

---

**GEORGIA ADOPT-A-STREAM**

**2021  
ANNUAL  
REPORT**

---



# OUR MISSION STATEMENT

*Georgia Adopt-A-Stream encourages individuals and communities to promote the health of their local streams, wetlands, lakes, and estuaries by conducting water and habitat quality monitoring and increasing public awareness of the impacts humans have on Georgia's waterways.*

## Table of Contents

- 1** Message from the Director
- 2** 2021 By the Numbers
- 4** 2021 Adopt-A-Stream Award Winners
- 9** Active Adopt-A-Stream Trainers
- 10** Staff & Board
- 11** Volunteer Photos & Contact Information

# Message from the Director

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division greatly values the support of citizens throughout the state to help protect and preserve our natural environment. A perfect example is the work you provide as Adopt-A-Stream volunteers to monitor the health of our streams and watersheds. The data you collect provides another layer of valuable information that otherwise would not be available. Your data helps alert us to issues as they may arise, and equally as important, helps let us know when things are going well.

Nearly 7,000 monitoring events were conducted in 2021; that's a big number of which all of us can be proud. Thank you for your continued support in helping make Georgia better for everyone.

Richard Dunn  
Director, Environmental Protection Division



# 2021 BY THE NUMBERS



**1,109** ACTIVE VOLUNTEERS

**48** ACTIVE TRAINERS

**732** ACTIVE SITES



**6,877**

MONITORING  
EVENTS

**26,821**

DATA POINTS

**400**  
WORKSHOPS CONDUCTED





# WELCOME, NEWCOMERS!

**1,054** NEW VOLUNTEERS CERTIFIED

**57** NEW MONITORING GROUPS

**190** NEW SITES MONITORED

**164** NEW STREAMS MONITORED

**5** NEW TRAINERS CERTIFIED

AAS volunteers conducted 19,109 hours of service in 2021, worth over \$510,000 in volunteer dollars!

# 2021 ADOPT-A-STREAM AWARD WINNERS



Georgia Adopt-A-Stream is sincerely grateful for all the volunteers, trainers and partners who give their time and energy to protect and improve Georgia's waterways. We are pleased to recognize the following individuals and groups for their achievements.

## Volunteer Awards



### **Volunteer of the Year** **Robert Richie**

Robert conducts chemical, bacterial, and macroinvertebrate monitoring at 5 sites as the lead volunteer with the Tennessee River Gorge Trust. His passion for conservation is evident through his commitment to consistent monitoring and his willingness to engage with anyone interested in learning about environmental topics, employing knowledge gained from his 36 years working for the Tennessee Valley Authority.

*"Through [TRGT and AAS], I am providing data that monitors the health and communicates the importance of our local streams entering the Tennessee River. And...I get to spend my retirement in the woods and streams in much the same way I did as a 10 year old boy. What could be better than that." - Robert Richie*

### **Extraordinary Watershed Monitoring Effort** **Upper Etowah River Alliance AAS**

The Upper Etowah Alliance AAS group is comprised of 14 volunteers monitoring 19 sites throughout the Etowah River watershed. In addition to the 117 monitoring events they entered in 2021, they also participated in UERA's annual Bacteria Day and organized cleanups at sites with evident litter contamination.

*"Water quality monitoring means...protecting our important Upper Etowah River Watershed! By taking the time to monitor, we can observe what is going on from the top of our watershed all the way to Allatoona Lake. This makes it easier to address issues as they come up and have an overall positive impact on our watershed."*

- Lori Forrester





## Red Flag Award Sharon Camp

Sharon has been involved with AAS since 2005, but just this past year began monitoring two creeks in her neighborhood after noticing a strong sewage odor while out walking her dog. She discovered E. coli spikes exceeding the AAS action value in both streams, which she reported to the City of Woodstock. The contamination sources were quickly found and fixed thanks to her efforts.

