this list not only to recognize these positive efforts on behalf of Georgia's water but also as a call to action for our state's leaders and citizens to review these success stories, borrow from them and emulate them.

The Georgia Water Coalition is a consortium of more than 260 conservation and environmental organizations, hunting and fishing groups, businesses, and faith-based organizations that have been working to protect Georgia's water since 2002. Collectively, these organizations represent thousands of Georgians.