



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.

## August 2014

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**Please join SRWA or renew your annual membership. Share this newsletter.**



Canoeing the South River

## SRWA Rivercane Project Funded

South River Watershed Alliance (SRWA) is the recipient of a \$34,400 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). The grant will support the reintroduction of rivercane to the South River corridor with the goal of improving stormwater runoff, restoring wildlife habitat, and offering opportunities for community environmental education. Successful implementation of the project will also provide an enormous boost to SRWA's efforts to raise community awareness and support for the river.



Photo shows rivercane on left and privet on right of trail. For the moment the trail is serving as a protective boundary for the cane.

To implement the grant, SRWA is partnering with the DeKalb County Department of Watershed Management, Panola Mountain State Park, Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance, Arabia Mountain High School, and Atlanta Audubon Society to restore 10 acres of rivercane buffer along the South River. Invasive Chinese privet vegetation has spread throughout the natural habitat of rivercane causing it to die out. The three year project will target the removal of privet allowing cane to naturally re-grow. Transplanting cane from less to more desirable sites is also a part of the restoration project.

Community education and building the capacity of the community to engage in conservation activities are additional goals of the project. The South River ecosystem will serve as an outdoor classroom for students at Arabia Mountain High School and surrounding schools. Volunteer opportunities will enable students to learn firsthand about conservation. Several informational kiosks will be created and displayed along the South River Trail and Panola Mountain State Park near rivercane replanting sites.

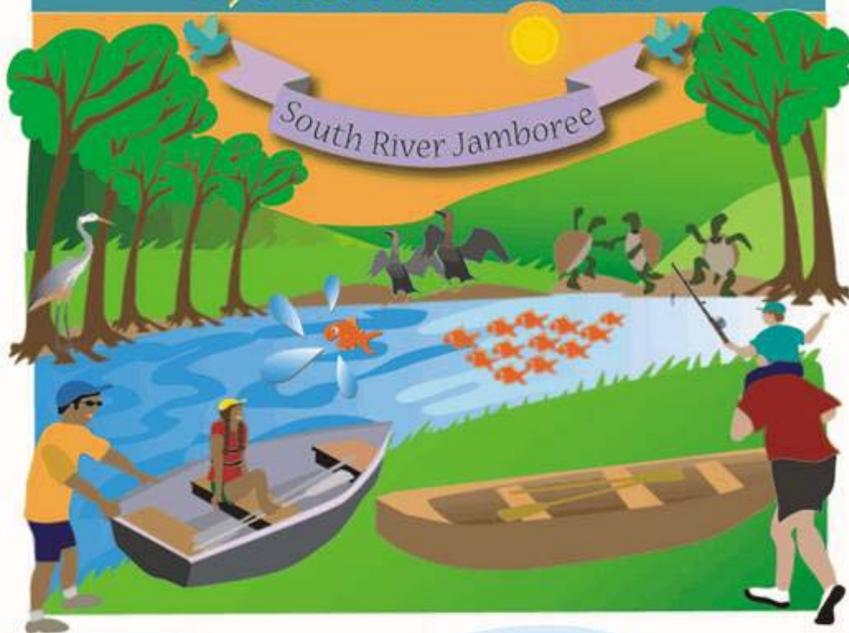
Restoring rivercane will benefit the South River ecosystem in a number of ways. As canebrakes or dense stands of the vegetation reestablish and spread, water quality in the South River should improve. Studies from the University of Southern Illinois confirm that canebrake is three times more effective at reducing harmful pollutants from agricultural runoff than a typical forested buffer along waterways. The endangered Swainson's Warbler that

nests exclusively in healthy cane with rare exception should increase in numbers. The butterfly population should benefit as well as several butterfly larvae only feed on cane foliage.

The NFWF Five Star Urban Waters Restoration Program seeks to develop community capacity to sustain local natural resources for future generations by providing modest financial assistance to diverse local partnerships for wetland, forest, riparian and coastal habitat restoration, stormwater management, outreach and stewardship with a particular focus on water quality, watersheds and the habitats they support.

