

GAWP is a Clean 13 Water Hero



Don't you just love the feeling when someone tells you that you've done a good thing? The feeling of pride and the satisfaction when being recognized for 'doing good' is hard to beat. To be honored by the Georgia Water Coalition with a *Clean 13 Award* is especially sweet – we are thrilled that this environmental advocacy organization views the Georgia Association of Water Professionals (GAWP) as a partner and protector of Georgia's water resources.

It wasn't too many years ago that the perception was very different and water professionals were not fully appreciated as water protectors. It's also a fact that water professionals weren't always open to the concerns and criticisms by advocacy groups. In Georgia, we have learned that we are all on the same side of clean water – even though we come at our roles in different ways. We've learned this by talking, listening, sharing, debating, and keeping our doors open to each other. This has resulted in a welcoming leap in understanding what water professionals do and how we can work together to gain further advances in our practices.

So who is the Georgia Water Coalition? It is an organization of more than 200 groups that care about water, including sportsmen, river and lake organizations, business owners, civic groups, farmers, forestry, faith groups, recreation groups, homeowner groups, garden clubs, etc. As a consortium of interests, the Georgia Water Coalition has an important impact on state water policy and legislation. You may be familiar with the annual release of

The Dirty Dozen report that brings attention to a dozen water pollution issues that the Coalition considers to be the most egregious in Georgia. This report gains a lot of media attention; therefore, no one wants to be on that list.

In 2017, the Georgia Water Coalition decided to create another type of list that recognizes positive efforts on behalf of Georgia's water: the *Clean 13 Awards*. It recognizes 13 entities that are working on innovative programs to address water problems in Georgia. These entities are held in high regard as water protectors and set good examples for others to emulate. As water professionals, we *want* to be on this list. We celebrated several GAWP members who were named as *Clean 13* winners in 2017 and 2018, including public utilities and private companies. We were so pleased to see water professionals recognized for their commitment and creativity.

This brings me to how GAWP landed on the 2019 *Clean 13* list. Nearly three years ago, with the encouragement and support of our Board and members, we strengthened our commitment to water quality protection through stormwater management education. We hired a full-time technical stormwater specialist, organized a technical advisory body of individuals within and beyond GAWP ranks, and developed training curricula and materials to meet the needs of field practitioners. This effort expanded into 'Green Infrastructure' training and certification with a number of special classes to assist stormwater managers.



GEORGIA WATER COALITION

We have been working hard to fill the gap and provide the same quality of educational services to stormwater practitioners that GAWP has done for the past 87 years. For this educational effort, the Georgia Water Coalition named GAWP as one of the *Clean 13* water heroes for 2019!

There will be an event held in Atlanta on March 12, 2020, where the Georgia Water Coalition will honor the 2019 *Clean 13* water heroes. As one of the *Clean 13* awardees, GAWP will be highlighted in a video presentation and presented with a beautiful award. We are very excited and hope to see many of you there. Please take a look at the *Clean 13 2019 Report* (<https://www.gawater.org/clean-13/clean-13-2019-report>) and for more information and consider joining us at the celebration.

You are all a part of the recognition for what you do every single day. Thank you for your continuous efforts to educate the public, to be part of GAWP, and to expand the understanding of what water professionals do to protect Georgia's water resources.

It's super keen to be named a Clean 13