



The mission of South River Watershed Alliance is to protect and restore the water quality and biodiversity of the South River watershed to the beneficial use of people and wildlife.

April 2014

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South River upstream of Browns Mill Golf Course
City of Atlanta



Standing on South Martin Street, a group listens to Jacqueline Echols talk about the Tift Site (behind fence)

Trouble In South River's Headwaters

The headwaters of the South River is located directly across the street from the East Point Housing Authority on busy Norman Berry Drive in East Point, Georgia. It is at this point that several underground streams emerge from two large pipes into daylight.

There is trouble in the headwaters. The problem dates back to the early 1900s when the area was home to several textile mills and the manner in which these operations disposed of their cotton waste. Contamination of the site has been linked to the practice of burying waste from the cotton production process in large onsite lagoons. Over time, chemicals from the production process have contaminated the soil and groundwater in the area causing the Georgia Environmental Protection Agency (GA EPD) to add the headwaters of the South River to the state's Hazardous Site Inventory on August 21, 1995.

The "Tift Site" as it is referred to by GA EPD, is contaminated with a variety of metals including copper, zinc, arsenic, silver, nickel, cadmium, and lead all of which have been found in the soil and/or groundwater on the site. These metals are degrading water quality in the headwaters and pose a serious threat to fish and other aquatic life downstream of the site. In addition to the aquatic hazard, the question of whether the site poses possible human health

impacts has also been raised considering that the nearest resident lives between 301 and 1000 feet from the area affected by the release. (Source: GA EPD). Statewide, only 82 of Georgia's 560 hazardous waste sites are designated as Class 1, the highest classification. The Tift Site is one of them.

Why has this situation been allowed to continue for almost 20 years? The Georgia legislature has been redirecting money from the Hazardous Waste Trust Fund (Trust Fund) setup to help GA EPD and local governments pay for the cleanup of sites like the Tift Site. For the period 2004 - 2011, the Trust Fund collected almost \$125 million through fines and tipping-fees. During this seven year period, \$71 million was redirected from the Trust Fund to the state's general budget. (Source: Georgia River Network).

Ultimately, the owner of a contaminated property is responsible for cleaning it up but when this does not occur, GA EPD steps in with funds from the Trust Fund. The state then takes action to collect the amount spent for cleanup from the property owner. There is a corrective action plan (CAP) in place for the Tift Site and some work to clean up the site has taken place, but significant and sustained remedial action cannot move forward without the necessary funds which can only come from the Trust Fund.

In 2013, the Hazardous Waste Trust Fund required reauthorization and the legislature attempted to close the loop hold that allows redirecting of funds. The measure of success will be the resumption of work by GA EPD to clean up the Tift Site.

Doolittle Creek

Community interest in the restoration of Doolittle Creek dates back to 1998, when a number of organizations including the Adopt-A-Stream program, Doolittle Creek Watershed Alliance, Southeast Waters, Outward Bound, and Georgia Perimeter College were engaged in water quality monitoring and recording stream impact data. The study "A Suburban Creek Resists Channelization" by Dr. Catherine Carter, professor (retired), Georgia Perimeter College, points to the possible impact of housing and business development projects on the natural functioning of the creek. [Click here for study.](#)

These type projects may have resulted in the elimination of the creek's natural meanders (twists and turns) in certain areas. This is particularly evident along sections near and immediately upstream of Georgia Perimeter College where the stream channel appears to be unusually straight. While channelization is oftentimes used to create more "buildable" area for development, this practice has negative

impacts on streams such as



Doolittle Creek at Mark Trail Park

increasing the velocity of stormwater resulting in stream bank erosion, sedimentation build up, and destruction of oxygen enhancing riffles.

Doolittle Creek is part of the Ocmulgee River Basin and is located completely within DeKalb County. The creek begins at Glenwood Road at Eastlake Golf Club (longitude 33.739923°, latitude -

84.302290°) and flows south southeast.

The length of the creek is slightly less than 5 miles from headwaters to the South River. The designated use of Doolittle Creek is fishing. Land use along the creek is mostly residential, but there are several recreational areas - Starmount-McAfee Park and Mark Trail Park. Doolittle Creek is listed on the state's 2012 list of impaired waters for high fecal coliform counts likely caused by stormwater runoff. (Source: DeKalb County Department of Watershed Management). For a detailed view of the creek's route enter the above longitude and latitude coordinates into Google Maps.

