

Dog River Trot

June 29

Distance: 16 miles

Obstacles/Rapids: None

Restroom Facilities: Mile 0 Metro Atlanta Softball Complex
Mile 16 North Georgia Turf Company

Points of Interest: **Mile 2**—Camp Creek WWTP—This dramatic outfall issues forth from Fulton County’s 13 MGD wastewater treatment facility. Good news, this marks the last wastewater treatment facility located on the Paddle Georgia route.

Mile 4—Dredge Barge at Hwy 92 Bridge—You’ll have already passed one of these operations today, and before the day is done, you’ll pass at least three more—more than on any other day of Paddle Georgia. These dinosaur-looking boats suck sand and gravel off the river bottom which finds its way into cement and other building materials. The river does run muddy, but along with that mud comes plenty of sand. These operations often suck strange things off the river bottom (wallets, dentures and other unmentionables that should only be shared in appropriate company)

Mile 13--Dog River Reservoir—This 200-acre reservoir was completed in 1992. You’ll find the dam a short distance up the river from the Chattahoochee (if the mouth of the river is passable). Douglas County built it largely in reaction to the polluted Chattahoochee (officials didn’t want to use the Chattahoochee as a water source). The county has attempted to protect the watershed by imposing strict development regulations within the river’s drainage basin such as 3-acre minimum lot sizes for residential development, limitations on impervious surfaces at commercial properties and a ban on industrial zoning.

Mile 15--Foxhall Farms—This sprawling equestrian farm located on the Douglas County side of the river upstream from Capps Ferry Road hosts the Foxhall Cup Spring Championship each April. The \$100,000 purse, three-day event includes dressage, cross country and show jumping. This high-end event is a testament to the fact that the Chattahoochee south of Atlanta, though still somewhat undiscovered, holds the same mystique that it does in North Atlanta.

Mile 16--North Georgia Turf Company—Owned by the McWhorter family, the North Georgia Turf Company raises sod in the bottomlands along the river. Earlier McWhorters farmed row crops and dairy cows, but sod has proven a more profitable farm commodity. The McWhorter family started the business with 20 acres in 1985 and now farms sod on 1500 acres along the Chattahoochee and other North Georgia locations.

Narrative: From Campbellton Road downstream, the Chattahoochee begins its healing process. The river here winds through a mostly wooded landscape, and if you climb the river banks you’ll likely see farms or industrial parks either backing up to or occupying the river bottoms. An interesting side note of history to ponder as you paddle this stretch is this: What would have happened if the dreams of Atlanta’s industry boosters of the middle 20th century been fulfilled? The federal Rivers and Harbors Act of 1945 brought federal funds to the South that many business leaders in Atlanta hoped would turn the city into an inland port with barges moving from Atlanta to the Gulf of Mexico. In 1951, one Atlanta leader, convinced of the need for an inland port on the Chattahoochee, said, “Longer delay would imperil our entire commercial and industrial structure.” When three locks and dams were completed on the Lower Chattahoochee by 1963, it appeared these dreams might become reality—even though six more locks and dams would have to be constructed to link Atlanta with the Gulf. The dream didn’t fully die until the early 1970s after a 1966 report estimated the additional structures on the river would cost \$250 million. Now, Atlanta’s major transportation link to the Gulf (and the rest of the world) is Hartsfield-Jackson Airport. I get the feeling that Mayor Hartsfield wasn’t too keen on the “inland port” idea. In 1958, when the mayor of Apalachicola, Florida presented Hartsfield with a 1,000-pound anchor to publicize the inland port dream, Hartsfield reciprocated with the gift of a framed newspaper clipping of sail boating and other water recreation on Lake Lanier. The anchor, by the way, still sits in Atlanta at the city’s waterworks near the river. Thankfully, there are no barges to hitch it to, and the Chattahoochee remains a free-flowing river to Franklin where the backwaters of West Point Lake begin and Paddle Georgia ends.