

# GEORGIA Adopt-A-Stream

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Allison Hughes, Tara Muenz, Editors



## Adopt-A-Stream Honors our 2011 Award Winners

This year's **Volunteer of the Year** award goes to **Obby Tapley** a Coastal Adopt-A-Wetland (AAW) volunteer and trainer. Obby is a founding member of the Peregrine Marsh Gang in Savannah and has conducted over 100 monitoring events for Coastal Adopt-A-Wetland since 2003. Her group monitors the marina at 'The Landings' and on Butter Bean Beach on Skidaway River, where current bridge construction is occurring. Obby conducts chemical and bacterial monitoring and became a chemical monitoring trainer in order to provide assistance with the Coastal Adopt-A-Wetland program. She has also spent many months revising the Coastal Georgia Adopt-A-Wetland manual from the 2nd edition to the 3rd and edited the AAW Quality Assurance Project Plan sent to the Environmental Protection Agency this fall. We applaud Obby Tapley for her efforts and honor her with the Volunteer of the Year award.



**Brandon Mitchell** has been selected for this year's **Extraordinary Volunteer Watershed Effort** award. Brandon is a Science Teacher at Winder-Barrow High School and has been a great supporter of the Adopt-A-Stream program for several years. Mr. Mitchell consistently teaches his students about water quality in their own backyard. He is young, energetic, intelligent and engaging. Mr. Mitchell brings many clubs, classes and people together to clean up Bulldog Creek, a tributary to Cedar Creek, every year. He also takes students to downtown Winder to clean parking lot areas adjacent to an important tributary to Fort Yargo Lake, which is the water source for the City of Winder. Every year, he teaches 180 students about water quality and takes them to Bulldog Creek and Fort Yargo Lake for monitoring. Mr. Mitchell is very personable and has established partnerships with Barrow County Stormwater and Keep Barrow Beautiful to keep these high school students involved. For these reasons, we are pleased to honor Mr. Brandon Mitchell with this award.



We have two recipients of this year's **Excellence in Data Collection** award including the **Toonigh Neighbor's (AAS Group-332)** and **Eric Lee of Bishop Lake and its 6 inflows (AAS Group-1117)**. They have consistently collected QA/QC quality data and recognize the importance of data integrity in their monitoring programs. The Toonigh Neighbors have been sampling Toonigh Creek since August 1999 and to date have submitted 180 monitoring events. From the start, the group went above and beyond the four basic chemical tests and used the advanced chemical kits. They started biological sampling in October 1999 and have consistently documented changes in the macroinvertebrate population over the past 12 years. They also conduct AAS E.coli testing and are one of the few groups that have completed the Watershed Survey and Map Assessment as well as stream visual surveys. Shortly after being certified in 2008, Eric Lee adopted six tributary sites to Bishop Lake in the watershed near his home and has been monitoring consistently ever since. Every month at each of his monitoring locations, he collects data, noting his observations of the current conditions. Working independently on this project, he has maintained his QA/QC certification, and has conducted over 175 monitoring events, with more than forty of these during 2011.



# Adopt-A-Stream Volunteer Awards



**Dick Farmer** has been selected for the **Outstanding Outreach and Partnership** award. Dick is the current Vice President and Education Director of the Watershed Alliance of Sandy Springs. Dick has contributed to the water community by creating several programs with Riverwood High School, Kennesaw State University (KSU) and Northsprings High School. Dick secured small grants to help purchase and fund these projects with a field lab for water quality testing. The dynamic program with Kennesaw State involved a one-month summer project dedicated to collecting data and understanding Long Island Creek in Sandy Springs. It was so successful that KSU is coming back again this summer and will be adding Marsh Creek in Sandy Springs as a monitoring site as well as continued monitoring of Long Island Creek. Dick also arranged for students at

Riverwood High School to do a comprehensive study of events that led to a fish kill in North Harbor Lake. It was illuminating and the kids were excited. Dick is also the coordinator for the 'Annual Creek Walk' for Adopt-A-Stream. He is enthusiastic and knowledgeable and has taken the Watershed Alliance of Sandy Springs in a direction that was envisioned in the organization's mission statement.

