

SPRING, 2009



GEORGIA RIVER NETWORK  
**CONFLUENCE**

## Flint River is America's #2 Most Endangered River

**A** proposal to dam the Flint River would waste massive amounts of taxpayer dollars, destroy fishing and boating opportunities, and would not solve Georgia's water needs. This threat landed the Flint in the number two spot in *America's Most Endangered Rivers: 2009 edition*. Georgia River Network and the Flint Riverkeeper worked together to nominate the Flint to bring attention to proposals to build dams on the Flint and build support to stop the dams.

Each year, American Rivers solicits nominations from thousands of river groups, environmental organizations, outdoor clubs, local governments, and

taxpayer watchdogs for the Endangered Rivers report.

With the listing, we called on Congress to oppose any legislation authorizing the dams and encouraged local leaders to embrace cost effective water efficiency measures as a proven water supply solution.

"Spending hundreds of millions of dollars to dam the Flint River simply doesn't make sense when there are water efficiency options available that are far cheaper and would deliver faster results," said Rebecca Wodder, president of American Rivers. "This dam building scheme is not the answer to modern



Paddlers enjoy the Flint River during Paddle Georgia 2008 Photo: Joe Cook

### Inside this issue:

GRN Welcomes Julie Goldberg to the Staff	2
GRN Recognizes River Celebration Award Winners	3
09 Legislative Session: Wins and Losses for Water	4
Become a River Partner	4
GRN Conference Empowers River Advocates from Across GA	5
Georgia River Heroes: Dr. Mary Freeman	6
Paddle Georgia 09 on the Coosawattee & Oostanaula Rivers	7
Calendar of Events	8

## GEORGIA RIVER NETWORK

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Working Together for Healthy Rivers

### MISSION:

Georgia River Network is working to ensure a clean water legacy by engaging and empowering Georgians to protect and restore our rivers from the mountains to the coast.

### GOALS:

- ◆ Increase the number of people involved in the protection and management of Georgia's waters.
- ◆ Improve awareness of the issues that threaten the health of our waters.
- ◆ Establish infrastructure for the exchange of resources among parties working to improve the protection of Georgia's waters.
- ◆ Provide necessary means to advocate for the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of our waters

### Board of Directors

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Dana Skelton,  
Director of Administration & Outreach

Julie Goldberg,  
Administrative Assistant

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*(Continued from page 1)*

Georgia's water needs."

The Flint is one of just a few rivers in the Southeast to still flow unimpeded for more than 200 miles. The river is used extensively by fishermen and boaters, and many local economies depend on the Flint for tourism dollars.

"The Flint River is well-loved by anglers, boaters, and Georgia's families. Damming the Flint would destroy this treasure and would be a major step backward in the quest for responsible, sustainable water supplies," said Mark Woodall of the Flint Riverkeeper.

The dam proposal has been dusted off as the drought in north Georgia has spurred a search for new water supplies to fuel growth in Metro Atlanta. In 2008, the Georgia Legislature passed a bill to encourage the construction of new water supply reservoirs. In November, a report of reservoir sites included two dams on the Flint and reservoirs on the river's tributaries.

The report calls on Metro Atlanta and other municipalities to embrace water efficiency as their first source of water supply instead of rushing to build expensive dams. Water efficiency means using water more wisely -- by fixing leaks, replacing old appliances and fixtures, and taking other common sense steps in our homes, businesses and communities.

Metro Atlanta and the state as a whole should adopt water efficiency measures including consumption based water rates, water fixture retrofits when re-selling older homes, simple, permanent outdoor watering rules, sub-metering on all new multi-family construction, and increased financial incentives for water conservation.

Water efficiency measures cost \$0.46 to \$250 per 1000 gallons, while dams can cost \$4000 per 1000 gallons -- and dams cost even more when maintenance and operation costs are included. Water efficiency measures could yield between 130 and 210 MGD -- a 21 to 33 percent savings. This water savings could save Metro Atlanta up to \$700 million.

"This dam proposal represents 19th century thinking. Our state needs 21st century solutions like water efficiency to ensure our economy, our environment and our quality of life are healthy and thriving in the years to come," said April Ingle, Georgia River Network's Executive Director.

The report presents alternatives to proposals that would damage rivers, identifies those who make the crucial decisions, and points out opportunities for the public to take action on behalf of each listed river. Visit [www.americanrivers.org/endangeredrivers](http://www.americanrivers.org/endangeredrivers) to take action today!

