

# GEORGIA

## Adopt-A-Stream

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Anne Stahley and Chelsea Hopkins, Editors



Department of Natural Resources  
Environmental Protection Division

### *Adopt-A-Stream Honors 2013 Award Winners*

Georgia Adopt-A-Stream is incredibly grateful for all of our volunteers, trainers and partners that give their time and energy to better Georgia's waterways. We would like to recognize the contributions of those that have gone above and beyond to reach and exceed the five goals of the AAS program. We hope that you enjoy reading their stories and draw inspiration from their enthusiasm and dedication.

**Volunteer of the Year, Wendy Higbee:** Wendy Higbee has been involved with Georgia Adopt-A-Stream since March 2011 as an integral part of the Upper Etowah River Alliance (UERA) monitoring group. She works with the volunteers' schedules to coordinate sampling days for six sites, days to pick up supplies, recertifications and environmental education opportunities. For three recently adopted sites, Wendy and her daughter, Madison, still monitor with the new volunteers to make sure they are comfortable with monitoring on their own. She maintains a good balance of helping and guiding the volunteers to ensure consistent and quality data. Wendy has increased the public awareness of non point source pollution by providing hands-on learning opportunities for home-school families in the area and outside of the Etowah watershed. Wendy's efforts have helped significantly grow the UERA's Adopt-A-Stream group! She has formed a strong partnership between the UERA and the City of Canton as well as Cherokee County Water and Sewerage Authority. We applaud Wendy for her dedicated efforts and honor her with the Volunteer of the Year award.



**Friend of Adopt-A-Stream, Brian Sterner:** Brian Sterner of the Gwinnett Environmental and Heritage Center started in 2007 as an AAS chemical and macroinvertebrate trainer, later on to become involved as a bacterial trainer. He also served as a local community coordinator for Gwinnett County, and led over 22 training workshops, certifying 125 volunteers. Brian also served as a leader for six AAS monitoring groups. In addition, he contributed greatly to our community coordinator program, providing feedback and support to its structure and function. Brian has created many opportunities for AAS to partner with the Gwinnett Environmental and Heritage Center, namely by facilitating the hosting of our annual volunteer conference, Confluence. Through this partnership, over 250

volunteers from across the state are able to experience an incredible day to learn, grow and share with other volunteers and professionals. We honor his dedication and contributions to the Georgia Adopt-A-Stream Program, and he will be sorely missed as he left this world too soon, in February 2014. Through his work, Brian clearly demonstrated environmental leadership and a commitment to the education of youth, leaving a powerful legacy for us all to continue.

## *Adopt-A-Stream Volunteer Awards*

**Nymph Award, Pope High School:** Pope High School's A.P. Environmental Science class began monitoring in 2013 adopting three sites on campus including one tributary upstream of the school's stormwater outfall and another downstream. They analyze the differences that may occur as a result of the monitoring locations. Their teacher, Bill Blythe, said his students have "developed a deep concern for the waterways (on campus) and in particular how our campus can be a bellwether for the local environment and contribute to the bigger picture downstream." They also helped organize a Rivers Alive cleanup. During the cleanup, a fish kill was observed. They alerted Cobb County's Watershed Stewardship Program who then notified their monitoring unit. A water main break upstream likely caused the fish kill. "Because they have demonstrated a commitment to collecting quality data, organized community service projects and reported the fish kill, we trust the integrity of this group and their dedication to protecting their watershed," noted the Watershed Stewardship Program. We congratulate Pope High School for their efforts and dedication.



**Outstanding Outreach and Partnership, Columbia County Adopt-A-Stream:** The dedicated members of Columbia County Adopt-A-Stream, Michael Reardon, Robin Reardon, Eric Cagle and Brandi Cagle, work hard at engaging volunteers and raising awareness of the Adopt-A-Stream program in their county as well as extending their efforts to the other side of the Savannah River in South Carolina! The group has held chemical, bacterial and macroinvertebrate workshops in South Carolina with attendees representing at least six environmental and volunteer groups. These new partners now have the knowledge and ability to take the Georgia Adopt-A-Stream program into their communities to create awareness and engage new volunteers that would have not otherwise been exposed to these opportunities to explore and protect their waterways. All of this is in addition to their continuous support and

engagement of local Augusta area Adopt-A-Stream groups. With their exemplary outreach efforts, they are helping to protect the entire watershed. For these reasons, we honor Columbia County Adopt-A-Stream with the Outstanding Outreach Award.

**Excellence in Data Collection, Ina Allison:** Ina Allison has been a chemical and macroinvertebrate monitoring volunteer for ten years, and attended the very first Cobb County bacterial monitoring workshop in January 2009! Ina chose her site on Rottenwood Creek where it joins the Chattahoochee River to see what the watershed is contributing to the river. Even with the twenty minute walk from the parking lot to her sampling location, Ina has consistently monitored and reported data each month for years, even when data was submitted via snail mail. Ina's collection methods are of the highest quality, following AAS sampling guidelines, resulting in data that is consistent and reliable. Ina's environmental stewardship goes beyond monthly sampling; she plays a key role in Cobb County's River Rendezvous by visiting all of the thirty monitoring sites to ensure up-to-date descriptions, incubating and counting all of the bacteria plates, and organizing lunch for the volunteers including her delicious fruit salad! During the River Rendezvous, Ina is a leader for one of the ten monitoring teams, usually mentoring new participants to ensure they are comfortable and accurate with the process. During Cobb's Watershed Stewardship Fair, Ina presents her data to engage the community in local water quality topics. We applaud Ina Allison for her excellence in data collection.