Reaching out to local communities about environmental issues can be done in a multitude of ways and 'Conservation Crusader, Defender of Water Resources,' has been an effective outreach and education tool of the City of Gainesville's Public Education Program. Conservation Crusader's mission is to provide citizens of all ages with the knowledge they need to continue protecting and efficiently using resources for continued sustainability for the years to come. The Crusader has been spotted at many places and events within the city, and at each engagement, the Crusader explains how to protect our resources, use water efficiently and protect our surface waters. Finally, Crusader always "deputizes" new conservation crusaders, as he knows that he cannot do it alone. For this we honor **Conservation Crusader, Defender of Water Resources** with the City of Gainesville with one of our **Adopt-A-Stream in Action** awards.



We couldn't just award one **Adopt-A-Stream in Action** award for 2011; our next award goes to **Nicholson Elementary School** which has been involved in Adopt-A-Stream since 2007 when teacher Cheryl Ashley-Serafine started participating in the 'Life Is A River' program, a year-long water unit, with her advanced third grade students.



They have adopted a site adjacent to their campus on Rubes Creek and visit the stream routinely throughout the year. The class monitors physical conditions, macroinvertebrates, amphibians and chemistries. This year, the students noted large piles of vegetative debris along the sewer easement as they walked the stream banks. In addition to piles of kudzu, grass clippings and wood, the students also found household litter and furniture. It turns out that the illegal dumper was their school. They decided to write letters to the school about their observations and concerns. In response, the school has stopped dumping and is in the process of getting the area cleaned up while also educating the offenders about the problems associated with dumping waste. Mrs. Ashley-Serafine used this as a learning opportunity for the students to become involved in conflict resolution and utilize their knowledge and voice on behalf of the community.



This year, Adopt-A-Stream created the **Nymph Award** to recognize a new group that has excelled in meeting the four AAS goals. We would like to recognize **Kylie McArthur** of the **Lake Avondale Advisory Board (G-1612)** for her incredible efforts. Kylie McArthur, age 13, has jumped into the Adopt-A-Stream program with enthusiasm. In May 2011 she started the program to monitor stream and lake water quality for the City of Avondale Estates. She completed the chemical, bacterial and biological monitoring classes in 2011. She wakes up extra early in the morning to collect samples before school begins. She has collected data consistently and carefully for three stream sites in her neighborhood. Kylie plans to write an article for her city's newsletter after she has collected one year's worth of data. We congratulate Kylie McArthur for her efforts and dedication in 2011.

# Adopt-A-Stream Watershed Awards

Georgia Adopt-A-Stream relies heavily on our more than fifty Local Adopt-A-Stream Programs. In 2011, there were over 350 workshops led and 4,300 volunteers trained. To show our appreciation, we present 'Watershed Awards' annually to our most outstanding local programs. Our 2011 Watershed Awards were given to DeKalb County's Adopt-A-Stream Program, the City of Gainesville's Adopt-A-Stream Program, the Atlanta Regional Commission, and the upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper's Neighborhood Water Watch Program. These programs have excelled in meeting the four goals of Georgia Adopt-A-Stream.



Keeping Watch Over Our Waters



ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION



**DeKalb County's Adopt-A-Stream Program** renewed its commitment to the goals of Adopt-A-Stream (AAS) for the citizens and visitors to DeKalb County in 2010, when the county hired a full-time employee to oversee and coordinate AAS activities. There was an immediate positive result for this investment, which carried over into the following year. In 2011, DeKalb AAS hosted 39 workshops that certified 639 volunteers. Furthermore, the program provided basic chemical testing kits to all new monitoring groups and loaned out other monitoring program equipment to volunteers. The training of volunteers led to 253 monitoring events, an increase of 146% from the beginning of 2010. Also in 2011, there were 22 new monitoring sites and 39 active sites. DeKalb AAS also supported stream cleanups through Rivers Alive. Last year, 519 volunteers provided 1,048 work hours to remove 24,650 pounds of trash and debris from area waterways.