## GRN Welcomes Julie Goldberg

Julie Goldberg joined Georgia River Network as Administrative Assistant in November, 2008. In this position her primary responsibilities include managing phone calls, assisting with the membership program, helping organize fundraising events, updating the website and providing general support to the Engage, Empower and Advocate programs of Georgia River Network. Julie is originally from Atlanta. She graduated from the University of Georgia with a degree in Arts, Political Science and Women's Studies. Before coming to Georgia River Network, Julie worked for Refugee Family Services in Atlanta where she managed volunteers and assisted with fundraising and general outreach. Julie volunteers her time leading a Girl Scout Troup made up primarily of girls from refugee and immigrant families. She also enjoys hiking and biking.



# GRN Recognizes River Celebration Award Winners

**O**n Friday, Feb 20, 2009, the winners of the fifth annual Georgia River Network River Celebration Awards were recognized. The awards ceremony took place in conjunction with the 2009 Georgia River Network Annual Conference, which was held February 20-21.

The awards recognize the successes and dedicated efforts of river advocates in Georgia.

Honorees received a scholarship to attend the conference, a certificate of commendation along with artwork by photographer Joe Cook, acknowledgement on Georgia River Network's web page and newsletter, and a 1-year complimentary membership.

April Ingle, Georgia River Network Executive Director, said, "It's great to acknowledge the efforts of citizens and organizations who work tirelessly to protect the rivers they love. It's so nice to be able to give these folks a pat on the back and say 'thank you!' to them."

## Watershed Group of the Year

The **Chattooga Conservancy** was founded in 1991 by a small group of activists and was one of the first watershed protection groups in the eastern United States. Their initial work was instrumental in causing a major reduction in intensive timber harvesting and road-building on national forest lands in the watershed. Throughout their history and today, they can be credited with major accomplishments and actions that effectively serve to protect the Chattooga River.

## Volunteers of the Year

Thanks to the leadership of Mark Woodall, Paul Deloach and Jim Butler, the Flint Riverkeeper was officially formed and licensed by the national Waterkeeper Alliance to protect and preserve the Flint. Together, they organized local communities to create an organization to protect the Flint against current threats brought about by the drought and proposals to dam the river. Mark Woodall is a lobbyist for the Sierra Club and lives in Woodland, GA, where he has a tree farm. Paul Deloach of

Andersonville is a Business Development Manager for Pellicano Construction and a famous cave diver. Jim Butler is a lawyer with the firm Butler, Wooten & Fryhofer, LLP, in Columbus.

## River Conservationist of the Year

**Neill Herring** has been lobbying in the Georgia General Assembly since the 1980's and is a lobbyist for Sierra Club and Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper. With his vast knowledge of environmental issues and experience working with legislators, Neill is a tremendous resource for the environmental community. His dedication, insights and tenacity have helped to protect our rivers countless times.



Neill Herring (center) with James Holland, the Altamaha Riverkeeper and his daughter Helena at the Altamaha Riverkeeper annual meeting at Ways Landing on the Ocmulgee



Mark Woodall speaks with President Jimmy Carter at Paddle Georgia 2008 in Montezuma.



Jim Butler at Spring Creek in Early County



Paul Deloach speaking at Paddle Georgia 2008 in Montezuma



Nicole Hayler, Buzz Williams, & Melinda Fischer of The Chattooga Conservancy

# 09 Legislative Session: Wins and Losses for Water

**T**hroughout the 2009 legislative session, Georgia River Network worked with our partners in the Georgia Water Coalition (GWC) to ensure plentiful, clean water. We were able to secure the passage of 1 of our 3 priority bills – and one other is primed for passage next session. We were also able to help secure the defeat of 4 out of 5 rollbacks to environmental protections.

## **GWC Legislative Priorities:**

**Well Water Protection Win!** HB 552 places a 5-year moratorium on pumping chemically treated sewage and river water into our groundwater. This practice can contaminate vital drinking water sources. The GWC aired television commercials in Middle Georgia informing citizens about proposals to pump chemically treated sewage and river water into our groundwater.

**Water Efficiency through Sub-Metering of Multi-Family Housing Ready for Passage Next Year.** HB 158, sponsored by Reps. Judy Manning and John Meadows will require new multi-family residential buildings to install meters on each unit to measure and charge for water. Currently most people

who live in multi-family housing (apartments, condos, town homes) don't receive a water bill, their landlords do, so they don't know how much they use and don't pay directly for what they use.