# *Adopt-A-Stream Volunteer Awards*

## **Extraordinary Volunteer Watershed Effort, Upper Etowah River Alliance:**

The Upper Etowah River Alliance group, also known as the Canton Creek Monitors, is a group of twenty to thirty home school children and their parents. They monitor five sites through a combination of visual habitat surveys, chemical, bacterial, macroinvertebrate and recently amphibian monitoring. The Canton Creek Monitors hosted a Rivers Alive cleanup in partnership with the City of Canton. The group kept an accurate tally of the debris by designating a recorder and having volunteers call out the items they picked up. They also took special care to separate recyclables from trash which resulted in many of the items being recycled! Being too tired to conduct their AAS monitoring that was scheduled after the cleanup, the dedicated group planned to meet the following week so they wouldn't miss a monitoring event. We are pleased to honor the members of the Upper Etowah River Alliance with this award.



**Beyond Borders, Alice and Doug Walker:** Since 2006, Alice and Doug Walker have continuously led the Stream Stompers group in chemical and macroinvertebrate monitoring of two locations on Hollow Creek within the Savannah River watershed in South Carolina. Every month they organize and participate in sampling with the other members, sometimes even providing lunch! In order to get chemical replacements and monitoring equipment, the Walkers write grants for funding. Their sites on Hollow Creek flow into ponds on Silver Bluff Audubon Center & Sanctuary managed lands. These areas provide refuges for the endangered Wood Stork. The consistent and accurate water quality data that Alice and Doug make available on the Georgia Adopt-A-Stream

website allows them to create annual reports on the health of the waters. They presented these reports to the local National Audubon Society chapter as well as at the Georgia Adopt-A-Stream annual conference, Confluence. On behalf of the Georgia Adopt-A-Stream Program, thank you Alice and Doug for your dedicated efforts to improve waterways in Georgia and South Carolina.

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## *Confluence 2015, Save the Date!*

**March 14th, 2015**

**Gwinnett Environmental & Heritage Center in Buford, GA**

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## *Thanks to our 2014 Confluence Sponsors and Partners!*



## *Adopt-A-Stream Trainer Awards*

Georgia Adopt-A-Stream relies heavily on our trainers to engage citizens through workshops and provide local level support to our volunteers. Over 50 active trainers in 2013 helped to conduct over 340 workshops with over 3700 certifications in our QA/QC monitoring programs. In recognition of our outstanding trainers that have gone above and beyond in promoting our goals, we would like to recognize the following Trainer of the Year, New Trainers of the Year and Legacy Trainers.

We recognize our 2013 Legacy Trainers for their 10+ years of active service to the Adopt-A-Stream Program.

**Ruth Mead and Frank Carl**

Thank you for your dedication, time and energy!

**Trainer of the Year, Kevin Smith:** Kevin works for Keep Forsyth County Beautiful as a Community Outreach Specialist and has been an active AAS trainer since 2006 being certified in our chemical, bacterial and macroinvertebrate monitoring programs. He led 44 workshops, certifying over 800 volunteers in 2013 alone. Kevin's enthusiasm for his work overflows as he shares his passion for improving the waterways of Forsyth County. He engages young adults and children by partnering with Forsyth County School System and local Scout groups. Kevin works hard to make the AAS program available to everyone by holding evening and weekend workshops. He also is a great resource for his volunteers after the workshop, answering questions about sampling or about their results and ensuring that they have all of the necessary equipment for monitoring.



**New Trainer of the Year, Jenn Collins:** Jenn has been involved with the AAS program since 2010 and as an active chemical and bacterial trainer since 2012 and macroinvertebrate trainer since 2013. Jenn works with the Chattahoochee RiverWarden as the Outreach Director. She has conducted 34 workshops certifying 133 volunteers. Individuals from River Valley Regional Commission, Golden Triangle and Fort Benning's Environmental Management Division now monitor water quality improvement projects in the area using AAS techniques. She also works to engage students in the program, coordinating equipment loans for local schools and training teachers and students at Columbus State University and Auburn University to use the program on their campuses. Chattahoochee RiverWarden worked with AAS and Alabama Water Watch to establish a reciprocity relationship in which AAS certified volunteers in Alabama can monitor local streams and submit their QA/QC data to both programs.