Improved water quality, aesthetic quality, and overall functioning of Doolittle Creek can be achieved with regular cleanups and replanting of streambank vegetation. Consider adopting a section of the creek nearest you.

Next month's featured creek - Snapfinger Creek.



Streambank Erosion
Doolittle Creek near Georgia Perimeter College



Doolittle Creek upstream of South River confluence

Upcoming Events

Visit our new Events calendar www.southernriverga.org

Where the Water Goes - Decatur to Albert Shoals - Saturday, April 19 - 9:00 - 3:00 pm (BYO Lunch)

Location: Decatur & South DeKalb neighborhoods, South River near Panola Mountain

Did you know that the sub-continental divide follows the RR tracks running along DeKalb Ave to Decatur? This means that waters arising on the Candler Park side flow to the Gulf of Mexico, while creeks in Oakhurst and Kirkwood flow to the Atlantic Ocean. We'll explore this fascinating phenomenon beginning at the Watershed Mural on DeKalb Ave. We'll then visit the historic campus of Agnes Scott College, stop by one or two of South River's DeKalb tributaries and end our trip at Albert Shoals, a series of short falls spanning the river after it has gained the force of Snapfinger Creek. This trip will involve visiting points of interest with light walking, including a short hike in to the falls not far from Panola Mountain, where we will have lunch on the large rocks and sandy banks. Van transportation will be available from the meeting location, or you can bring your own vehicle. Limit 18, van limit 12. This is a FREE event though donations are accepted. [Click here](#) to register. Meet up directions will be sent to registered participants.

[SRWA](#), [EcoAddendum](#) and [Keeping It Wild](#) partnership event.

Earth Day South River & Tribs Cleanup, Saturday, April 26 - 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Join SRWA and make a difference in recognition of Earth Day 2014. Take part in a multi-site cleanup of the South River at Panola Shoals, the Everett Property (Klondike Road), Panthersville Road, and Constitution Lakes.

Please sign up at [Eventbrite](#) so that we will know you are coming. If you live near Memorial Drive and I-285, the **Dunaire Neighborhood**

Association (George Luther Drive at Kingswood Drive directly behind Wendy's) will be sprucing up Indian Creek. To volunteer contact Jim Kavanagh at 404-909-8505 or email jvkavanagh@gmail.com. Clean up materials provided. Disposable gloves will be available or bring your own sturdy work gloves.

Upper Ocmulgee River RC&D, Farm and South River Tour and Training Sessions, Saturday, April 26, 2014, 8:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Join us for farm and South River training sessions on "how to install" conservation practices such as septic system maintenance, water quality conservation practices, micro irrigation installation, and much more. To register [click here](#) or call 678-376-9518.

Beyond the Bridge Canoe Outing - Saturday, May 17, 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. This will be our first outing of 2014. We will canoe the section of the South River in Rockdale County from Lorraine Park/Hwy 138 bridge to Oglesby Road, a distance of approximately 5.5 miles. Canoeing time is

approximately four hours including a short snack break and naturalist/river talk. Plan to arrive at Lorraine Park by 8:30 for a 9:30 put in. Canoeing experience is not required but participants should be physically able to paddle for an extended period without tiring. The cost of the event is \$40 per person which includes canoe rental, insurance, and lunch. [Click here to sign up.](#) Contact Jackie at (404) 285-3756 if you have questions. Kayakers are welcome and should contact Jackie for additional information.

SRWA welcomes **Where the Water Goes - Canoe to Rockdale** participants to this event.

Stockade Creek Cleanup - Tapestry Community in Ormewood Park, Saturday, May 17, 9:30 a.m.-12 p.m. Meet in the vacant lots (adjacent to stream) west of 842 East Confederate Avenue (Note EAST on address since there is a 842 Confederate Avenue). Stockade Creek and wetlands area drain into Intrenchment Creek which flows to South River. Tapestry Community is close to Georgia National Guard, Georgia State Highway Patrol Headquarters, and Trestletree Apartments, all on East Confederate Avenue. Bring your own gloves. For more information or to volunteer contact Julie Lowring, at 317-989-9951 or email ringlow@aol.com.

