

Department of Natural Resources
 Environmental Protection Division

Protecting Local Waters through Community Outreach Events

River protection begins with building a community that is aware of their local water resources and by fostering actions that promote stewardship of these resources. One way to increase awareness is by offering fun, educational activities that introduce and engage citizens in protecting local natural resources. Community outreach events offer the opportunity for you to share your knowledge and help local citizens better define their role in watershed protection. There are numerous activities to choose from. In this issue of our newsletter we are going to focus on Rivers Alive cleanups, World Water Monitoring Day, pharmaceutical/hazardous waste collection events, rain barrel workshops, rain garden demonstration projects, and educational programs for the K-12 audience.



River Cleanups: A river cleanup can help your community in many ways. On the surface, it makes the waterway more aesthetically pleasing and safer for those who use it. But it often goes deeper than that. When people participate in such an event, they create a personal connection to the waterway and it's protection, and many will strive to keep it clean as it is now "their" stream. The State of Georgia's Rivers Alive program is designed to assist local communities in their quest to organize river cleanups. We encourage you to visit us on the

web at www.riversalive.org or call 404.675.6240 to get involved.

Water Quality Monitoring: Taking it a step further in your community outreach, you may want to teach others about the local water quality. There are many ways to do so, one of which is to participate in **World Water Monitoring Day**. This program is an international education and outreach program that builds public awareness and involvement in protecting water resources around the world. Basic water quality monitoring kits allow monitors to test for pH, dissolved oxygen, temperature and turbidity, and only cost \$13 plus shipping. Don't be confused by the name; this is a year around monitoring program. Those who want to take it even further are encouraged to host an **Adopt-A-Stream** workshop so that volunteers will learn advanced monitoring techniques approved by the Environmental Protection Agency.



www.worldwatermonitoringday.org

Got Drugs?



Waste Disposal: A hot topic today is the proper disposal of pharmaceutical and household hazardous waste. Many people do not know how to dispose of these items and end up flushing their unwanted pharmaceuticals down the drain or throwing hazardous waste into the trash, which can potentially introduce harmful products into the environment. So what do you do? One simple at home method is to empty your pharmaceuticals into a sealable bag and add a sufficient quantity of liquid soap to make them undesirable and then disposing of them with your household garbage. Community take-back events are also a great disposal mechanism. The **U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency's National Take Back Initiative** offers support to

communities interested in hosting a pharmaceutical take back program. The National Association of Community Pharmacists' **Dispose of My Meds Program** also offers year around take back programs in participating pharmacies. You may visit www.justice.gov/dea and www.disposemymeds.org for more information. Organizing a household hazardous waste collection event may seem very overwhelming, but there are many resources available to help. The State of Georgia's Department of Community Affairs' **Chemical Hazards Program & local Keep America Beautiful Affiliates** help communities organize such events. More information can be gathered at www.dca.state.ga.us.

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Rain Barrel Workshops: Water conservation is another way to protect local water resources. As the drought continues to worsen across the State of Georgia, we must find creative ways to conserve water. One way to do so is to install a rain barrel to collect water to use in and around your landscape. Rain barrels help collect precious water resources for future use and also reduce the amount of stormwater runoff from your property. Rain barrels range from simple do-it-yourself barrels to upscale designer barrels that resemble terracotta pots such as those available at The Rain Barrel Depot (rainbarreldepot.com), a sponsor of the 2011 Confluence.

Hosting a rain barrel workshop in your community is a great way to educate your community on the importance of water conservation while providing them with the tools to get started. Bonny Putney with the Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper has dedicated much time to develop a partnership with Coca-Cola Enterprises to provide free barrels for your workshops. She is more than willing to provide advice on organizing a rain barrel workshop and welcomes you to contact her at bputney@ucriverkeeper.org.

Rain Garden Demonstration Projects: A rain garden is a planted depression used to capture and absorb water that runs off an impervious surface such as parking lots, roads, roofs and driveways. In addition to its aesthetic value, rain gardens allow stormwater to soak into the ground instead of flowing to the nearest storm drain, thereby diverting stormwater and the pollutants that it contains away from the stream. These gardens are planted with native plants that can tolerate drought but don't mind getting their feet wet periodically, which means they require very little maintenance. This type of gardening is growing in popularity and by creating a demonstration project in your community, you can educate others about their value to the environment. For more information, visit the UGA Cooperative Extension's website (stormwater.uga.edu) or call 706.342.2217.



