

# Georgia River Network

# 2003 Annual Report

Georgia River Network is the only statewide environmental non-profit organization solely dedicated to the conservation of Georgia's waters.

We envision rivers that we can use for drinking, swimming, fishing, and boating; rivers that add beauty and value to our communities, and meet the needs of the ecosystems they support.

Our vision for the future of Georgia's rivers is dependent on an active, effective, citizen-led watershed group in every watershed in Georgia.

Our strategy is to **ENGAGE, EMPOWER, and ADVOCATE**. If citizens want to protect and improve their river, they often need assistance to know how to do it. Georgia River Network gives citizens the tools they need to make a difference in their watersheds. We help citizens:

- Organize to protect and restore their rivers,
- Build their capacity to protect and restore their rivers, and
- Keep them abreast of policy issues that may impact their rivers, and serve as a voice for concerns that transcend watersheds.

## 2003 Accomplishments

### Engage

#### Carried out the 2003 Georgia Watershed Education Campaign

- **Georgia River Quilt Project**  
The Georgia River Quilt Project is an innovative effort to reach out to the public through the art of quilting. As part of the project, we held a quilt contest for river themed quilts. The quilts were then displayed at locations across the state throughout the summer and fall of the year. A grant from the National Quilting Association helped make this project possible. Over \$6,000 in prizes for the contest were donated.
- **Religious Community Outreach Program**  
Our 2002 fall intern, Derry O'Kane, took the lead in developing a Religious Outreach Toolkit. This web-based toolkit provides scripture references for possible sermon development about stewardship of our waters as a religious value. With information and references for the five major world religions, watershed groups can use the toolkit to reach out to religious communities.
- **Public Radio Series**  
In cooperation with WUGA and Georgia Public Radio, we assisted with the production of two radio documentaries on Georgia's rivers.
- **Fact Sheets on Each Basin**  
GRN developed a fact sheet on each of Georgia's 14 river basins and posted them on our website.

- **A Citizen's Guide to Georgia's Rivers**

Georgia River Network is collaborating with the the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Adopt-A-Stream Program, Department of Community Affairs Keep Georgia Beautiful Program, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Pollution Prevention Assistance Division, & Georgia Cooperative Extension Service to create a publication featuring Georgia's rivers.

**Developed our 2004 Georgia Watershed Education Campaign**

- 2004's campaign will focus on providing information about watershed efforts to targeted groups of citizens who already demonstrate care and concern for Georgia's rivers, and encouraging them to form local watershed groups.

## **Empower**

**Coordinated and organized 2004 annual Georgia River Network Conference**

- Three informative tracks:
  - Organizational Development-Featuring presentations from River Network's fundraising, communications, and organizational development staff
  - River Basics-Featuring presentations on river systems and threats to rivers
  - Protection Tools-Featuring presentations on tools to protect and restore rivers
- A Saturday night party featuring a live auction, River Jam, food and drinks
- Networking opportunities
- Exhibits

**Produced and distributed three issues of our quarterly newsletter "Confluence"**

- Provided members with information on successful advocacy, spotlights on Georgia watershed groups, policy/issues updates, and spotlights on GRN services

**Updated and maintained the Georgia River Network website**

- Provided a comprehensive online directory of Georgia watershed groups, resources and tools for organizational development, resources and tools for watershed protection, a listing of trainings available through Georgia River Network, information on Georgia's water resources, listing of funding opportunities for watershed groups, event listings, information on endangered species, fish consumption advisories, news about Georgia's rivers, Georgia River Network's newsletters, Georgia River Network organizational information, and an online bookstore.

**Produced and distributed our monthly e-newsletter "News Stream"**

- Provided watershed advocates with information on fundraising, board development, social marketing, outreach, successful advocacy, policy/issues updates, and spotlights on GRN services.

**Directly assisted over 18 watershed groups**

- Provided educational tools to build awareness of water resources and the threats to those resources.
- Provided tools, information and resources to build capacity to identify problems and implement solutions that will work in their watershed.
- Provided information and resources to build understanding of local, state and federal policies that impact their watersheds, so they can ADVOCATE for policy that makes sense in their watershed.