*“[T]his program provides an amazing service not only to help protect our waterways, but also to allow people... to ensure the safety and quality of our neighborhood creeks and streams. Good water quality is essential for a healthy ecosystem and the safety of our children as they play in their neighborhood creeks.” - Sharon Camp*

## Outstanding Outreach and Partnership Toonigh Neighbors

Toonigh Neighbors, Nolton Johnson and John Seufert, have been monitoring since 1999 and have a total of 317 monitoring events recorded in the AAS database. They have used their extensive dataset to increase awareness of water quality issues in their community, partnering with organizations such as the Falls of Cherokee HOA, the City of Holly Springs City Council, and the Upper Etowah River Alliance.

*“John Seufert and Nolton Johnson started monitoring Toonigh Creek over twenty years ago and have involved our children, and members of the neighborhood, while collaborating with local government. The monitoring is enjoyable and a way for us to give back to the environment.” - John Seufert and Nolton Johnson*



## Excellence in Data Collection Riffle Beetles

The Riffle Beetles are a group of seven volunteers who have been consistently certified in chemical, macroinvertebrate, and bacterial monitoring for the past 5 years. Participants go out each month to monitor, typically sampling between 4-7 sites in the Broad River watershed in a single morning! They have also added nitrate testing on top of their usual testing at sites with suspected nutrient contamination.

*“The Adopt A Stream program has given me some tools to measure the impact of local activities on the health of the watershed. It has opened my eyes up to the importance of macroinvertebrates to the ecosystem. It has allowed me to find other folks that have similar concerns about our environment.” - Ellen Forbus*

## Innovation in Adopt-A-Stream Anne Ledbetter

In 2021, Anne created Our Stream Stories, an online gallery containing user-submitted photo stories that illustrate a themed aspect of a water resource. The idea stemmed from an art exhibit featuring photos from her AAS site, which then developed into a platform where anyone can create a visual story of a waterway. Nearly 100 photos have been uploaded, along with poetry, blogs, and educational information.

*“I enjoy doing something worthwhile to help the environment. I feel so proud to be part of the Adopt-A-Stream and the water conservation community. Participating in the program has been wonderful during the pandemic because I feel connected to a cause and community.” - Anne Ledbetter*



## Excellence in Education Stephanie Spencer

Sagamore Hills Elementary's STEM teacher Stephanie Spencer works with K-5 kids to enrich their understanding of GA watersheds using their neighborhood creek, Turtle Creek. All 450 students have participated in water education in some way, and Stephanie uses AAS visual, chemical, and macroinvertebrate monitoring, as well as Project WET activities to engage her students.

*"A cornerstone of STEM education is for students to experience authentic challenges. Challenges involving water quality in our neighborhood are real... Georgia Adopt-A-Stream affords me the opportunity to engage my students in authentic learning and to make a difference in their community."* - Stephanie Spencer



## Nymph Award Hannah Bonvechio

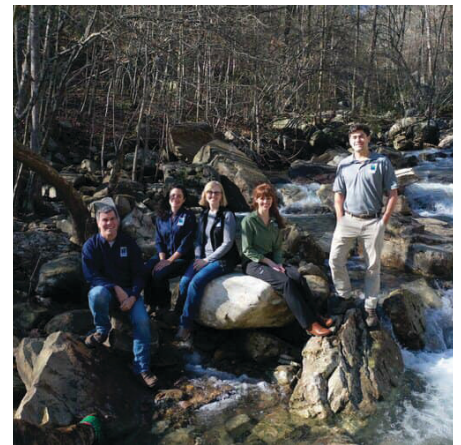
Hannah Bonvechio got certified and began conducting chemical monitoring with Satilla Riverkeeper in 2021. Since her certification, she has gone out every month, and sometimes twice a month, to conduct testing at a site on the Satilla River Water Trail. In addition to her monitoring efforts, she also organized clean up events at a popular landing on the Satilla River where there are no trash bins for solid waste.