Upcoming Events at Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve

Super Sunday Hike with Ranger Robby @ Arabia-Davidson Nature Preserve, Sunday, April 13, 8:00 - 11:00 a.m. This event is part of Monadnock Madness, a month long event that invites you to discover three local granite peaks in one month, or in just one day! We want you to get up close and personal with Arabia, Panola, and Stone Mountain parks! Finish the weekend with a rejuvenating and adventurous hike with Davidson-Arabia's resident naturalist Ranger Robby. For more information please call the Davidson-Arabia Nature Center at 770-492-5220.. Free. [More info](#)

Fund Friday Hike with Ranger Robby @ Arabia-Davidson Nature Preserve, - April 18, 8:00 - 11:00 a.m. Start your weekend off right with a fun hike with Ranger Robby. Explore the less-traveled areas of the Davidson-Arabia Nature Preserve and discover the wonders of flora and fauna found throughout. Ranger Robby will lead you on a moderately difficult hike, so remember your good hiking shoes, a bottle of water, and an adventurous spirit! For more information please call the Davidson-Arabia Nature Center at 770-492-5220.. Free. [More info](#)

South River's First 1.5 Miles

Trip Report: Where the Water Goes - The Headwaters, Saturday, March 22, 2014.

Action: Follow up with GA EPD on status of Tift Site cleanup. Contact elected officials for help.

Standing on the shoulder of busy Norman Berry Drive the group gazes down at the pool of milky blue water and white residue that covered the stream bottom and sides of the stream bank. It was obvious that something was terribly wrong. This was the second stop of the morning, the first was a vista at the top of South Martin Street a few hundred feet upstream of where we now stood. From the South Martin Street location a view of the "Tift Site" was possible. The actual site has been relinquished to the trees, grass, shrub brush, and rubbish piles that have appeared over the intervening decades. Although the buildings are gone, the twenty plus people that made the trip this morning use their



South River headwaters

imagination to recreate images of the cotton processing mills and the lagoons used to dispose of contaminated cotton waste. Staring down at the discolored water, one could only ponder the magnitude of the problem and when it would finally be fixed..

Next, was a brief stop at River Park, a community park located less than a quarter mile downstream. Here the stream was still a milky blue, and the section accessible to the public had been fenced to keep people and animals away.

From River Park the trip took on a more lighthearted mood as we made a slight detour that took us pass a house that has a stream running through it. Clearly the modest size tributary had a different origin as the water was amazingly clear, quite a contrast to our previous stop. [Side note: Not often is a house raised to allow a stream to flow underneath it. Imagine falling asleep each night to the sound of a babbling brook.]

Continuing to follow the river southeast, we made our way to the [Swann Preserve](#), a beautiful 26 acre greenspace and PATH trail. Here the group explored the preserve and from the bridge that spans the river's banks, listened and looked for birds to add to the list of sightings for the day. Concern about the possible impact of headwaters contamination this far downstream was driven by the slight but menacing hint of blue that could be seen in a pool of water along the river's far bank.

Group departed for Constitution Lakes, our point of origin, at approximately 12 noon.

Repeats & Reminders

DeKalb County BoC

Lee May, Interim DeKalb County CEO
404-371-2881

[Email](#)

Elaine Boyer, District 1
404-371-2844

[Email](#)

Jeff Rader, District 2
404-371-2863

[Email](#)

Larry Johnson, District 3
404-371-2425

[Email](#)

Sharon Barnes Sutton, District 4
404-371-4749

[Email](#)

Lee May, District 5
404-371-4745

[Email](#)

Kathie Gannon, District 6
404-371-4909

[Email](#)

Stan Watson, District 7
404-371-3681

[Email](#)

Septic System Grants

The Upper Ocmulgee River Resource Conservation and Development Council has funds available for cost-share grants for installation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) that will help improve water quality in the South River basin. BMPs may include maintenance, repair, and/or replacement of failing septic system, trash and debris cleanup, and the elimination of stream access to domestic animals.

Grant awards are reimbursement only (i.e., the property owner must pay for installation of the BMP and will be reimbursed for up to 50% of the cost). There will be a cap on the amount of money that can be reimbursed for any one project.

Areas eligible to receive these grants include any properties which drain to the South River or any of its tributaries. For additional information Bob Scott, Program Manager, 678-376-9518.



Albert Shoal



River Cane

Get regular updates on SRWA activities and learn more about what we do. Follow SRWA on Twitter and connect with us on Facebook. Links to our pages are just below.

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BECOME A MEMBER
