



Erosion, Sedimentation, and Stormwater... *...Making Georgia Streams Run Red!*

*With 139 organizations and growing, the Georgia Water Coalition is united by one common goal: To protect and care for our waters – an essential ingredient for strong property values, clean water for drinking, recreation, fish and wildlife, and Georgia’s continued prosperity. **The Georgia Water Coalition Identifies Erosion, Sedimentation, and Stormwater As One of its Three Urgent Issues.***

FACTS

- Georgia is the largest state east of the Mississippi, with over 70,000 miles of streams and rivers, over 400,000 acres of lakes, and more than 100 miles of coastline.
- The southeast ranks highest for aquatic freshwater diversity in the nation, with 269 fish species, 100 mussel species, and 70 species of crayfish.
- Currently Georgia has more than 800 streams, rivers, and lakes with impaired water quality. This figure represents 58% of those water bodies that have been assessed but, overall, only 20% of Georgia’s waters have been tested, so the actual number of impaired water bodies is likely much higher.
- The majority of impaired waters are impaired because of non-point source pollution or stormwater runoff. Sediment carried by stormwater runoff from construction sites is the leading cause of non-point source pollution to streams and rivers throughout the state.
- Sedimentation clogs the spaces between rocks and gravel, buries fish eggs, and prevents flowing water and oxygen from reaching the eggs and newly hatched fish. Sedimentation also increases the cost of treating water to make it safe for us to drink and can reduce property values of downstream property owners.



Photo courtesy of the Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper.



Photo courtesy of the Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper.

- Currently, Georgia has mandated 50-foot buffers on trout streams and 25-foot buffers statewide. Scientists have conclusively documented that buffer areas with trees and plants bordering streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands and marshes are effective, natural filters. Georgia needs larger buffers to remove pollutants and other contaminants. Where the goal is to protect fish and wildlife in the water, these buffers must be closer to 100 ft. wide to be effective.

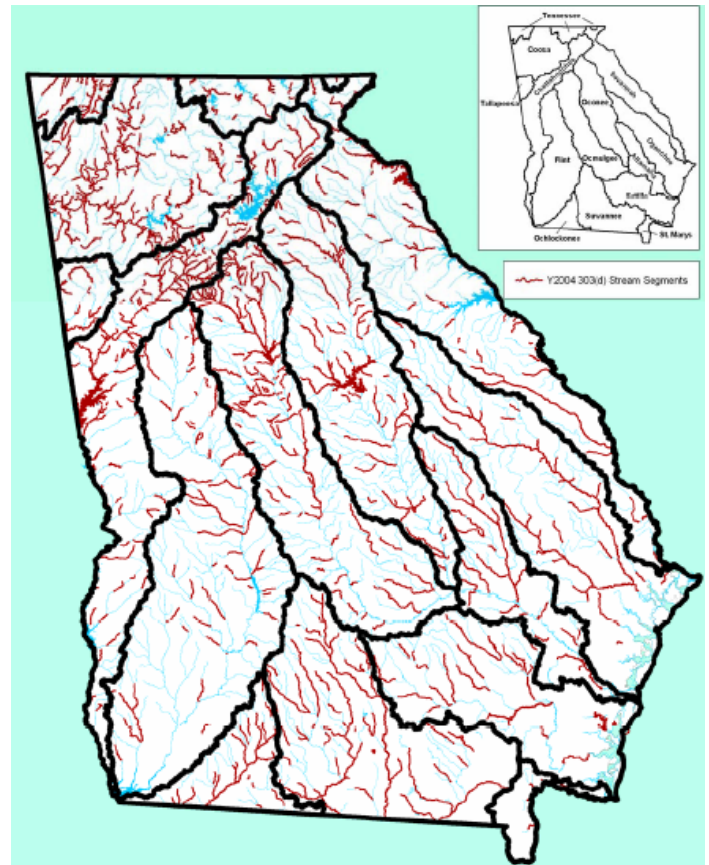
Enough Clean Water - Now and Into The Future

Erosion, Sedimentation and Stormwater...

Georgia is experiencing a population boom that is putting a strain on our once-abundant supply of clean water. Intensifying the strain are irresponsible developers and other powerful insiders trying to make a quick buck at the expense of our quality of life. Irresponsible developers are degrading, destroying and piping our waterways with cut and run development that does not adequately protect our water or our riverbank trees and plants. These insiders are violating land development requirements and, in some cases, are actively working to weaken and dismantle the laws that require stream buffers and protect water quality.

When dirt and stormwater from development spill into our streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, and marshes, our clean water is at serious risk, which can lower our property values and require higher taxes and fees to clean it up. If we don't carefully manage and protect our water, we risk losing this precious resource, and with it, the Georgia way of life we treasure.

This issue of stormwater and erosion is on the minds of Georgians from one end of the state to the other; that was made quite plain at the 2006 General Assembly when a bill that would have reduced buffer protections upstream of drinking water supplies was overwhelmingly defeated in the House.



Impaired waters on Georgia's 2004 305(b)/303(d) list. Figure courtesy of the Georgia Environmental Protection Division.

...Enforce Laws and Prevent Policy Rollbacks



Photo courtesy of the Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper.

We need to establish and enforce appropriate stream buffer laws in Georgia that will protect water quality, wildlife and plants in streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands and marshes. Local and state officials must be held accountable for making responsible decisions and resisting irresponsible developers who would sacrifice our water resources for their private gain.

Enforcing laws and preventing policy rollbacks that protect our streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands and marshes from runoff will benefit us all.

Protecting Georgia's waters — from the beautiful mountain streams and coastal marshes to the rushing rivers and healthy lakes — will provide our children with a bright and prosperous future.

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