



For Immediate Release September 14, 2020

For More Information Contact:

Mark Woodall, Sierra Club Georgia Chapter, woodallmark8@gmail.com , 706-601-1118

Gordon Rogers, Flint Riverkeeper, gordon@flintriverkeeper.org, 912-223-6761

Representative Debbie Buckner, Georgia House of Representatives, debbie.buckner@house.ga.gov, 706-269-3630

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

View Rep. Debbie Buckner's Clean 13 video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ozs_g-baKSs

**Leading Water Protection Coalition Presents
Clean 13 Water Heroes Award to Representative Debbie Buckner**

Today, Georgia's leading water protection coalition presented its Clean 13 Water Heroes Award to Representative 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 18-year veteran lawmaker is a respected and knowledgeable voice for Georgia's water and natural resources. She annually ranks among the top legislators in votes to defend the state's natural resources.

In recent sessions, Rep. Buckner's votes have supported better regulation of toxic coal ash; increased state funding for land conservation; protected local governments' ability to collect fees that keep pollution out of rivers and streams; improved stewardship of the Flint River and Floridan aquifer; strengthened the state's ability to respond to environmental emergencies; required landfill operators to notify local residents in the event of a release of contaminants or toxins; and helped preserve the character of state-owned Jekyll Island. She has also worked effectively to prevent massive transfers of water from one river basin to another, improve the state's stream buffer laws, and to recognize Georgia's native shoal bass as an important economic engine, sporting icon, and ecological treasure. To bring statewide recognition to her diligent bipartisan work, the Georgia Water Coalition included Rep. Buckner in their 2019 Clean 13 report. The annual 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.

Mark Woodall, Legislative Chair of the Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club, presented the award to Representative Buckner on behalf of the Georgia Water Coalition. "For 18 legislative sessions, Rep. Debbie Buckner has worked tirelessly to protect the Flint River, the Chattahoochee River and all the rest of the waters of Georgia. She is a true Clean Water Hero."

The 2019 Clean 13 Water Heroes 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 necessary 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.

The awards presentation took place at Rep. Buckner's home at Fielders Mill in Junction City. "I am honored to receive the Georgia Water Coalition's Clean 13 Award. I am proud to be recognized along with my distinguished colleagues and previous Clean 13 awardees, House Majority Leader Jon Burns and the late House Rules Chairman John Meadows.

The Water Coalition has done an excellent job over the years working to protect Georgia's water resources. We must all work together and remain ever vigilant to ensure that all Georgians continue to have access to life essential, clean water that is drinkable, fishable, and swimmable."

Mark Woodall was accompanied by Gordon Rogers, Flint Riverkeeper, who said, "It is a joy to labor with Debbie on legislative issues affecting Georgia's rivers. Her doggedness and ability to assemble support across the ideological spectrum achieves results. Her work affects Georgians all over the state in ways that many will never know, but that make everyone's lives better".

Other attendees included Gina Rogers of the Georgia Wildlife Federation, Henry Jackson of Flint Riverkeeper, and Debbie's husband, Mike. The Sierra Club, Flint Riverkeeper and Georgia Wildlife Federation all serve as members of the Georgia Water Coalition's 14 member Leadership Team. 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.