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# The Second Annual



## Serenade By the River 4 October

6:00 - 9:00 PM

5052 River Road, Ellenwood, GA

Architect Neil Campbell lives on the South River and has graciously offered to host this year's Jamboree.

*Enjoy an enchanting evening on the bank of the South River.*

*Serenade by the River will feature delicious catered hors d'oeuvres by Aziza by Kameel, tasty spirits, great mood music from the Matthew Wauchope Trio, and silent auction.*

\$40 per/person

**Purchase Tickets**

## Sand of Panola Shoals

Where does the Panola Shoals sand come from? The sand naturally builds up as the river slows after going over the shoals. During large flood events, the water carrying the sand spreads out over the bar, slows down and deposits the sand. There is more sand now than there would have been before any development in south DeKalb County (including farming in the 1800s) so the sand bar is probably larger now than pre-development but it would have been there anyway. DeKalb County Sanitation removes the sand about twice a year for landfill cover but the bar is rebuilt by the river fairly quickly. Unfortunately, trash and debris come downriver with the sand. [Click here](#) for a stunning aerial view of the sand. (SRWA thanks Dave Butler for his help with this article).

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## Upcoming Events

**South River Canoe Outing, Saturday, September 6, 9:00 a.m.- 3:00 p.m.**  
Don't miss our final outing of 2014. We will paddle the DeKalb County section of the river from Panola Shoals to Klondike Road, a distance of approximately 5.5 miles. Canoeing experience is not required but participants should be physically able to paddle for an extended period without tiring. The cost is \$40 which includes canoe rental, insurance, and lunch. Space is limited. Contact Jackie (404) 285-3756 if you have questions. Kayakers are welcome and should contact Jackie for additional information. [Sign up here](#).

**Where the Water Goes - Special Event Series, Trip 6 - Sapelo Island, Saturday & Sunday, September 19-21.**

The Altamaha River finally releases its massive flow to the Atlantic Ocean in a broad delta that divides the landscape between Georgia's barrier islands. On the north side of this delta lies Sapelo, a smaller island now belonging mostly to the State of Georgia. The history of peoples here is long - millennia of native Americans, exploring Spaniards, 18th and 19th century French expatriate and American planters, enslaved African peoples, and free African-American homesteaders, whose descendents still call Sapelo home today. Historic features include the RJ Reynolds estate, lighthouse and archaeological ruins. Despite centuries of human impact, much of the island's natural heritage remains intact or is in a state of recovery, so untrammelled beaches still offer haven for nesting shore birds and endangered sea turtles. Brilliantly colored migratory songbirds, including the rare painted bunting, nest in Spanish moss-draped oaks as well as tangles of sandy-scrub. We'll experience all ecosystem types - forest, estuary and coastal bar - in addition to visiting historical sites, and perhaps learning too from today's island stewards. [RSVP here](#).

This special outing series is offered in partnership with Atlanta Keeping It Wild and the South River Watershed Alliance.

**South River Jamboree, Serenade By the River, October 4, 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m., 5052 River Road, Ellenwood, GA. \$40/person. [Purchase tickets.](#)**

### **Upcoming Events at Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve**

#### **Ranger Ramble Guided Hikes, August 15, 8:00 - 11:00 a.m.**

Experience the outdoors with Ranger Robby as he visits some of his favorite spots in the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve. This weekly hike is always different based on the season and interests of the hikers. Join us and you'll be sure to see new vistas and learn about what makes this lunar landscape like nowhere else on earth. This weekly hike is easy to moderate and a perfect way to explore the Preserve the first time. For more information call the Nature Center at 770-492-5220.

#### **Ranger Backstage Tour, August 24, 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 call the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Center at 770-492-5220.

