

GEORGIA ADOPT-A-STREAM

Georgia's Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program

AdoptASStream.Georgia.gov



January - March 2024 Newsletter

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CONFLUENCE 2024: KEYNOTE PANEL



From Left to Right: Dr. Chris Kodani, Professor of Biology at Clayton State University / Ruth Mead, Education Director at Phinizy Center for Water Sciences / Callie Moore, Western Regional Director at Mountain True

Join three seasoned Adopt-A-Stream volunteer trainers with highly diverse backgrounds in academic research, environmental education, and watershed management to discuss how they use citizen science and Adopt-A-Stream in their environmental careers.

Dr. Chris Kodani has been AAS certified since 2002. Serving as the local coordinator for Clayton County, he's a previous winner of the Innovation in AAS Award for a published research project using AAS data that focused on macroinvertebrate community health and the imperviousness of their watershed.

Ruth Mead has served as an AAS trainer since 2004 and is currently on the GA AAS Advisory Board. A master naturalist and awarded educator, Ruth has been instrumental in developing and implementing environmental programs at Phinizy Swamp since 2000.

Callie Moore's experience includes serving as the Director of the Hiwassee River Coalition for 17 years and as a river basin planner for the North Carolina DNR. In her current role with Mountain True, she builds support for environmental issues in the region and oversees all programmatic activities, including their water quality monitoring programs.

[REGISTER FOR CONFLUENCE 2024](#)



Photo: Courtesy of Ruth Mead, Macroinvertebrate Training in Reed Creek, May 2023

Registration Information

Price: \$30 for Adults, \$20 for Students, \$10 for K-5 Grade

Deadlines: Registration closes MONDAY, March 18th

Registration includes entrance to all sessions, Saturday breakfast and lunch, a conference t-shirt, door prizes, priceless networking, and much more! The Friday Social dinner is an additional cost which includes dinner, refreshments, and Adopt-A-Stream water themed trivia. There is also an option to bring guests for meals on Friday and/or Saturday for an additional cost.

REGISTER HERE

Location & Lodging

Attendees will have the option to stay at Unicoi State Park & Lodge (note: this is based on room availability, space is limited). We recommend calling the Lodge at 1-800-573-9659 as soon as possible to make your arrangements. For additional information can be found on our [Location and Lodging](#) webpage.

Session Topic Highlights

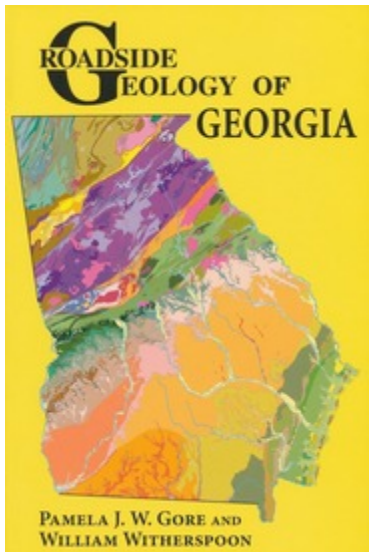
While Confluence 2024 provides a multitude of sessions and topics to choose from, below are just a handful of examples to showcase the diversity and expertise of our conference this year. You can find all session options and descriptions on our [registration page](#).



Wonderful Water Wildlife with Kathy Church, DNR Wildlife Resources: We'll look at some of the cool animals like eagles, otters, raccoons and snakes, and discuss how they rely more heavily on our waterways than others. Also, we'll explore how their interactions affect the aquatic systems themselves. Plan to see some specimens in person!



Legislative Updates & Protecting Georgia's Waters: Join April Lipscomb, Senior Attorney at Southern Environmental Law Center, to learn about recently passed or currently proposed legislative updates that affect water quality protection in GA. Afterwards, Watershed Protection Branch Chief of the GA EPD, Ania Truszczynski, will provide an overview of EPD's efforts to protect Georgia's waters and updates regarding rulemaking changes that address water quality, water efficiency and drought protection.



The geology of your adopted watershed helps determine its sediments load, the conductivity and pH of its waters, and the kinds of rocks and minerals you will encounter while monitoring. Bill Witherspoon, co-author of the popular guide "Roadside Geology of Georgia," introduces the geologic regions of Georgia and their influence on streams. The latter part of this workshop will include a caravan to Anna Ruby Falls Visitor Center to enjoy the geology along lovely Smith Creek.



Adopt-A-Stream Junior: K-5th grade children of Confluence attendees are invited to participate in a special session designed just for them! This session will feature Project WET activities, guest speakers, live animals, crafts and a nature hike. For a \$10 registration fee, students can sign up for the morning sessions (8:30-12:00), afternoon session (2:00-4:00) or both, and the cost of lunch is included (students will meet their

parents for lunch and free time from 12:00-2:00). Join us for a fun day of learning about our water world!

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT



Photo Credit: Zach Alley - conservationfishes.org/darters/etowah-darter

At their most basic level, fish are cold-blooded, oftentimes scaled vertebrates with gills. The first animal known to develop bones over 500 million years ago and can be found in nearly every aquatic environment on Earth. The most diverse group of vertebrates, they hold inherent, cultural, economic, recreational, and ecological worth. Many species even act as biological indicators, meaning their population health and status can reveal changes in their environment, such as nonpoint source pollutants. Georgia ranks third in the nation for the number of native freshwater fishes with 265 native species, 5 of which are endemic to Georgia and occur nowhere else in the world.

