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Read the full 2019 Report at: <https://www.gawater.org/clean-13>

View the Clean 13 videos at: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQCF-maTR_YY9ieYfjXDPCQ/videos

Photos: <https://tinyurl.com/y2pdnsqr>

**Leading Water Protection Coalition Presents Clean 13 Water Heroes Award to
The Georgia Association of Water Professionals**

Today, Georgia's leading water protection coalition presented its Clean 13 Water Heroes Award to the Georgia Association of Water Professionals (GAWP) for filling a gap in training to address non-point source pollution. Since the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972, it has provided critical training for sewage treatment plant operators, and thanks in part to their work, discharges from sewage treatment plants no longer rank as the biggest threat to Georgia's rivers. Now, non-point source pollution—the stormwater that courses off the developed landscape with every rain—is the biggest concern. Unfortunately, there's a big gap in the understanding of how to address the threat. During the past two years, GAWP has filled that gap, providing training to stormwater managers in large and medium-sized cities, giving them the knowledge and tools they need to stem non-point source pollution and protect Georgia's water, especially the small streams that course through Georgia's urban areas.

"The Clean Water Act mandates that small towns have to follow have developed much faster than the capabilities and capacities communities need to actually implement these plans," said Pam Burnett, GAWP Executive Director, explaining why the Association made stormwater a priority. "There was somebody in my office every week asking for more support for the stormwater community. There wasn't a place to get good quality training. We thought somebody's got to do this."

"We were really happy to see GAWP invest in a full-time stormwater professional trainer who can field questions and conduct trainings to get municipalities up to speed on stormwater management practices," said Chris Manganiello, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper's Water Policy Director. "Addressing non-point source pollution in our state's creeks, streams, and lakes is a critical step to maintaining clean and plentiful sources of drinking water."

The thirteen water heroes from 2019 were slated to receive their awards at a Gala Celebration in Atlanta on March 12, 2020. Unfortunately, the event was postponed due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and subsequent restrictions on large gatherings of people. As the COVID -19 crisis continued to escalate over recent months the Georgia Water Coalition permanently cancelled the event and instead chose to recognize these inspiring water heroes at locally organized small outdoor ceremonies.

"Georgia is faced with many water challenges involving problems that affect 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 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. The Coalition annually publishes the Clean 13 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.

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