

GEORGIA Adopt-A-Stream

Volume 27, Number 3 July-September 2020
Adopt-A-Stream Staff, Editors



Congratulations to the 2019 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 honored to FINALLY recognize the following individuals and groups for their achievements!

Volunteer Awards



Volunteers of the Year: **WWALS Watershed Coalition, Inc.**

WWALS Watershed Coalition advocates for conservation and stewardship of the Withlacoochee, Willacoochee, Alapaha, Little, Santa Fe, and Suwannee River watersheds in south Georgia and north Florida. They became involved with AAS two years ago with only two kits and four volunteers. They have since grown in numbers, adopting 16 new monitoring sites in 2019 alone with plans to add even more in the coming years. They will continue to consistently monitor water quality throughout the southern end of the state and north Florida and provide transparent data to the public.

Extraordinary Watershed Monitoring Effort: **Lake Blackshear**

This group of volunteers, composed of lake homeowners as well as students and staff from Georgia Southwestern State University, began monitoring Lake Blackshear in 2017 in response to a need for more recent baseline data. The data from their 11 sites are used to inform the impact of land use change on Lake Blackshear's water quality.



Red Flag Award: Lucy Damon

Lucy was a senior at Wheeler High School when she reached out to the Cobb County Watershed Stewardship program in search of a mentor for her stream monitoring capstone project. The bacterial results from her first sampling event came back atypical, with even higher E.coli counts in her follow up sample. She reported her findings to Cobb County, leading to an investigation of the stream and the discovery of a sewage spill from a broken sewer line within the City of Marietta.



Outstanding Outreach and Partnership: **Great Apalachee River Community**

GARC is a community-based, 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to preserving and protecting the ecosystem of the Apalachee River. Their monitoring and outreach efforts have greatly contributed to the preservation of the Apalachee River. They work to increase public awareness of water quality issues by holding annual meetings and picnics, publishing editorials in local newspapers, and attending water-related conferences.

Excellence in Data Collection: **Jonathan Price**

Jonathan has had a flawless data collection record since February 2015, never failing to document observations and promptly submit his data. He monitors a relatively pristine site within the Upper Etowah Watershed, providing quality, long-term baseline data for the region. He is also an active member of the Upper Etowah River Alliance.



Excellence in Education: **Amberly Wood**

Amberly is a 5th grade teacher who became AAS certified in June 2019. After receiving her certification, she promptly led ALL 205 5th grade students at Whitlow Elementary out of the classroom and into the creek! The students eagerly monitor the impacts of subdivision development on the creek near their school and take a lot of pride in their efforts.

Nymph Award: **Woodstock High School**

Last year, three teachers from Woodstock High School adopted a former Adopt-A-Stream site as a teaching tool in their STEM classes. They have since excelled, with their group now expanded to 73 QA/QC certified volunteers! They split up monitoring between their classes: the biology class is responsible for macroinvertebrate monitoring, the chemistry class is responsible for chemical monitoring, and both classes conduct habitat surveys. Plus, implementation of AAS into their curriculum was a key component to their school becoming STEM program certified!



Beyond Borders: **Christina Dunbar**

Christina monitors 2 sites in Georgia's Tallapoosa watershed and one site in Alabama's Terrapin Creek watershed, with plans to add 2 more. As a retired Georgia science educator, she understands the importance of increasing public awareness of water quality issues, and collaborates with kayak outfitters to conduct testing and educate the public on local land and water issues. She also works with local environmental groups to remove dams that block fish and kayak access.

Trainer Awards

Trainer of the Year: Lori Forrester



Lori Forester works for the Cherokee County Water & Sewage Authority and has been an AAS coordinator for over 17 years. She is a true AAS water steward, in both her professional and personal life. Her job allows her to work extensively with students and teachers in her area, from stream monitoring sessions on the Etowah River to classroom-based science activities. As an AAS trainer with the Upper Etowah River Alliance, she volunteers to teach workshops around the Upper Etowah Watershed on the weekends. She also leads by example, monitoring three personal sites in what spare time she has!

New Trainer of the Year: Eric Eberly

Although he is relatively new to the AAS trainer world, Eric has gone above and beyond by single-handedly connecting the Paulding County Public School System with the Paulding County Water System. He has trained both teachers and students, and assisted with the implementation of a high school STEM program that utilizes AAS protocols. He has also connected students across grade levels by facilitating a mentorship program between seniors and elementary school students. The students affectionately call him their “on-call water biologist”!