*"I enjoy collecting samples from my local rivers so that I can be a part of the growing data on our rivers. I participate because I think it's vital to see how pollution, runoff, and temperature changes over time can affect the chemistry of our rivers."*  
- Hannah Bonvechio

## Beyond Borders Tennessee River Gorge Trust

The Tennessee River Gorge Trust has been involved with AAS since 2015 and has since conducted over 400 monitoring events. In 2021, TGRT's volunteers collected chemical, bacterial, and macroinvertebrate data consistently at 5 different sites within the Tennessee River watershed, using their data to identify potential restoration projects and increase awareness and engagement among citizens.

*"The Tennessee River Gorge Trust is proud to be part the Adopt-A-Stream program. The program provides the foundation for communities to turn environmental ethics into action. We look forward to many more years of monitoring our cherished streams and using the data to help inform our management decisions."* - Eliot Berz



## Friend of Adopt-A-Stream Frank Carl

This is the only award given by AAS Staff. First certified in AAS in 1999, Frank Carl became a trainer in 2003. Over 20 plus years, Frank has assisted with 589 monitoring events and conducted 237 water quality workshops, at least half of which occurred after he retired as Executive Director of the Savannah Riverkeeper. One notable achievement was when Frank identified and resolved a sewer leak, helping "save" a triathlon. We so appreciate your support and wish you all the best!

*"Clean fresh water is our most at-risk essential resource. I am old enough to remember the dead rivers of the early '70s and how the Clean Water Act gradually brought them back to life. Programs like Adopt-a-Stream will prevent that from ever happening again."* - Frank Carl



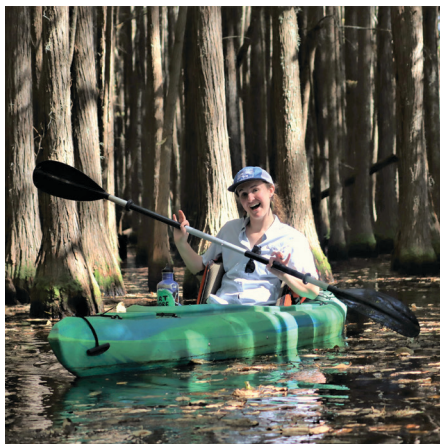
# Trainer Awards



## **Trainer of the Year** **Will England**

Will England works at the Cherokee County Water and Sewer Authority and has been active with AAS since 2017. He conducted 14 workshops in 2021, resulting in 81 volunteers getting certified in chemical, bacterial, macroinvertebrate, and visual monitoring. In addition to workshops, Will also excels in maintaining communication and engagement with his volunteers, routinely touching base to ensure that they have everything they need to monitor and even creating their own Volunteer of the Year award to celebrate excellence in monitoring among volunteers in their region.

*“Few places on this Earth provide the tranquility needed for quiet meditation as a babbling brook or a meandering creek. Adopt-A-Stream provides the tools needed to protect this invaluable resource from the harm that comes from the careless decisions of others.” - Will England*



## **New Trainer of the Year** **Melanie Sparrow**

Melanie Sparrow is the Education and Outreach Coordinator with Ogeechee Riverkeeper. She first got QA/QC certified in early 2020, conducting chemical and bacterial monitoring until she got trainer certified in April of 2021. Although she has been a trainer for less than a year, she has hit the ground running, conducting 9 workshops resulting in 42 certificates earned by her students. After the workshops, Melanie always goes out with new volunteers for their first couple sampling events to ease them into their monitoring routines and provide additional support.

*“The Adopt-a-Stream program is an important education and outreach tool for those working in and adjacent to Environmental Education. The combination of citizen science, community engagement and relevant data is what I appreciate the most about the program and think our volunteers get the most benefit from. I enjoy being an AAS trainer and getting people to interact with their environment in a new way!” - Melanie Sparrow*

# Watershed Awards



## **Non-Governmental Organization** **Satilla Riverkeeper**

Satilla Riverkeeper started with AAS in 2014 and ever since have actively engaged volunteers and promoted water monitoring in their region. This past year, their volunteers conducted nearly 150 monitoring events, putting in over 200 volunteer hours. These data were used to create interactive GIS maps to communicate with stakeholders and to successfully petition to have portions of the Satilla River Water Train redesignated from fishing to recreational.