In the calendar year of 2011, the **City of Gainesville's Adopt-A-Stream Program** gave over 290 presentations to well over 2000 people of all ages through schools, fairs, festivals, career days and public forums. With three certified Adopt-A-Stream (AAS) trainers on staff and with the help of volunteers, the program has spent over 295 hours on chemical, bacterial and biological monitoring, administering tests, receiving training, providing information and conducting clean ups in 2011. Over the past decade, Gainesville AAS has held annual stream clean ups as part of the Rivers Alive program. This year, 150 volunteers removed approximately two tons of litter from waterways, with event coverage from TV 18. Other water education and outreach events provided by Gainesville's AAS program in 2011 included rain barrel workshops, "Drugs Down the Drain Campaign", Find-A-Leak workshops, and the Tri-State Water Wars Panel discussion.

In 2009, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division contracted the **Atlanta Regional Commission** to coordinate the development of a Watershed Improvement Plan (WIP) for Proctor Creek. Proctor Creek is located in the headwaters to the Chattahoochee River, flowing through the middle portion of the Atlanta Metropolitan region in Fulton County. The stream segment is listed as impaired for not meeting the State water quality standards for fecal coliform bacteria. As part of the WIP, the Proctor Creek Watershed Improvement Project carried out a visual field survey, hosted bacterial monitoring workshops, developed a monitoring plan using the AAS method for E.coli bacteria collection and analysis, identified potential sources of contamination, conducted outreach and created a final watershed improvement plan listing potential best management practices. By utilizing AAS surveys and protocols, this project identified several sources of contamination, many of which have now been repaired.

The **Neighborhood Water Watch Program (NWW)** is a collaborative effort between Upper Chattahoochee RiverKeeper (UCR) and neighborhood groups in the Upper Chattahoochee Watershed to improve water quality in urban streams and, by extension, protect human health and increase public awareness of water quality issues in the surrounding communities. This particular project focuses on inner city communities and empowers local citizen groups to help protect water quality flowing through their neighborhoods. Through NWW, community partner groups, UCR staff and interns routinely collect water samples from 18 active Adopt-A-Stream sites. UCR staff tests these samples for *E.coli* and other parameters in accordance with AAS requirements. In 2011, UCR processed 366 bacteria samples and logged them into the AAS database. The NWW program utilizes a network of partnerships with local community groups and local governments to identify areas with high E.coli levels and reports them for remediation. Through these efforts they have been very successful in improving water quality in the Upper Chattahoochee Watershed.

# Adopt-A-Stream Volunteer Awards

We honor our database programmer, **Rick Hitchcock**, with our **Friend of Georgia Adopt-A-Stream** award. Rick is employed by the University of Georgia's Soil and Water Testing Lab and is contracted by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division to provide programmatic assistance for the Georgia Adopt-A-Stream database and website. Always quick to respond in a professional and kind manner, Rick goes above and beyond to promote the program's growth. His fine attention to detail and wealth of knowledge have helped Georgia Adopt-A-Stream create a database that is not only widely used by our volunteers, but water resource users statewide and in the southeast. We sincerely thank Rick for his strong commitment and positive energy to serve our program and keep us running afloat!



Please visit our calendar of events at [www.GeorgiaAdoptAStream.org](http://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:

**Georgia Adopt-A-Stream**  
**Environmental Protection Division**  
**4220 International Parkway, Suite 101**  
**Atlanta, GA 30354**  
**404.675.6240**  
**[www.GeorgiaAdoptAStream.org](http://www.GeorgiaAdoptAStream.org)**

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Dragonfly



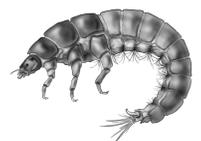
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