## **Advocate**

### **Actively participated in the Georgia Water Coalition**

- The Georgia Water Coalition is an alliance of 77 organizations working to ensure that the waters of the state continue to belong to the people of the state, and that water is managed fairly for all Georgians, with the interest of all citizens, existing businesses and farms in mind.
- Recruited watershed groups to participate in Georgia Water Coalition activities
- Assisted in organizing an event in Athens to recognize area legislators and build awareness of the issues
- Worked to get 5 resolutions supporting a fair state-wide water management plan and opposing water permit trading passed: Roswell, Athens-Clarke County, Oconee County, City of Winder, and City of Commerce

### **Tussahaw Reservoir case**

- Represented jointly by the Southern Environmental Law Center and the Turner Environmental Law Clinic at Emory Law School, we, along with Altamaha Riverkeeper, filed a citizen lawsuit against the Army Corps of Engineers challenging the permit for the planned Tussahaw Creek reservoir. In response, the Corps reevaluated its Environmental Assessment (EA) of the project and agreed that it had not sufficiently addressed the cumulative impacts of the multiple reservoirs and other disturbances in the upper Ocmulgee and the entire Altamaha basin. The Corps suspended the permit and committed to perform a comprehensive assessment of those impacts. Although the judge presiding over the case ultimately ruled against us on the need for an EIS, we believe the lawsuit served as a significant catalyst to the Corps' decision to undertake a comprehensive study of the Altamaha basin.

### **Submitted comment letters on a number of policy issues**

## **Build Our Own Capacity**

### **Board recruitment**

- Georgia River Network increased its board membership to 10 members:
  - Mr. Stuart Clarke-Grants Maker
  - Mr. Rob Cowan-Attorney, Cowan Law Firm
  - Dr. Gail Cowie-Public Service Associate, Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia
  - Mr. Justin Ellis-Executive Director, Soque River Watershed Association
  - Ms. Jeanne Epstein-GIS Specialist, Institute of Ecology, University of Georgia
  - Mr. Kent Igleheart-City Councilman, Roswell, Georgia; President, Clean Earth Action; Executive Director, Scenic Georgia
  - Ms. Alice Miller Keyes-Senior Policy Analyst for Water Issues, Georgia Conservancy
  - Dr. Theresa (Terry) Perenich-Emeritus Professor, Department of Textiles, Merchandising and Interiors, College of Family and Consumer Sciences, University of Georgia
  - Dr. Brenda Rashleigh-Aquatic Ecologist, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Research and Development
  - Mr. Kes Roberts-Environmental Attorney

### **Developed 2004 annual plan of work**

- The 2004 plan of work is focused on achieving the objectives and goals laid out in the Georgia River Network 5-Year Strategic Plan, and conducting the 2004 Watershed Education Campaign.

### **Developed 2004 budget and fundraising plan**

- The 2004 budget and fundraising plan are focused on managing and acquiring the needed resources to carry out the 2004 annual plan of work and prepare for work in the upcoming years.

### **2003 Fundraising Activities**

- 2003 fundraising activities included coordinating membership renewals, the 2003 annual appeal, submitting inquiry letters to foundations, making foundation visits, submitting foundation proposals, and hosting our five-year anniversary fundraiser at the Five and Ten restaurant in Athens.

## **Restore**

### **Robust Redhorse Restoration**

- We worked closely with the Robust Redhorse Conservation Committee, including the US Forest Service, University of Georgia, Georgia Department of Natural Resources and others, to improve and protect habitat for the Robust Redhorse. The Robust Redhorse, *moxostoma robustum*, is a sucker fish that was lost to science for over 100 years. The habitat restoration included the stabilization and vegetation of a 200 foot section of bank and a section of eroding forest service road in critical Robust Redhorse habitat on the main stem of the Ocmulgee river at the mouth of Wise Creek in the Oconee National Forest. Educational signage was created for the site.