*“Water monitoring is at the core of our mission as a Riverkeeper. You can’t know if there is a problem unless you are out on the river testing the water! Testing also gives us the ability to hone in on areas where we suspect pollution and see if those discharges are having real-time negative impacts on water quality.” - Chris Bertrand, Satilla Riverkeeper Executive Director*



## **Government Program** **City of Griffin Stormwater**

City of Griffin Stormwater staff have supported AAS in Griffin and the surrounding communities for a number of years. In addition to the 15 workshops they hosted this past year, City of Griffin staff also conducted 8 school visits and led a guided wetland hike. They have worked to promote partnerships between citizens and local government and maintain an equipment loan program to support volunteers in their area.

*“One of the things we love about AAS is how it empowers our citizens. It gives them the knowledge and the guidance to watch over their water quality and then to question when things don’t look right. I love that this program gives them a voice and a support network so we can...hopefully protect our water more fully.” - Alexa Robinson, Watershed Protection Specialist*



## **Regional or University Program** **UGA Extension- Pike County**

Although reasonably new to AAS, the UGA Extension Pike County office showed excellent initiative in utilizing AAS as a vehicle for educational outreach in 2021. Pike County collaborated with local AAS coordinators to incorporate AAS workshops into a number of their outreach events, such as the Citizen Science Academy. They have also implemented AAS into their own lesson plans, brought water education to local public schools, and begin monitoring 4 new sites in the area.

*“Water quality monitoring through Georgia Adopt-A-Stream means connecting people with their environment and giving them the ability to make a true positive impact. If people feel connected and empowered, I am doing my job as an educator.” - Brooklyne Wassel, County Extension Coordinator*

# ACTIVE AAS TRAINERS

## Thank You Active Trainers!

Trainers who led at least one QA/QC workshop in 2021

### Coastal Georgia

Damon Mullis, *Ogeechee Riverkeeper*  
Jessica Warren, *Camden County Extension*  
Luke Roberson, *Georgia Southern University*  
Patricia Dubose, *Satilla Riverkeeper*  
Robert Hodgdon, *Richmond Hill Middle School*

### East Georgia

Frank Carl, *Savannah Riverkeeper*  
Kate Mowbray, *Sandy Creek Nature Center*  
Ruth Eilers, *Georgia College & State University*  
Ruth Mead, *Phinizy Center for Water Sciences*  
Vicki Soutar, *OconeeWaters*

### Metro Atlanta

Alexa Robinson, *City of Griffin Public Works*  
Annie Couch, *Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area*  
Ben Martin, *Fayette County Water System*  
Bob Schmitt, *Upper Chattahoochee Trout Unlimited*  
Eric Eberly, *Paulding County Water System*  
Ganesh Venugopal, *Johns Creek Resident*  
Hannah Penn, *Fulton County Dept. of Public Works*  
Javier Sayago, *Lowe Engineers*  
Jeff Scott, *HCWA Cubihatcha Outdoor Center*  
Jennifer McCoy, *Cobb County Water System*  
Jessica Sterling, *Chattahoochee Riverkeeper*  
John Butler, *Gwinnett County Dept. of Water Resources*  
Jordan Girard, *Gwinnett County Dept. of Water Resources*  
Kelli Edwards, *Fulton County Dept. of Public Works*  
Lori Forrester, *Cherokee County Water & Sewage Authority*  
Michael O'Shield, *DeKalb County Watershed Management*  
Mike Kahle, *Cobb County Water System*  
Shaundon Moore, *Cobb County Water System*  
Shelley Lange, *Fulton County Dept. of Public Works*  
Will England, *Cherokee County Water & Sewage Authority*  
William Lott, *Upper Chattahoochee Trout Unlimited*