**Water Efficiency through Drought-Tolerant Landscaping Loses.** HB 262, sponsored by Reps. Calvin Hill and Tom McCall would have allowed homeowners to plant drought-tolerant landscaping (also called xeriscaping). Some homeowners' associations have covenants that prevent homeowners from planting drought-tolerant landscaping. A weakened version of HB 262 passed the House but died in the Senate Natural Resources Committee.

**Rollbacks We Opposed: Damaging Special Interest Reservoir Stopped.** HB 406 would have undermined existing intergovernmental service agreements, discouraging water utilities from investing in existing water systems and would have had statewide impacts on the revenue bond market. This bill would have made it more difficult to finance infrastructure projects, creating problems statewide. HB 406 failed to get the majority vote

needed to pass the Senate.

**Bill to Eliminate Judges' Ability to Neutrally Interpret Environmental Laws Fails.** SB 229, sponsored by Senators Tolleson, Williams, and Johnson, would have fundamentally changed the administrative appeals process for all environmental appeals in Georgia by taking away the ability of a judge to act as a neutral interpreter of the law. SB 229 was defeated when it failed to get the majority vote needed by the Senate.

**Stream Buffer Destruction Bill Passes.** SB 155, sponsored by Senators Pearson, Tolleson, Williams, Rogers, and Chance, exempts what they are defining as "ephemeral streams" from having state mandated buffers, creating uncertainty and confusion around which streams require buffers. This bill was unnecessary because property owners are already protected under existing Georgia law and Department of Natural Resources rules, which allow for variances from buffer requirements for all waters.

## **Become a River Partner**

Our River Partners join together to make regular monthly contributions to support Georgia River Network's programs. With regular monthly support we can invest more of our resources where they bring the highest returns for future generations.

**Can you commit to sustainable support of our work?** Contact [jan@garivers.org](mailto:jan@garivers.org) for more information or start your monthly gift today by visiting [www.garivers.org](http://www.garivers.org) and clicking on **DONATE NOW.**

### **As a River Partner...**

- You strengthen Georgia River Network with your steady, reliable support.
- You and GRN use less paper.
- You decide how much to give.
- You save time and trouble—no need to write checks.
- You receive special updates on our work.
- You have direct contact with GRN staff.
- You decide when to raise, lower or stop your gifts.

**Thank you for considering this unique opportunity to step up to a critical leadership role in supporting Georgia River Network's efforts to protect and restore Georgia's rivers.**

## Join us in Going GREEN!

Printing quarterly newsletters consumes paper and time. We can be more efficient in delivering our programs through relying on email, our website, and social networking tools. You can help by making the switch too.

You have in your hands the last mass produced, printed copy of Confluence. **We plan to post future issues of Confluence on our website** for your reference and will let you know when a new issue is available. **NEVER FEAR - IF YOU STILL WANT A PAPER COPY, LET US KNOW** by emailing [info@garivers.org](mailto:info@garivers.org) or calling 706-549-4508.

GRN will provide you with more options to reduce the mail in your box. Watch the mail - paper and electronic - for more details.

## GRN Annual Conference Empowers River Advocates from Across GA to Maximize Impact, Protect Rivers

Over 120 river advocates from all over Georgia gathered in Athens in February for the Georgia River Network Annual Conference. Georgia River Network hosts the conference annually as a way to empower citizen river advocates to protect and restore their rivers. This year's conference offered a variety of opportunities for river advocates to gain new skills, information, tools and resources, as well as a great opportunity to network and socialize.

The conference kicked off Friday morning with two workshops. One focused on communicating for impact and the other trained citizens on how to monitor construction sites for erosion violations. Saturday was filled with presentations aimed at helping advocates protect and restore their rivers. Ben Emanuel, with the Georgia River Survey, gave the weekend's first keynote address on Saturday morning, giving an update on the issues facing the Oconee River, the host river basin. Mary Ann Dickinson of the Alliance for Water Efficiency talked

about the connection between water efficiency and climate change. Afternoon keynote speakers Neill Herring, Sierra Club Lobbyist, and Shana Udvardy of the Georgia Conservancy discussed current policy and legislative issues, followed by Ezra Milchman of River Network presenting on fundraising secrets for grassroots movements.