Education Programs for K-12: Let's not leave out the younger generation, as they will be our future leaders and we will rely on them to make sound decisions. **Georgia Project WET** (Water Education for Teachers), a sister program of Adopt-A-Stream and Rivers Alive, offers fun, hands-on, minds-on workshops for formal and non-formal educators so that they can bring active water education to their K-12 classrooms. Their mission is to reach children, parents, teachers and community members of the world with water education. **River of Words** is an environmental education project where students learn to explore their own watershed and express their findings through art and poetry. To find out how you can bring these fun and exciting education programs into your community, visit gaprojectwet.org or call 404.675.6240.

So now I know about all of these different opportunities, where do I go from here?

- 1. Partnerships! Partnerships! Partnerships!** With all of this being said, there are many ways in which you can engage your community in the protection of local water resources. First in your planning, seek out local partners! As we have mentioned in the sections above, there are many organizations who have experience planning these events and can offer assistance.
- 2. Consider the Goals and Needs of your Community.** With your partners, determine what is needed in your community. Do you have areas of the community or streams/wetlands that need attention? Do you have an interested group of people? If so, think about introducing the above concepts and opportunities to your neighbors.
- 3. What Resources do you have in your Community?** Do you have a water treatment facility, school or library willing to host workshops, or organizations willing to fund and support stewardship practices?
- 4. Now the Fun Part, Pick your Event and Advertise!** Work with your partners to pick an event and advertise in as many different outlets and avenues as possible. Start early!
- 5. Call us!** Don't hesitate to contact your local Adopt-A-Stream Coordinator, or Allison and Tara at the State Office, if you should need ideas or help with your planning stages.

Welcome New Adopt-A-Stream Groups!

(First data entry from 03/16/2011 to 07/07/2011)

Marist High School, DeKalb County
Dunwoody High School, DeKalb County
CCGA Biology Club, Glynn County
Clear Creek Watch Dogs, Fulton County
Sustainable Norcross, Gwinnett County
Friends of Noonday Creek, Cobb County
Mitsy Forest Maniacs, Cobb County
Lake George, Liberty County
Cedar Run, Clarke County
South Cobb High School APES, Cobb County

Wildcat Group, Oconee County
Woodstock High School, Cherokee County
Skylake Neighborhood, White County
Catherine Street, DeKalb County
Academe of the Oaks, DeKalb County
Anderson Farm Noses, Cobb County
Blackwatch, Bulloch County
Mad Chemists, Butts & Spalding Counties
Friends of Peachtree Hills Park, Fulton County
Parkwood Garden Club, DeKalb County

Monitoring Tip: Care and Storage of Your Reagents

Proper storage and care of your monitoring equipment is essential to maintaining the integrity of your data. It's easy to forget about our reagents and leave them in a sunny spot or in your car between monitoring events, but this can alter the chemicals and cause incorrect readings. Reagents should be replaced annually, but also make sure they don't get heat stroke or freeze up!

Remember these tips in caring for your reagents:

- Avoid extreme temperatures and direct sunlight when storing your reagents.
- Tighten all reagent bottle caps between each use.
- Do not let the tip of your reagent bottle touch the water sample.
- If your reagents become contaminated or have expired, contact the State Office for a replacement.

Adopt-A-Stream Program Fact!

Did you know that in the year 2010, Adopt-A-Stream volunteers dedicated over **21,000 hours** to make Georgia's waters healthier? That translates to over **\$500,000** in volunteer dollars! This information was retrieved from the yearly summary in the data views section of the website.

*Volunteer dollars are calculated at \$20.25/hour for volunteers and \$23.30/hour for workshop trainers.





SAVE THE DATE: CONFLUENCE 2012

SATURDAY, MARCH 17TH

**Gwinnett Environmental & Heritage Center
Buford, Georgia
www.gwinnettechc.org**

Adopt-A-Stream's Annual Volunteer Conference and Award Ceremony

Tell us what you think! Follow this link to participate in our short Pre-Conference Survey & share your ideas for Confluence 2012:

http://www.kwiksurveys.com?s=NNLIIG_4d95d22

*this link can also be found at www.GeorgiaAdoptAStream.org

Please visit our calendar of events at www.GeorgiaAdoptAStream.org for upcoming monitoring workshops and Adopt-A-Stream events.

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

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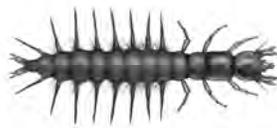
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Dragonfly



Riffle Beetle



Dobsonfly



Stonefly



Net Spinning Caddisfly