Watershed Awards



NGO: **Upper Etowah River Alliance**

UERA supports 12 groups and 28 sites throughout the Upper Etowah Watershed by supplying monitoring supplies, conducting trainings, assisting with site selection, and more. They partner with Cherokee County Water and Sewage Authority to further support water quality efforts in Cherokee County. Additionally, last year, they hosted a “Bacteria Day”, where 25 volunteers collected bacterial samples from 36 sites in one day!



Government- Phase 1: **Cobb County Watershed Stewardship Program**

One of AAS’s longest standing partnerships is with the Cobb County Water System. In 2019, Cobb County supported 52 active AAS groups and facilitated 35 AAS workshops, which resulted in 215 people earning 287 certifications! Whenever possible, Cobb County staff meet volunteer groups at their adopted site to become familiar with specific issues at each site, foster relationships with the volunteers, and discuss their concerns.



Government- Regional: **River Valley Regional Commission**

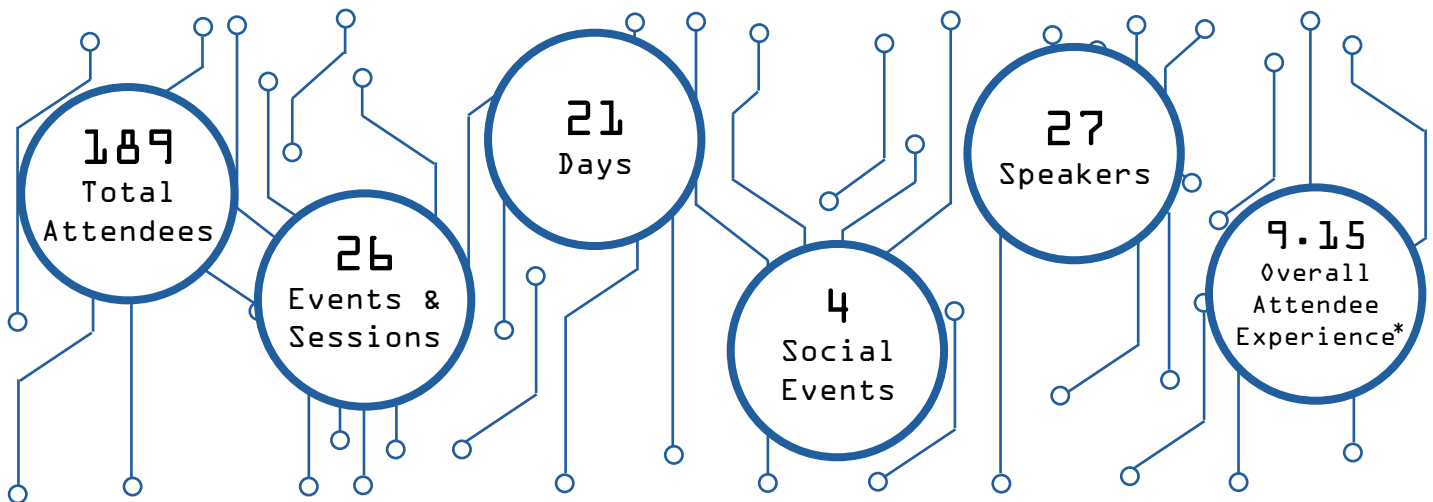
In 2019, the River Valley Regional Commission conducted a total of 224 monitoring events at 24 sites across 4 watersheds. They also assisted a budding Adopt-A-Stream program, training 2 City of Americus employees and supporting their monitoring efforts. In addition, RVRC offered a number of workshop opportunities, which is especially important in the area they serve, as many of the rural counties lack baseline water quality data.

Thank You for Making Our First Virtual Confluence a Success!



Attendees of the Friday Social event giving each other an AAS HIGH FIVE!

2020 has been a year of change in many ways, and Confluence was no exception! To ensure that attendees and staff remained safe during the pandemic, we adapted our traditional 3-day, in-person conference to a month-long virtual conference with daily sessions so that everyone could attend from the comfort of their own homes. While we had to overcome some technical difficulties and adapt to the online format, your support, participation, and positive feedback made it all worth it! Check out some of the numbers from our virtual conference below.



*From post-session surveys sent to attendees

CONFLUENCE 2021 IS GOING VIRTUAL THIS MARCH!

We are excited to announce that Confluence 2021 will be virtual! Although we will miss seeing everyone in-person, we are in the process of curating an even better virtual experience. Stay tuned for updates and we will see you (virtually) in March!