### North Georgia

Callie Moore, *MountainTrue*  
Jesse Demonbreun-Chapman, *Coosa River Basin Initiative*  
Kristen Howard, *City of Gainesville*  
Tyler Sims, *City of Gainesville*

### Southwest Georgia

Gretchen Quarterman, *WWALS Watershed Coalition*  
Megan Parker, *Southern Georgia Regional Commission*  
Michele Smith, *Georgia Southwestern State University*  
Robert Gipaya, *Flint Riverkeeper*

### Beyond Borders

Sarah Sweat, *LJA Engineering*  
Shelly Krueger, *Florida Sea Grant*

### Legacy Trainers

Thank you for your many years of active service as AAS Trainers!



**Mike Kahle**  
10 years



**Shelly Krueger**  
10 years



**Jennifer McCoy**  
20 years



**Michael O'Shield**  
20 years

## Welcome New 2021 Trainers!

Nikki Belmonte *City of Roswell*    Ralph Cromer *Keep Forsyth County Beautiful*    Truck Carlson *Savannah Riverkeeper*    Stephanie Marquardt *Gwinnett Clean & Beautiful*    Melanie Sparrow *Ogeechee Riverkeeper*

# ADOPT-A-STREAM STAFF



**Harold Harbert**  
Program Manager



**Bailey Crapps**  
State Coordinator



**Cecilia Nachtmann**  
State Coordinator



**Jackie Encinas**  
Outreach Specialist

# ADOPT-A-STREAM BOARD



*Katherine Atteberry, Atlanta Regional Commission*  
*David Bell, Jacobs*  
*Steve Blackburn, EPA; Wetlands, Coastal & Ocean Branch*  
*Bob Bourne, Cobb County Water Quality Laboratory*  
*Jean Brown, Georgia Power Company*  
*Amanda Buice, Georgia Youth Science & Technology Centers*  
*Lynn Cobb*  
*Checo Colon-Gaud, Georgia Southern University*  
*Jenna Dodson, West Virginia University*  
*Dr. Stephen Golladay, Jones Ecological Research Center*  
*Shelly Krueger, Florida Sea Grant*  
*Erin Lincoln, Tetra Tech*

*Jan Mackinnon, GA DNR Coastal Resources Division*  
*Ruth Mead, Phinizy Center for Water Sciences*  
*Callie Moore, MountainTrue*  
*James Moore, Georgia Association of Water Professionals*  
*Tara Muenz, Stroud Water Research Center*  
*Katie Owens, The Nature Conservancy*  
*Luke Roberson, Georgia Southern University*  
*Jessica Sterling, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper*  
*Jessica Warren, Camden County Cooperative Extension*  
*Tony Wasilewski, GTRI / EOSL*

# Thank You!

*To all of our AAS volunteers, trainers, partners, and supporters, we thank you for all your hard work and dedication throughout 2021!*



---

**GEORGIA ADOPT-A-STREAM**  
Environmental Protection Division  
2 MLK Jr. Dr. SE, Suite 1462 East  
Atlanta, GA 30334  
(470)938-3341  
(470)524-5791  
[AdoptAStream.Georgia.gov](http://AdoptAStream.Georgia.gov)



[AAS@dnr.ga.gov](mailto:AAS@dnr.ga.gov)



[Georgia Adopt-A-Stream](https://www.facebook.com/GeorgiaAdopt-A-Stream)



[@georgiaadoptastream](https://www.instagram.com/georgiaadoptastream)

---

If you are interested in learning more about AAS or wish to adopt and monitor a site, contact the State office or your local coordinator. You can also visit our online calendar for monitoring workshops and AAS events!

---



Georgia  
**Adopt-A-Stream**  
Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring



The preparation of the Georgia Adopt-A-Stream annual report is financed in part through a grant from the US Environmental Protection Agency under provisions of Section 319(h) of the Federal Clean Water Act of 1987, as amended.