On Saturday there were three tracks, each providing information, tools and resources for attendees with varying interests. The first, entitled "Water Efficiency: the Solution to Georgia's Water Supply Problems" featured presentations on retrofitting, water pricing strategies, and success stories from water utilities. The second track, entitled "Success Stories for Georgia's Watersheds," provided participants with information on fundraising practices, buffer protection and how watershed groups can influence the water crisis. The third track - "Watershed Protection and You" chaired by Georgia Adopt-A-

Stream, featured presentations on invasive species, collecting regulatory level water quality data and the 303(d) listing process for impaired streams.

The conference also featured a Friday night party with a live and silent auction fundraiser benefitting Georgia River Network and music by the Georgia Mudcats. Georgia River Network also hosted, as part of the party, the fifth annual River Celebration Awards Ceremony.

Conference sponsors included Stack & Associates, Stormwater Systems, Inc., REM, Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, Environmental Site Management, The Georgia Conservancy, Georgia Conservation Voters, American Rivers, Broad River Watershed Association, Coosa River Basin Initiative, The Wilderness Society, UGA Fish Action Response Team, Upper Oconee Watershed Network, Satilla Riverkeeper and Ogeechee Canoochee Riverkeeper. Our conference partner is Adopt-A-Stream.



Workshop leader, Erik Eckl, teaches participants how to use "Water Words That Work."



Ezra Milchman and Diana Toledo of the national River Network enjoy the conference



Bud Queen, Towaliga river group, and Dorinda Dallmeyer, GRN Board, catch up

# Georgia River Heroes: Dr. Mary Freeman

**T**his is the first of a series of articles highlighting our River Heroes. None of them fly through the air, have x-ray vision or leap tall buildings with a single bound. However, each of them paddle our rivers, provide new insights into their beauty and their challenges, and fight for their protection.

Although she would not be inclined to claim the title, Dr. Mary Freeman – Research Ecologist for the USGS Pawtuxet Wildlife Research Center and Institute of Ecology, UGA, is our first Georgia River Hero. Not only has she recently published the discovery of a new fish species, the Halloween darter, she is constantly in the middle of the most important issues facing our rivers. Dr. Freeman provides research data for stakeholders involved in river management. Closer to our heart, she has been a constant supporter and adviser for Georgia River Network, as well as a naturalist on Paddle Georgia.

Mary is part of a dynamic duo. Mary along with Dr. Bud Freeman, co-discovered the Halloween darter. Bud is the Director of the Georgia Museum of Natural History, as well as a member of the UGA water resources and conservation ecology faculty. Mary and Bud noticed that some darter fish, in contrast to the Blackbanded darter, had a striking orange color in its fins. The researchers had identified a new species, the Halloween darter or *Percina crypta*. The fish is common to only a few areas of the Chattahoochee and Flint River systems because it requires habitats with swift water currents over rocky areas, or shoals. According to Mary, there are far fewer shoals today because of the rise of dams on rivers and streams, as well as the removal of shoals to improve rivers for navigation.

Their discovery and on-going research has definite implications for conservation strategies. "Keeping track of the status of the Halloween darter, along with other species that require shoal habitats in the Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers, will provide information on how shoals as ecological systems are

responding to changes in land use, water management and climate," said Mary.

On other fronts, Mary has served (or serves) on committees ranging from regional and statewide initiatives, like the Etowah Habitat Conservation Plan Steering Committee and Target Flow Committee for the Georgia Statewide Water Plan, to national efforts like the National Fish Habitat Science & Monitoring Steering Committee.

Wherever she goes, she helps answer vital questions about our rivers, water supply and river flows. In Athens, she studies the different methods of supplying water and the consequences of on our waterways and the fishes. In the Coosa River Basin, she studies how the counties surrounding the Etowah can combine efforts in the midst of fast-paced development to provide sufficient clean water, manage storm water and avoid pushing species to extinction. In the Upper Flint River Basin, given all the other users, she studies the water availability for a healthy ecosystem.

