



**February 2013**

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South River

**South River Watershed Alliance Is Georgia  
River Network's Watershed Group of the Year**

SRWA's work to protect South River has been recognized by Georgia River Network. SRWA is proud to announce it will be presented with the **Watershed Group of the Year** award during the River Celebration Award Ceremony on April 6th at GRN's [Weekend for Rivers](#) annual conference and celebration.

We invite all SRWA members and supporters to attend the conference and

evening party. Conference registration is open. Tickets to the party can be purchased [here](#).

## Upcoming Events

### **Friday, February 22, 8:00AM - [Interpretive & Recreational Hiking](#)**

#### **Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve**

Explore the Preserve's trails to learn about natural, cultural, and historical resources. Hikes are moderate and last 2-3 hours. Topics include natural and cultural history, geology, forestry and plant life, wildlife, and wetlands. Don't forget to bring sturdy hiking shoes and water!

### **Sunday, February 24, 8:00AM - [Ruins of Arabia](#)**

#### **Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve**

Learn about Arabia's past through the lens of old rock ruins with veteran Preserve volunteer Tom Smith. Old quarry buildings, homestead foundations, and mystery structures are revealed each winter so come explore with us!

### **Saturday, March 2, 9:00AM - [Privet Annihilation Shindig](#)**

#### **Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve**

***This is a great volunteer opportunity!!!*** Privet is an aggressive invader that grows so fast and dense that it cuts off food and space for our native plants. The preserve has a large area that has been completely overrun by Privet and needs your help to keep it from spreading. Each Privet plant can produce hundreds of seeds in the spring and summer so we need to remove it from the park now. All tools will be provided so please join the shindig to cut, chop, and mulch this invader down to size! Please RSVP to [Kimberly@arabiaalliance.org](mailto:Kimberly@arabiaalliance.org).

### **Sunday, March 17, 8:00AM - [Medicinal Plants and Teas](#)**

#### **Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve**

Join herbalist and medicine woman Nicole Bluh to discuss and practice foraging and tea brewing. Participants will learn about ethical plant collecting, the healing power of the plants that grow in our area, and how to prepare healing teas and tonics.

### **Saturday, April 6 - 7, 8:00AM - [Weekend for Rivers](#)**

#### **Georgia River Network @ Chattahoochee Nature Center**

GRN's Annual Conference and River Celebration event that gives us all a chance to celebrate Georgia's unique, beautiful rivers through storytelling, partying and paddling! Registration is open now!

Other Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve events:

- **Healthy Hikes at Arabia**, Fridays & Saturdays at 12:30PM & 2:00PM

- **Exercise and Aerobics!** 2nd Saturdays, 8:30-10:00AM & Noon-1:30PM
- **Real Talk, Real Food, Real Spirit Forum,** 2nd Saturdays, 1:30-3:30PM
- **Healthy Cooking Demos!** 2nd Saturdays, 10:30AM-Noon

## 1,000 Gallons of Water a Minute

All day every day, the DeKalb County Parks Department can withdraw 1,000 gallons of water a minute or 1,440,000 gallons of water a day from South



Rock Dam on South River

River to irrigate the Sugar Creek Golf Course. The permit, issued by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, carries no expiration date or conditions. There are no conditions attached to the water withdrawal permit. It does not matter how little water is in the river or the severity of drought conditions. It does not matter the negative impacts that such large withdrawals will have on aquatic life. It does not matter the impact that reduced water flow has on the health of the river. None of these factors are addressed or considered in the permit, they do not matter.

There is also no external monitoring or accountability associated with the permit. No monitoring, no accountability, no conditions inevitably leaves the door wide open to abuse.

**Permission to siphon water from South River was granted in 1989 under an agriculture watering permit which treats the golf course as agriculture.**

Georgia's summers have become progressively drier. Extended periods of drought during the hot summer months have become the norm. During the summer of 2011, South River was so low that instead of sucking water the county's water pumps were sucking sand. Their response was to build a dam across the river in order to pool sufficient water for pumping.

During last year's river canoe outings low water flow due to lack of rain was a constant concern. For a river the size of South River, the loss of 1,000 gallons of water a minute can have a devastating impact on the quantity of water in the river available for recreational activity.

Protecting and restoring South River Watershed protection is not just about



safeguarding water quality it is also about safeguarding water quantity. We are only months away from summer and if this one is like those of past years it promises to be hot and dry. **It is time that the DeKalb County Parks Department identifies an alternative source of water to irrigate the Sugar Creek Golf Course.** Continued abuse of South River is irresponsible.



### **Setting the Record Straight**

Like the legendary Phoenix, South River is rising. Hindering the river's climb is the fact that it is being held to a higher standard by public and government officials that have the ability to influence the river's future in very positive ways. South River is being held to a higher standard than any other river in the Atlanta area or the state for that matter. Why, is not completely clear and rather than speculate, it is more important to set the record straight!

It is important that individuals who hold sway over the future of the river throw their weight behind propelling the river forward, rather than holding it back. **Just as folks paddle, kayak, tube and enjoy the Chattahoochee, Yellow, Oconee, Flint, Altamaha, Ogeechee, Etowah and other great Georgia rivers, citizens of south DeKalb County and surrounding jurisdictions have an equal right to enjoy South River, our river, in the same ways.**

The issue is the presence of fecal coliform bacteria in South River. The truth of the matter is that **fecal coliform bacteria impact the water quality of**

**every urban river in America including those listed above.** Fecal coliform bacteria are the most common contaminants of natural waters. It lives in the digestive tracks of warm-blooded animals. Although most of these bacteria are not harmful and are part of the normal digestive system, some can cause illness, if swallowed.

The presence of fecal coliform indicates the possible presence of organisms that can cause illness. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has set acceptable limits for fecal coliform in water based upon the use of the water. For example, water used for drinking cannot contain any fecal coliform bacteria while swimming may contain up to 400 fecal coliform colonies/ 100 ml (100 ml is about 3.4 fluid ounces).

The main source of fecal coliform bacteria in urban rivers across Georgia and the United States is from stormwater runoff that washes animal waste into waterways. The most contaminated stormwater runoff is referred to as the "first-flush", the initial quarter inch or so of rain that washes pollution off roads and streets and into storm drains. After the first flush the amount of pollution in stormwater runoff is significantly diminished. There are two important points to keep in mind about stormwater especially as it related to South River. First, it runs off very quickly and second, when there is little or no rain for weeks on end fecal coliform bacteria from stormwater runoff will be minimal.

Other factors contribute to fecal coliform bacteria contamination. Rainwater seeps and flows into sanitary sewer pipes and manholes causing overflows a situation which is made worse by clogs caused by fats, oils, and grease. Dry weather discharges are caused by sewer line breaks and collapse. Stormwater overwhelms combined sewer systems causing combined sewer overflows. Wastewater treatment plants malfunction and residential septic systems fail.

The circumstances that result in fecal coliform bacteria contamination of rivers and streams play out all over Atlanta and Georgia every day, no exceptions. **The presence of fecal coliform bacteria should not be used to scare people away from South River or limit the river's future. Instead, it should be viewed as an opportunity to educate the community on the safe use of the river for recreation and enjoyment** and how fecal coliform contamination can be reduced with their help. Only through use will South River continue to improve.

## **Support South River and SRWA**

By financially supporting SRWA you are investing in the future of South River and the health of the watershed and if you happen to live near the river you are also investing in your community as well. A clean South River is what we

all want but as is the case with most things that are worth having, a healthy South River is not free. Your donation of \$35 or more would really help to secure the river's future. Please donate today [online](#) or mail to SRWA, PO Box 1341, Decatur, GA 30031.