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To: justin@704creations.com
Subject: South River News - Green with Passion, Meet Thomas Peters



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.

May 2014

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South River in Rockdale County

Please share this newsletter with neighbors and friends



Thomas Peters inspects rivercane

"Rivercane Man" - One Man's Passion Provides Hope for the South River

SRWA is committed to the reintroduction of rivercane to the South River and we are not alone. As a graduate student at the University of Georgia, Thomas Peters interest in the propagation of America's only native bamboo blossomed. Peters is convinced, as we are, that rivercane holds great promise for the restoration of the South River and its tributaries. This is his story.

Naturalist, William Bartram on his journey through the Southern frontier was one of the first to describe the rich biodiversity along the rivers of Georgia. Paddlers, fishermen, naturalists, and many others still frequent Georgian waterways in appreciation of the unique scenery and biota. Bartram however, would see the Oconee, Ogeechee, Chattahoochee, and even the South, as a foreign landscape to the one he traversed over a century ago. Erosion and channelization from disturbance allow invasive plant species like Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*) to invade and become well established on river banks. Privet and other invasive species are choking out millions of acres where native plant communities once thrived.

One native species particularly threatened by invasive plant species is rivercane (*Arundinaria*), the only native North American bamboo. Bartram and his contemporaries described vast expanses of "cane meadows," more commonly referred to today as "canebrakes". Although rivercane is still found across the southeast, it rarely forms the dense stands, or canebrakes that covered an estimated twelve million acres before European settlement.

Canebrake supports a variety of threatened and endangered species. Swainson's Warblers nest exclusively in healthy cane with rare exception. Several butterfly larvae only feed on cane foliage. Studies from the University of Southern Illinois confirmed that canebrake is three times more effective at reducing harmful pollutants from agricultural runoff than a typical forested buffer along waterways. Canebrakes are highly effective at reducing erosion with their matted root structures called rhizomes. The tough, flexible canes filter and deposit organic matter from flood waters rebuilding soil quality.

As Landscape Manager at Snapfinger Creek Mitigation Bank, I am doing all I can to make canebrake restoration a reality in Georgia. My work began with extensive research in the history,



Rivercane Rhizomes

ecology, and cultural significance of canebrake ecology to receive the Master degree in Landscape Architecture. This research has evolved into the independent cultivation of thousands of rivercane plants from both cuttings and seed. I have given many of these plants to Cherokee artists and preservationists that have helped by sharing valuable knowledge on canebrake management and ecology. Indigenous Nations like the Cherokee,

Choctaw, and Poarch Creek, have been extensively involved in the emerging field of canebrake restoration for the past decade because of its cultural significance. Many Native Americans still utilize cane in traditional and contemporary art forms.

Several hundred of these plants will be planted in an experimental design at Snapfinger Creek Mitigation Bank to test competitive/dominance variables in landscapes where privet and cane collide. The experiment and monitoring will take place over the next year to test the hypothesis that with the right techniques, canebrake restoration following privet removal can effectively stabilize soils, staunch intrusions of exotic plants, and increase overall ecosystem function.

South River Stewardship Network

On April 5th SRWA hosted the first of several planned luncheons to discuss formation of the *South River Stewardship Network*, an initiative which will link schools and students to opportunities for hands-on learning. The South River is the perfect venue from which local area schools and teachers can promote



(l to r) Jackie Echols, Wayde Broughton - SRWA; Dr. Manoranjini Chilkamari and Dr. Dorothy Taylor-Shaw instructors MLKing, Jr. High School

ecology, environmental science, civics, green infrastructure, local history, and careers in science. Student learning is best achieved through personal engagement and their appreciation of STEM related career tracks can be enhanced by exposure to real life situations and environments. Through the *Network* students, teachers, and even parents can get to know and learn about their

home watershed through making the connection between a healthy environment and the river's ecology and biodiversity. Schools and teachers interested in participating in the South River Stewardship Network should email www.southernwatershedalliance@gmail.com.

Upcoming Events

Visit our new Events calendar www.southernverga.org

SOLD OUT - 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. **Space is still available for kayakers. Interested individuals should contact Jackie at 404-285-3756 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.

Where the Water Goes - Ocmulgee Wildlands, Saturday, June 14, 2014, 8:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

The South River joins the Yellow and Alcovy Rivers at Jackson Lake, then flows on to become Georgia's Ocmulgee River. We'll paddle several miles on the Ocmulgee below Macon, where the river begins to take on the character of a classic coastal plain stream. This rich ecosystem hosts a great diversity of birds and wildlife - yep, snakes and alligators live there too - and this area is the last part of central Georgia large enough and remote enough to host a small bear population. This will be a full-day adventure. Cost is \$65 per person includes canoe/kayak (BYOL). Van transportation from Atlanta is available. Limit 16, van limit 12. To RSVP and for additional information [click here](#). Details and directions sent to registered participants.

Upcoming Events at Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve

Moms on the Mountain @ Arabia-Davidson Nature Preserve, Sunday, May 11, 8:00 - 11:00 a.m. Treat yourself and your mother to a beautiful hike on Arabia Mountain with Ranger Robby. Hikers will start the morning with tea and then hike to Arabia Mountain to see the flowering Mountain Laurel in bloom. Please wear comfortable shoes, bring plenty of water, and come ready to celebrate the beauties of the mountain and Mom. [More info](#)

Fund Friday Hike with Ranger Robby @ Arabia-Davidson Nature Preserve, - May 16, 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](#)

Super Sunday Hike with Ranger Robby @ Arabia-Davidson Nature Preserve, Sunday, May 18, 8:00 - 11:00 a.m. Finish the weekend with a rejuvenating and adventurous hike with Davidson-Arabia's resident naturalist Ranger Robby. Come explore the Davidson-Arabia Nature Preserve on a moderately difficult hike, and see the different ecology and geology found in this unique landscape. Remember your most comfortable hike shoes, a bottle of water, and your adventurous spirit! Please call the Davidson-Arabia Nature Center for more information at 770-492-5220. Free. [More info](#)

Snarfinger Creek

Snarfinger Creek is part of the Ocmulgee River Basin. The creek is slightly more than 18 miles in length, from beginning to end, making it South River's longest DeKalb County tributary. Snarfinger Creek starts just south of Stone Mountain Freeway (Hwy78) between Clarkston and Stone Mountain in an industrial park (Coordinates: [33.827095°](#), [-84.186569°](#)). The creek travels south, crosses I-20 and intersects South River approximately a mile upstream of Snarfinger Road (Hwy 155). Snarfinger Creek begins in an industrial park but land use along most of its route is residential. It passes through the middle of the City of Pine Lake and has several tributaries that join with it including Indian Creek, Panthers Branch, and Barbashela Creek. The creek's designated use is fishing. Water quality is impaired due to fecal coliform from urban stormwater runoff.



Snarfinger Creek at Pine Lake

Snarfinger Creek is the site of a 150 acre Wetlands and Stream Mitigation Bank. This former golf course was converted back into its natural state by removing topsoil covering

former wetland areas, removing pipes, and reestablishing creeks in order to regenerate the ecosystem. Mitigation banking is the preservation, enhancement, restoration or creation (PERC) of a wetland, stream, or habitat conservation area which compensates for expected adverse impacts to similar nearby ecosystems.

Repeats & Reminders

DeKalb County BoC

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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

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