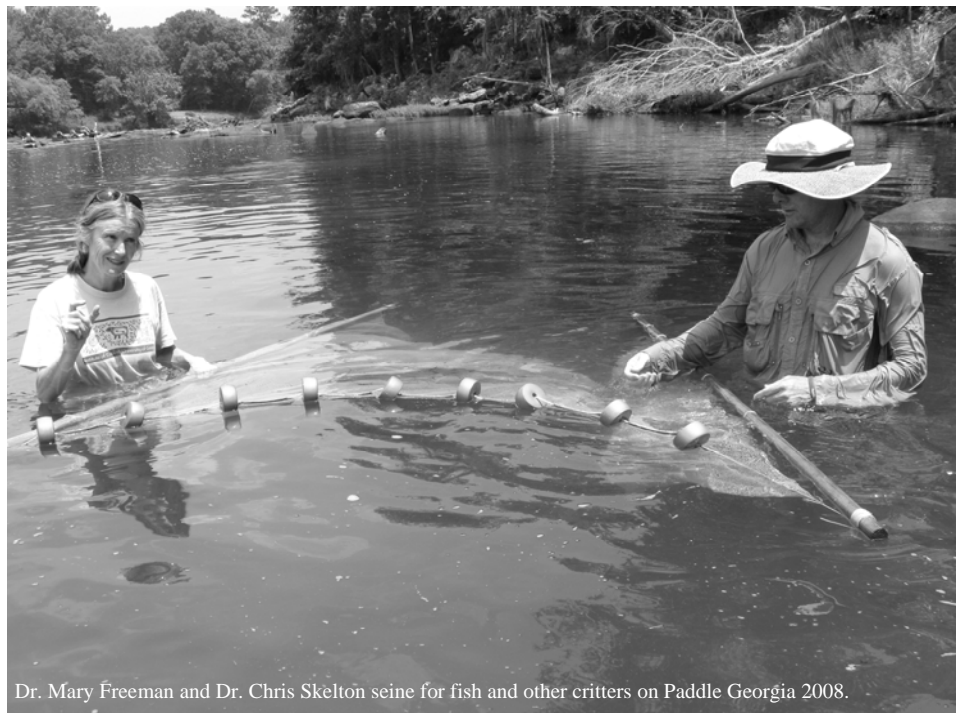
It's not just about supplying the data and applying the science of ecology. Mary has to supply the data, tell the

story for the river and be part of the solution as she is both USGS and citizen scientist.

She is most proud of a successful effort on the Tallapoosa River in Alabama, where an agreement was reached during relicensing to adopt a dam management framework that protects downstream habitat while ensuring sufficient power generation. Mary's data told the river's story and established the need for critical changes.

On Paddle Georgia, Mary becomes the naturalist, teaching participants about the ways of the river through engaging paddlers in hands-on activities that provide a close-up view of fish, mussels, and crayfish. Whatever was hidden under the water is revealed and paints a picture of an eco-system that paddlers may have never known. Paddle GA participants leave the river with a deeper understanding and appreciation of the river's inhabitants.

We know that comic book heroes have amazing super powers. No doubt, Mary's efforts to protect our rivers and her commitment to Georgia River Network ensure her hero status with us.



Dr. Mary Freeman and Dr. Chris Skelton seine for fish and other critters on Paddle Georgia 2008.

# Join Georgia River Network

## Type of Membership:

- \$1,000 River Patron     \$500 River Guardian     \$250 River Supporter     \$100 River Friend     \$50 River Watcher  
 \$40 Family Membership     \$25 Individual River Enthusiast     \$20 E-Membership     \$15 Student/Limited Income

Additional Tax Deductible Contribution: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total Amount Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Check #: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mr.  Mrs.  Ms.  Dr.  First and Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax #: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

*We occasionally have the opportunity for our members to receive information from other conservation organizations.*

*Check here if you do not want us to share your name and address with other organizations.*

**Mail To: Georgia River Network, 126 S. Milledge Ave, Ste. E3, Athens, GA, 30605**

*GRN is classified by the IRS as a 501(c)3 organization. Contributions are tax deductible.*

Confluence 5/09

## Paddle Georgia 09 on the Coosawattee & Oostanaula Rivers

Paddle Georgia 2009 will be held on the Coosawattee and Oostanaula rivers from Ellijay to Rome June 20-26. Prepare yourself for the Coosawattee, Carters Lake and the Oostanaula--part of the most biologically diverse river basin in North America. This is the area that once inspired James Dickey's novel *Deliverance*.