**New Trainer of the Year, Mike Kahle:** Mike has been involved with the AAS program since 2010 and as an active trainer in our chemical, bacterial and macroinvertebrate monitoring programs since 2012. He has conducted 55 workshops certifying 471 volunteers. Mike works with the Cobb County Watershed Stewardship Program as an Environmental Programs Specialist. He manages programs that raise awareness about non-point source pollution including river cleanups, invasive plant removal and storm drain marking among many others. To cultivate relationships with Cobb's long-time AAS volunteers, he joins them on a monitoring day observing their techniques and providing productive feedback and praises. Meeting with the volunteers allowed Mike to encourage the addition of new monitoring parameters and also gave him new perspectives on how he can grow and serve as a local AAS coordinator such as introducing volunteers monitoring the same stream and showing them the benefits of using each other's data for stream assessment.



## *Adopt-A-Stream Watershed Awards*

Georgia Adopt-A-Stream honors the efforts of local Adopt-A-Stream programs in the governmental, nonprofit, university and watershed organization levels through annual 'Watershed Awards.' Our 2013 Watershed Award winners are the **City of Gainesville** and the **Cobb County Watershed Stewardship Program**. These programs excel in meeting the Adopt-A-Stream goals and we are so grateful for their service to the program.



The **City of Gainesville** held 26 chemical, bacterial and macroinvertebrate monitoring workshops certifying over 450 volunteers in 2013. Over the past decade, Gainesville AAS has held annual stream clean-ups as part of the Rivers Alive program. This year, 168 volunteers removed approximately 3,000 pounds of litter from Flat Creek. The City of Gainesville also organized rain barrel workshops and a rain barrel decorating contest, and continued restoration of Flat Creek. Over 180 students from six schools participated in the rain barrel decoration contest, decorating 34 barrels. The barrels were displayed throughout the community for a month and even placed in a parade to spread awareness for water conservation.

**Cobb County Watershed Stewardship Program's** mission is to promote respect for the environment by providing the community with learning opportunities concerning the connection between our behavior and water quality. They trained 244 volunteers during 45 chemical, bacterial and macroinvertebrate monitoring workshops. In Cobb County, there are over 50 active AAS monitoring groups who reported more than 500 monitoring events in 2013. The Watershed Stewardship Program brings water quality awareness to the community through rain barrel workshops and storm drain marking, partnering with library departments and the Cobb County Master Gardeners and organizing Cobb's Anuran Monitoring program and the Children's Water Festival.

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### *Do You Know This Year's Adopt-A-Stream Award Winners?*

Is there a trainer in your area who exemplifies the goals of Adopt-A-Stream? Have you or another monitor taken action to protect your watershed or developed partnerships to make a difference in your community? In addition to the award winners highlighted in this newsletter, we also have a Multimedia Award for the group or individual who has gone above and beyond utilizing creative formats (video, social media, music, etc.) to raise awareness about water quality, and an Adopt-A-Stream in Action award for the volunteer or group that addressed a water quality problem or used AAS data to help resolve an issue. Throughout the year. We encourage you to notice Adopt-A-Stream champions for this year's awards!

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### *Welcome to our New Trainers and Community Coordinators!*

Ashby Nix  
Jessica Warren

Jesse Demonbreun-Chapman  
Sumner Gann

#### **Need Monitoring Equipment?**

Ben Meadows is continuing to offer the 15% discount on all products for AAS volunteers.

Use this code at checkout: **TSDNR14**

Code expires 12/31/2014.

The Georgia Adopt-A-Stream Newsletter is published quarterly.  
For more information about the Georgia Adopt-A-Stream program or  
to contribute to the newsletter, call or write to:

**Georgia Adopt-A-Stream**  
**Environmental Protection Division**  
2 MLK Jr. Drive, Suite 1462 East  
Atlanta, GA 30334  
404.463.1464  
[GeorgiaAdoptAStream.org](http://GeorgiaAdoptAStream.org)

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Dragonfly



Riffle Beetle



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Stonefly



Net Spinning Caddisfly

## *Good bye Tara, We Miss You!*

After dedicating her time and expertise for five years working for Georgia Adopt-A-Stream, we had to say farewell to Tara Muenz. In April, she moved up north to join the Stroud Water Research Center as an Education Program Manager in Avondale, Pennsylvania.

She certainly led by example in her own neighborhood by adopting sites to monitor on her own time and even organized a stream cleanup! With a big heart and gentle spirit, Tara had a youthful joy that became most apparent when outdoors “playing” near streams conducting workshops and interacting with the public, but she was very committed to ensuring volunteers maintained QA/QC protocols.

“First, I wanted to extend my gratitude to all the AAS volunteers, trainers, board members, my super awesome colleagues at EPD, and especially to the waters of Georgia, you all brought so much wisdom and teachings to my heart, and it means more than I can express. I am inspired by you all and excited for the next phases of growth for the program. Keep on shining bright for the future and remember how powerful the message is that you bring each day through your efforts.” - Tara



Her hard work and dedication to grow the AAS program within and beyond the state are greatly appreciated. Tara has rejoined the AAS Advisory Board and we are certain that we will see her again. Until then, we will miss you and we wish you well on your next adventure! **Thank you Tara!**

*Please visit our online calendar at [www.GeorgiaAdoptAStream.org](http://www.GeorgiaAdoptAStream.org)  
for upcoming monitoring workshops and Adopt-A-Stream events.*