Board Member Highlight: Luke Roberson, UGA Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant



Hailing from Elizabethtown, Kentucky, Luke grew up exploring the woods, creeks, and limestone sinkholes around the central part of the state. He and his family enjoyed hunting, fishing, and playing on his grandparents' farm, which helped form his deep attachment to the outdoors. He attended the University of Kentucky in Lexington and received a degree in Graphic Design; however, he found himself stuck behind a desk most of the time, so on a whim he volunteered for the US Forest Service as a seasonal biology technician in the Wasatch-Cache National Forest. It changed his life. He then served two summers researching sea turtles for the Buck Island Reef National Monument in St. Croix, US Virgin Islands, went back to the University of Kentucky to get his Biology degree, and moved up to Maryland to work at Maryland DNR in freshwater non-tidal streams. There, Luke trained the Maryland Stream Waders, a team of volunteers who collect benthic macroinvertebrates to be identified by state taxonomists. While working at DNR, he received his MS in Environmental Science and Policy from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

Since moving to Savannah in 2016, Luke worked for the Ogeechee Riverkeeper as their Education and Stewardship Coordinator. It was here he first met the Adopt-A-Stream folks, received his trainer certification, and began participating in Confluence. In 2019, he began working for the UGA Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant at the Marine Education Center and Aquarium on Skidaway Island as the Adopt-A-Wetland Coordinator. That same year he joined the AAS board.

Adopt-A-Wetland is Adopt-A-Stream's coastal sister organization. As the Adopt-A-Wetland Coordinator, Luke educates volunteers, schools, community groups, and businesses on coastal water quality issues like sea level rise, increasing temperatures, and saltwater intrusion. In addition, Luke is developing bilingual training sessions with Dr. Checo Colon-Guad and other AAS coordinators to help build bridges between AAW/AAS and local Spanish-speaking communities. Lastly, he is working on a new method of bacterial monitoring in brackish or saltwater that would be quicker and more informative than the current culture methods that coastal volunteer use. Luke looks forward to many more years with Adopt-A-Stream!

Adopt-A-Stream and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped our work, lives, and society. We are constantly adapting, and now more than ever, we need to find safe ways to come together as a community and support one another. Adopt-A-Stream staff are working hard to ensure that trainers and volunteers who would like to continue holding workshops and monitoring their local waterways have the resources and support to do so safely.

Adopt-A-Stream certification and recertification workshops are currently being offered with additional safety precautions. Gretchen Quarterman, the Executive Director of WWALS Watershed Coalition and an AAS community coordinator, used a hybrid training model for her latest workshop – virtual for the classroom portion and in-person for the field. Although not all trainees felt comfortable meeting in person, Quarterman states that “...those that did had great time practicing their new skills and showing off their masks, gloves, and boots.” Ruth Mead, another AAS community coordinator and the Education Director at Phinizy Center for Water Sciences, held her most recent workshop entirely outside, with social distancing measures and masks. She encourages people to use AAS monitoring as a way to reengage with the AAS community and spend time in nature. “It is easy to social distance outside at your creek,” Mead states, “and wearing a mask [is] extra protection. Moreover, being outside brings great health benefits!”



Photo by Ruth Mead

If you feel comfortable, we encourage you to start or continue monitoring your local waterway in a safe and health-conscious way. For questions about sampling during the pandemic, or more information about workshop safety precautions, please contact us at AAS@dnr.ga.gov or check out our [COVID-19 Sampling Guidelines page](#). Please follow all local regulations and CDC guidelines.

The preparation of the Georgia Adopt-A-Stream quarterly newsletter 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. For more information about the Georgia Adopt-A-Stream program or to contribute to the newsletter, contact:

Georgia Adopt-A-Stream
Environmental Protection Division
2 MLK Jr. Dr. SE, Suite 1462 East
Atlanta, GA 30334
404.651.8515

AdoptAStream.Georgia.gov

AAS Staff: *Harold Harbert, Bailey Crapps, Jenna Dodson
Jackie Encinas, Cecilia Nachtmann*

GO BLUE!
Sign up for our e-newsletter
by emailing us at
AAS@dnr.ga.gov



Dragonfly



Riffle Beetle



Dobsonfly



Stonefly



Net Spinning Caddisfly

We are still holding workshops!

Get certified to monitor your local waterways at a safe, socially-distanced workshop.

Find a workshop near you with the Workshop Calendar:
AdoptAStream.Georgia.gov



Stay Connected!

Like us on Facebook and follow us on Instagram to stay up-to-date on the latest Adopt-A-Stream news! Use #gaadoptastream or tag us when you post photos of yourself monitoring. We love to see all the good work you do!



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



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



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