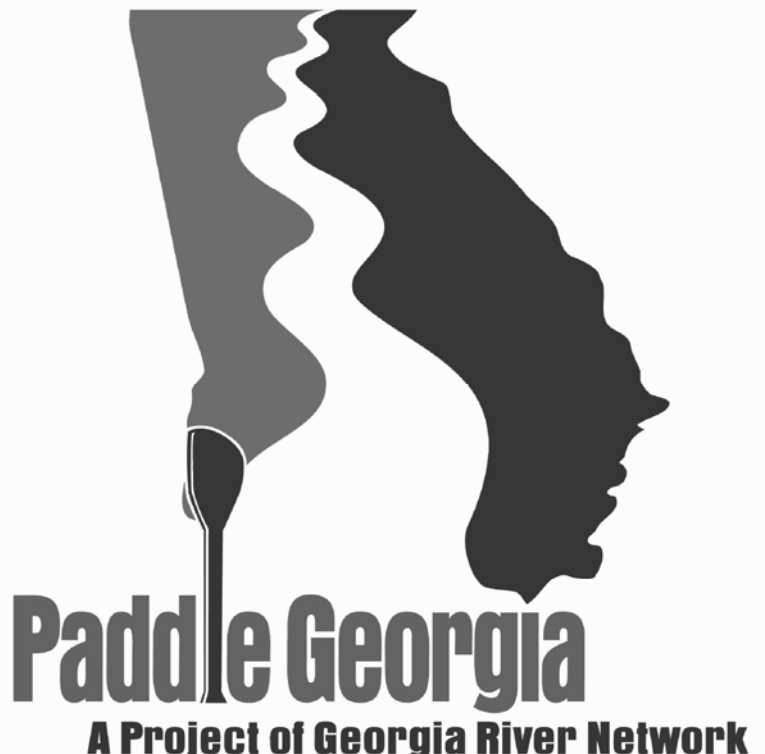
Today, it inspires biologists with its incredible diversity of fish, snails, crayfish and mussels. Keep your ears peeled for banjo music and your eyes peeled for mussel shells. It's going to be a great trip! Off river, you'll have the opportunity to learn more through water monitoring, visits to historic sites and area attractions and tours of industrial facilities. Nightly activities at campsites will include entertainment, games and programs highlighting the river's cultural and natural heritage. An educational adventure for the whole family, Paddle Georgia will show you Georgia as you've never seen it before.

- Day 1 13.1 miles Ellijay to Ridgeway Ramp/Carters Lake
- Day 2 5-6 miles Carters Lake Paddle
- Day 3 13 miles Carters Rereg Dam to Farm Boat Ramp
- Day 4 12 miles Farm Boat Ramp to GA 225
- Day 5 16.9 miles Ga. 225 to Ga. 156
- Day 6 17.6 miles Ga. 156 to Ga. 140
- Day 7 14.5 miles Ga. 140 to Downtown Rome

**Register Now! Only a few spaces remain!**

[www.garivers.org](http://www.garivers.org)

or by calling 706/549-4508



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Starting Next Issue, this  
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Send us your e-mail or call if you  
still want to receive a paper copy

## Upcoming Events

### May, 2009

GRN is Earth Fare-Athens Friend of the Month—Visit all month to support GRN

### June 6, 2009

**Altamaha Riverkeeper 10 Year Anniversary Party**

[www.altamahariverkeeper.org](http://www.altamahariverkeeper.org)

### June 20, 2009

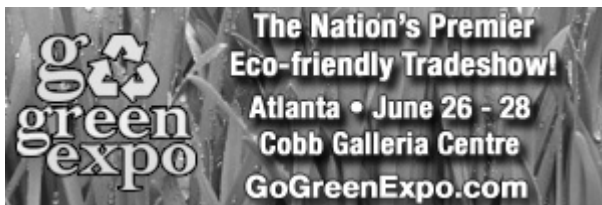
**Ogeechee Canoochee Riverkeeper - Ogeechee Summer Paddle**

[www.ogeecheecanoocheeriverkeeper.org](http://www.ogeecheecanoocheeriverkeeper.org)

### June 20-26, 2009

**Paddle Georgia on the Coosawattee and Oostanaula Rivers**

See inside for details or visit [www.garivers.org](http://www.garivers.org)



### October, 2009

**Rivers Alive Clean Up Month**—[www.riversalive.org](http://www.riversalive.org)

### October 8, 2009

**Rivers Rock Event to benefit Ogeechee Canoochee Riverkeeper and Satilla Riverkeeper**

<http://www.riversrock.org>