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## **Sugar Creek**

A tributary of the South River in DeKalb County, Sugar Creek begins (starting Coordinates: 33.760199°, -84.309686°) near the corner of East Lake Drive and 2nd Ave NE, at Oakhurst Dog Park in southwest Decatur and travels south crossing I-20 and I-285. Sugar Creek intersects South River at Sugar Creek Golf and Tennis Center just south of Cedar Grove Middle School (ending Coordinates: 33.6835130°, -84.290270°). The creek's designated use is considered by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division to be fishing. According to the 2012 303(d) list, the Sugar Creek is impaired for fecal coliform likely caused by urban runoff.

Land use along Sugar Creek is mostly residential. It passes by several parks, recreational areas, and schools including: Oakhurst Dog Park, Charlie Yates Golf Course, Longdale Park, McNair High School, Clifton Elementary School, Sugar Creek Golf Course, and Cedar Grove Middle School. Hardee Creek helps to make up its headwaters and several small unnamed tributaries join Sugar Creek before it ends in South River.



Sugar Creek has been severely impacted by urban residential development. This photo shows the creek in a concrete-lined channel as it flows through Decatur's Oakhurst neighborhood.

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## Support Needed Now for Invasive Species Bill

Recently, SRWA received the letter below on behalf of the National Environmental Coalition on Invasive Species. This letter and its content are very timely in light of the negative impact that invasives like Chinese privet (See article above "*SRWA Rivercane Project Funded*"). SRWA is reprinting the letter in its entirety to further raise the alarm about invasive species and encourage readers to take action.

Dear Jacqueline,

I'm writing you as a fellow conservationist and retired U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist. It seems like every time we turn around these days we are hearing more and more horror stories about invasive species and the impacts they are having on North American fish and wildlife species, their habitats and our lands and waters. If this trend continues, it won't be long before our children and grandchildren will never know what the native biota of this country should look like.

We have long needed legislation to strengthen the Lacey Act and provide for scientific screening of species proposed for introduction into this country. If such legislation had been passed earlier, we would have had better tools available to prevent the introduction of species such as Burmese python, Asian carp, Snakehead, Lionfish, Nutria and other such invasives. [H.R. 996](#) the Invasive Fish and Wildlife Prevention Act of 2013, and its companion bill in the Senate ([S. 1153](#))

provide an important step forward in gaining the protections we need. Copies of the two bills are attached as is a list of [current endorsing groups](#).

In promoting these bills I am doing so, not only on behalf of myself, but also on behalf of the National Environmental Coalition on Invasive Species (NECIS), who is leading the promotional effort. Information on the NECIS can be found on their web site at: <http://www.necis.net/>. We are hopeful that the South River Watershed Alliance can endorse these important bills. Unfortunately, we have only a few short months left in the 113th Congress, so time is of the essence. But several bills are starting to move, including S. 1153 which was the subject of a hearing in the Senate Water and Wildlife Subcommittee last Wednesday. So we need to take action now, and we encourage you to not only endorse these important bills, but to also:

Contact your members of Congress and encourage them to sign on in support of H.R. 996 and S. 1153. Ask your representatives to join the discussion on invasive species by becoming members of the House Invasive Species Caucus recently formed and co-chaired by Dan Benishek (R/MI) and Mike Thompson (D/CA).

Your endorsement and any action which you can generate now (e.g., letters or emails to Congress, action alerts to your members, letters to the editor, etc.) would be most helpful to the National invasive species control effort. Also, if you could, I would appreciate very much if you could keep me informed of any actions you take. This would be most helpful in coordinating the overall effort and in gaining knowledge of members of Congress which our Washington, D.C. staff may want to focus on.

On behalf of the NECIS, I want to thank you for any support you can provide in advancing the cause for invasive species control!

Sincerely,

Jerry  
Jerry L. Rasmussen  
NECIS Field Consultant  
4 Cobblestone Lane  
Le Claire, IA 52753  
563-940-7707  
[ijrivers@aol.com](mailto:ijrivers@aol.com)

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## Repeats & Reminders

### DeKalb County BoC

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

[Email](#)

Elaine Boyer, District 1  
404-371-2844

[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

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](#)

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 Shoals



Rivercane

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