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

**Leading Water Protection Coalition Recognizes
Clean Water Heroes During Online Awards Ceremony**

Yesterday during an online awards ceremony, Georgia's leading water protection coalition recognized the 13 individuals, businesses and non-profit organizations that were included in the Georgia Water Coalition's Clean 13 report released in October.

The report highlighted 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.

"The entities included in this report are each in their own way helping other citizens, businesses and local governments understand the importance of protecting Georgia's water resources," said Jesse Demonbreun-Chapman, executive director with the Rome-based Coosa River Basin Initiative. "While many are taking action that directly benefits specific water bodies, all are either helping us experience our rivers and natural areas or helping others understand actions they can take to protect our state's water."

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the awards ceremony was held via video conference rather than in person. More than 100 attendees participated in the program.

Fall-line Alliance for Clean Energy was represented at the awards ceremony by organization President Larry Warthen and associate Lyle Lansdell. "I'm proud of my organization for stopping the coal plant from coming to Washington County and saving 13-16 million gallons of water a day from coming out of our aquifer," said Mr. Warthen.

Golden Triangle Resource, Conservation and Development Council in southwest Georgia was one of the honorees. "We are very humbled and honored and proud to have been chosen as a Clean 13 Water Hero for Georgia. At the end of the day, we know we've made a difference and it's so exciting to be amongst all of these great Water Heroes here tonight," said Rhonda Gordon, Executive Director.

Those recognized during the ceremony include:

Live Thrive Atlanta (Fulton County)

In the state's capital, Live Thrive Atlanta's Center for Hard to Recycle Material (CHaRM) offers residents a place to recycle everything from old paints to obsolete electronics. Since 2015, CHaRM has diverted more than 50 million pounds of hazardous chemicals and waste from landfills. CHaRM has helped Atlantans understand that recycling benefits urban streams and our rivers.

YKK AP America, Inc. (Dublin-Laurens County)

In Dublin, YKK AP, makers of aluminum windows, doors and architectural facades, is recycling and repurposing at the industrial level. While recycling all of its aluminum waste on site, YKK AP also recovers byproducts of its manufacturing process that are repurposed in house or sold off-site for other uses. Its energy efficiency measures in its 1.2-million square-foot facility serve as an example of energy savings that can be realized by community wide adoption of something as simple as LED lighting.

Yonah Mountain Vineyards (Cleveland-White County)

In North Georgia, Yonah Mountain Vineyards, one of Georgia's growing number of wineries, is likewise setting a clean energy example with the installation in 2019 of a 360-panel solar array that powers much of the vineyard's operation. The sommoliers of solar have also installed a 14-station Tesla Destination charging station for electric cars.

Emory University (Decatur-DeKalb County)

At Emory University, one of the country's leading research universities, the WaterHub, a first of its kind facility in the U.S., is showing students—and even international leaders—the benefits of small-scale, on-site water treatment facilities. The WaterHub, which looks like a large on campus greenhouse, treats up to 400,000 gallons of sewage daily and provides 40 percent of the campus's daily water needs.

Parsley's Catering (Marietta-Cobb County)

In Marietta, Parsley's Catering, a 40-year-old family-owned business, has adopted green initiatives and encourages others in the food service sector to follow their lead. One of the few Atlanta area food providers certified by the Green Restaurant Association, Parsley's has embraced solar power and water-saving plumbing, converted to compostable and biodegradable plates and utensils and connected with local organic farms to provide its meats and produce.

Golden Triangle Resource Conservation and Development Council (Blakely-Early County)

In Southwest Georgia, the Golden Triangle Resource Conservation and Development Council, among many other initiatives, educates local county road crews on best practices for maintaining the region's many dirt roads—an effort that keeps dirt out of streams and protects imperiled aquatic wildlife. The Council is producing a series of educational videos promoting tourism along the Flint River.

Okefenokee Swamp Park (Waycross-Ware County)

The private, non-profit, 74-year-old Okefenokee Swamp Park, is embarking on a tourism marketing effort with other local swamp attractions to bring more people to the swamp and convert more of them to swamp lovers. The effort couldn't be more timely as the swamp is now faced with new outside threats and needs all the defenders it can get.

Chattahoochee RiverLands (Metro Atlanta)

The Chattahoochee RiverLands project aims to make the Chattahoochee more accessible to communities across metro Atlanta. The proposed 120-mile multi-modal trail running from Buford Dam in Gwinnett County to Chattahoochee Bend State Park in Coweta County, along with multiple new boat launches and connecting trails, aims to bring citizens to the region's "waterfront" and enlist a new generation of river stewards.

SouthWings (Based in Asheville, North Carolina with volunteer pilots across Georgia)

Flying above all this action on the ground is SouthWings, an Asheville, North Carolina-based non-profit that provides free flights to environmental organizations in Georgia. In 2019, SouthWings' volunteer pilots flew 29 missions totaling some 87 hours of flight time. The flights served to educate decision makers and the public about issues impacting our water, ranging from coal ash disposal to oil spills along the coast.

Fall-line Alliance For Clean Energy (Sandersville-Washington County)

The Fall-line Alliance for Clean Energy (FACE) celebrated the end of their decade-long effort to stop a coal-fired power plant from being built near Sandersville. Earlier this year, state regulators refused to extend permits for the project. Plant Washington was the only coal-fired power plant still currently under consideration in the U.S. Since 2010, more than 170 proposed coal-fired power plants have been cancelled across the country.

Sen. William Ligon (White Oak-Camden County)

In the state legislature, Sen. William Ligon (R-White Oak) introduced and secured passage of SB 123, a measure that closes a loophole in Georgia's coal ash disposal regulations. The new law will discourage out-of-state coal ash producers from dumping their waste in Georgia landfills. The retiring senator also leaves a legacy of protecting the Georgia coast and coastal rivers.

Sen. Freddie Powell Sims (Dawson-Terrell County)

On the other side of the aisle, Sen. Freddie Powell Sims (D-Dawson) used her influence as the only Democratic senator representing a mostly rural district to secure votes of the senate's full Democratic caucus in the heated battle over HB 545, a measure that would have harmed rural constituents by inviting industrial-scale animal feeding operations to rural communities.

Georgia Farmers

Influencing Sen. Sims to take a stand against the bill was a vocal group of farmers, including many from her district. While lobbyists from the agri-business sector wield

much influence in Sims' Southwest Georgia district, their endorsement of HB 545 was no match for these citizen activists, most of whom were traditionally, politically-right-leaning farmers. Forming an unlikely coalition with senate Democrats, they played an important role in defeating HB 545.

Videos of the award winners can be viewed on the Georgia Water Coalition YouTube Channel at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQCf-maTR_YY9ieYfjXDPCQ

The Georgia Water Coalition is a consortium of more than 275 conservation and environmental organizations, hunting and fishing groups, farms, businesses, neighborhood associations and faith-based organizations that have been working to protect Georgia's water since 2002. Collectively, these organizations represent thousands of Georgians.