

Canton Contra

June 26

Distance: 13 miles

Starting Elevation/Coordinates: 900 feet/N34 17.944 W84 23.798

Ending Elevation/Coordinates: 860 feet/864 feet/N34 14.414 W84 29.653

Obstacles/Rapids:

Mile 10—Strainer—At a sharp bend in the river to the right, a sandbar and large tree block the river's course. Inexperienced paddlers may wish to get out on the sandbar and simply line your boat along the edge of the sandbar. The river's volume is narrowed to a small course between the sandbar and the right bank. From the right bank two trees extend toward the sandbar creating strainers. If you choose to run this, paddle across the current into the eddy adjacent to the sandbar. This will keep you from being pushed into the second tree below the first tree. Careful here! This one's tricky.

Mile 13—Shoal at Canton Water Intake—a rock dam here blocks the river's path at low water levels. The best route is on river left adjacent to the intake facility.

Restroom Facilities:

Due to the lack of suitable access points, there are no pit stops on this route. If nature calls, use a camp trowel and cover all human waste appropriately or carry a sealable plastic bag to take your waste with you.

Mile 0 Goldkist Rendering Plant

Mile 13 Heritage Park in Canton

Points of Interest:

Mile 3, 4.5, 7, 8.5 and 11—Fish Weirs—You'll find no less than five fish weirs on this section of river. During low water they make excellent play places. While you're wading about on them, contemplate what river structures we will leave behind that will be marveled at by explorers of this river 1000 years from today. Will it be the remains of Allatoona Dam, our bridges, our water intake facilities? Fish weirs are a reminder that long after our civilization is gone, this ancient river will continue to flow.

Mile 1--Blankenship Sand Company—Your first encounter with the self proclaimed "cleaners of the Etowah." The Blankenship Sand Company dredges sand and silt from the river bottom here and downstream on the upper end of Lake Allatoona. The barge you see sucks sand and water from the river and pumps it on to the shore where it is separated for our use and enjoyment. The sand is used to make cement and finds its way into construction projects throughout the region—the average house has 70 tons of sand in it. The sand is also utilized on ball fields and in parks—most notably, Etowah River sand has been used by the grounds crew at Turner Field which spreads the light brown crystals on the Braves infield. Workers at the operation often pull unusual items from the river bottom including dentures, wallets and other unmentionables. As you pass by, give a thank you to the Blankenships. Milton Blankenship owns the property at Gober Beach which we used as our launch site today.

Mile 11.5—Hickory Log Creek and Dam—You'll see this creek entering the Etowah at the I-575 bridge over the Etowah. What's interesting is what's taking place upstream. The City of Canton and the Cobb County-Marietta Water Authority (CCMWA) began construction last year on a 950-foot wide, 180-foot high dam on this creek for the purposes of assuring drinking water supplies during drought periods. By storing water at this reservoir, the builders intend to supplement flows on the Etowah during drought, thus assuring a dependable water supply. The dam will even come with a pipeline to transport water between the reservoir and the Etowah. It will be the largest dam in Georgia not built by the Corps of Engineers or Georgia Power, will store 5 billion gallons of water, and will cost as much as \$40 million to build.

With this project in place, Canton and CCMWA ultimately intend to withdraw 44 million gallons a day from the Etowah—enough water to meet Canton's projected demands through 2050.

The dam raises the contentious debate between meeting the water needs of Metro Atlanta's growing population and protecting natural river systems. Dams have significant negative impacts. Georgia has only one natural lake, thus our state's aquatic species are adapted to flowing water systems. Many species cannot survive in lake habitats. Furthermore, dams block the movement of migratory species and alter habitat below dams such that many species cannot survive. It should also be noted that reservoirs increase water loss through evaporation, resulting in a net loss of water from the river system. Finally, dams are expensive to build. Couple the expense of reservoirs with the environmental damage they wreak, and opting for aggressive water conservation measures makes more and more sense.

Unfortunately, the lead water planning agency for Metro Atlanta earlier this year abandoned plans to force owners of older homes to replace water wasting plumbing with water efficient fixtures. This plan would have saved 71 million gallons a day in Metro Atlanta by 2030. The "District," as the water planning agency is known, has set a very modest goal of reducing water use by 11 percent by 2030. Other communities have reduced water use by as much as 25 percent. Meanwhile, the District water supply plan calls for the construction of at least five new reservoirs in the 16-county Metro area.

Mile 12.5—Storm Drain—Though the Paddle Georgia course does not go through any major cities, it does flow through the heart of two mid-sized towns—Canton and Rome. In both you'll see storm drain structures like the one on river right here. This massive storm drain carries water from Canton's fast-growing commercial area—complete with oil residues and heavy metals from the acres of roads and parking lots. If you ever wondered how all the drink bottles and other debris make it into the river, you need look no further than here. If it hits the pavement in the Big Box parking lot, you can bet the wind and rain will carry it to this paddling course.

Mile 13—Canton Cotton Mill—A bit of Canton's history stands near the Etowah here. Built in 1924, the massive brick Canton Cotton Mill No. 2 once employed 550 people and processed up to 30,000 bales of cotton each year. Canton is, first and foremost, a mill town with many of the historic mill house neighborhoods still in tact. In the 1930s, fully a third of the town's population was employed in the textile industry. This mill operated until 1981, and in 2000, it was transformed into loft apartments. Today no textile industry exists in Canton.

Mile 13—Canton—The City Of Canton was first incorporated under the name of Etowah in 1833, but the following year, the Georgia legislature approved the name "Canton" because some founders of the town had tried to establish a silk industry as found in Canton, China. Though the silk industry never developed, the town did ultimately develop a textile industry in its cotton mills. Cherokee County was once among Georgia's top producers of cotton per acre, and Canton Textile Mills, located on the banks of the Etowah was one of the largest denim manufacturers in the South.

Today, Canton is largely a growing bedroom community. Cherokee County as a whole ranks among the top 35 fastest growing counties in the nation. Between 2004 and 2005, more than 9,000 new residents moved into the county, pushing the county's total population to 185,000. A drive through the county on Ga. 20 will show you where all these new residents are moving, and a paddle down the Etowah will show you the impacts of their arrival. If it rains, expect a river the color of the Piedmont's red clay as dirt from the massive land clearing projects for residential and commercial developments washes off these sites. Does it impact aquatic species—including the protected darters? You bet. The dirt clogs up their gills, makes it difficult for them to find food and decreases their reproductive success. Want to know how it feels to be a darter looking for love in a muddy stream? Try throwing a bucket of mud in your bed!

Mile 13—Heritage Park—Dedicated in 2004, this new 30-acre city park will be our campsite for the evening. It is the first phase of the city's Etowah Greenway program and sits adjacent to the recently completed \$8 million YMCA and community center.