One of these species is the Etowah Darter (*Etheostoma etowahae*). Belonging to the Percidae family, this species is federally listed as Endangered and is only found in the Etowah River System in north Georgia, where it lives in creeks with rocky substrates and swift moving currents. The Etowah Darter preys on aquatic macroinvertebrates like caddisflies, and spawns in the early spring to late summer in large creeks where they bury their eggs in gravel substrate. This species is highly

endangered by reservoir construction and urbanization which causes habitat fragmentation and impoundment, waters polluted by silt which smothers the gravel it relies on, and nonpoint source pollutants from surface runoff.

Programs like Adopt-A-Stream can aid in the conservation of species like the Etowah Darter, as community science water quality monitoring has the ability to detect bacterial, chemical, biological, and visual habitat changes in their environment. The data our citizen scientists collect helps establish baseline conditions for waterbodies, identify and report water quality issues, and helps to inform the status of streams for 305b/303d impaired water lists in Georgia.

Thank You Cecilia & Welcome Michaela



Thank you, Cecilia, for 4 and a half amazing years supporting the Adopt-A-Stream program and Rivers Alive! Starting as a Program Assistant, Cecilia seamlessly transitioned into the State Coordinator position. Besides having excellent coordination skills, she helped lead in a complete redesign of the AAS workshop presentations, making them invaluable teaching tools. Cecilia also contributed greatly to the continued growth of our digital presence, helping integrate new software and helping to develop videos to support program goals. In addition, Cecilia's prowess in a canoe is legendary, once severing the thwart of a canoe with the power of her shin! We'll miss you, but best of luck as you explore future endeavors.

Harold Harbert, Manger of Georgia Adopt-A-Stream

"During my four years working with the Adopt-A-Stream program, I had the honor to connect with, learn from, and work alongside so many amazing volunteers, trainers, board members, and partners who are leading the charge in protecting and preserving Georgia's diverse waterways. This community is such a beautiful sliver of passionate, environmentally minded people and I am so grateful to have been a small part of it.

I will never forget the incredible impact that this program has had on me and how much it has shaped me both professionally and personally. Although I am moving on to pursue new avenues and opportunities, I am grateful to take the experience I have gained during my tenure as coordinator. I hope to cross paths (and paddles!) with many of you for years to come. Thank you for everything!" -Cecilia



Georgia Adopt-A-Stream is excited to announce Michaela Collins as our new Program Assistant. Michaela graduated from West Virginia University in 2020 with a degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Resources. Throughout her undergraduate studies she gained experience in a variety of fisheries management and aquatic conservation jobs including: working at a fish hatchery, as a research assistant on native Appalachian brook trout studies, and as a field intern for a nonprofit. After graduating she worked as the Environmental Education & Outreach Coordinator for a small watershed conservation non-profit in West Virginia through AmeriCorps. With previous experience in environmental education, running citizen science and other volunteer programs, we're confident that she'll add much to our program and community. Welcome aboard Michaela!

"Given my passion for all things aquatic ecology, conservation and education - I couldn't be more thrilled to serve as the AAS Program Assistant! I can't wait to dive into working with a community that shares my love for citizen science, water quality, environmental education and exploring nature. I'm looking forward to being a part of the Adopt-A-Stream team alongside outstanding staff and volunteers to continue monitoring and improving our Georgia waterways!" -Michaela



UPCOMING WORKSHOP OPPORTUNITIES



Get certified or recertified in an AAS monitoring program! You can find workshop opportunities near you on the [workshop calendar](#) on the AAS website or contact your [local coordinator](#) or AAS@dnr.ga.gov to set up a workshop in your area.

- **Saturday, March 30:** Chemical Workshop (9:00AM-12:00PM) & Bacterial Workshop (1:00-4:00PM)

Forsyth County - Cumming City Hall, 100 Main St., Cumming, GA 30040

- **Thursday, April 4:** Bacterial Workshop (3:00-6:00PM)

Gwinnett Clean & Beautiful - Harbins Park, 2550 Indian Shoals Rd, Dacula, GA 30019 at the Football Field Lower Lake Pavilion #2

WELCOME NEW ADOPT-A-STREAM GROUPS!

These groups monitored for the first time in January - March, 2024!

Welcome to the AAS team!

- Yoga Pond
- WAWA Warriors
- Mojo
- Westwind
- CDs Waterways
- Beth and John Stevenson
- HCWA Towaliga
- TByrd
- Peachtree Creek Greenway
- Eco-Restoration Corps
- Gam71
- Emory OSI Team



[Atlanta Science Festival](#)

March 9-23, 2024 at Various Locations

[Birds Georgia: Wood Stork Festival](#)

March 25, 2024

[Birds Georgia: Georgia Bird Fest](#)

April 6 - May 4, 2024

[Georgia River Network Paddling Trips](#)

[Click here](#) to check out various dates and locations throughout 2024!

If you'd like to become an AAS trainer, please contact the [State Office](#) for workshop information.

Visit our [online calendar](#) for monitoring workshops and AAS events!

