

Hilly Mill Hustle— Paddle Georgia 2014

June 27—Chattahoochee River

Distance: 15 miles

Starting Elevation: 670 feet **Lat:** 33.4304°N **Lon:** -85.0123°W

Ending Elevation: 635 feet **Lat:** 33.2774°N **Lon:** -85.1011°W

Restroom Facilities:

Mile 0	Chattahoochee Bend State Park
Mile 6.6	Hilly Mill Creek
Mile 15	Riverside Park

Points of Interest:

Mile 0—Chattahoochee Bend State Park—Perhaps no other development along the river represents the revival of the Chattahoochee downstream of Atlanta better than this state park. The first tracts of what would become the park were purchased by the state in 1999, and in 2005 Coweta County agreed to fund a general development plan for the park. Finally, in 2007 with help from House Natural Resources Chairperson Rep. Lynn Smith from Newnan, \$7 million in state funds were secured to make the park a reality. It opened in 2011. Of course, the Chattahoochee is the centerpiece of the 2900 acres that also features six miles of walking, biking and equestrian trails. The Friends of Chattahoochee Bend State Park, who helped organize our street party in Newnan, assist the Department of Natural Resources with special projects at the park, including trail maintenance and regular river clean ups.

Mile 0.4—Plant Wansley—Operational since 1976, Georgia Power Company's Plant Wansley burns coal, oil and natural gas to produce 2,852 megawatts of power. The structure on river right serves as the plant's water intake, and Chattahoochee River water is essential to the energy production process. In fact, no other sector of the Georgia economy uses more water than Georgia Power. Coal, nuclear and natural gas powered generation facilities in Georgia account for about half of all water withdrawals from Georgia's rivers, lakes and streams. Any where from 1,200 to 50,000 gallons of water are needed to produce one megawatt of electricity at coal-fired power plants. Thus, when you practice energy conservation, you are also practicing water conservation.

Mile 2.9—Hollingsworth Ferry & Col. Brownlow's Escape—The hero who led naked troops in a daring crossing of the Chattahoochee at Cochran Shoals on July 7, 1864 nearly met his demise at this location on July 31, 1864. Col. Jim Brownlow was among the troops on McCook's Raid that crossed the Chattahoochee three days earlier (see Smith's Ferry & McCook's Raid on Map 5). After successfully blazing a path of destruction from the Chattahoochee to the Flint River south of Atlanta, the Union cavalry hot-footed it back west to safety beyond the Chattahoochee, only to be intercepted by Confederate cavalry and infantry and utterly destroyed at the Battle of Brown's Mill near Newnan. The splintered remnants of the Union cavalry escaped the battlefield and sprinted for the river in scattered groups. Col. Brownlow's men reached Hollingsworth Ferry in the middle of the night where they found a precipitous bank and only two small canoes to shuttle them to safety. Brownlow—one of the few swimmers in the crowd—stripped to the skin—and spent the next five hours prodding and helping his comrades cross the river. When the Confederate cavalry overtook them, only about 150 had made it to safety and more than 100 (including Brownlow) were caught between the river and the Rebels. Brownlow abandoned his horse and leaped into the river, swimming across under heavy fire. A day later he straggled into Union headquarters in Marietta wearing civilian clothes and a farmer's straw hat. He was one of only about 500—out of 3,000—to return from the calamitous raid. Upon hearing the news, Gen. Sherman telegraphed his lieutenants: "I am quite unwell." Seven years before this drama unfolded Levi Hollingsworth obtained a permit from the General Assembly to build a dam across the river at this location to power a gristmill and sawmill. Whether the dam was constructed remains unclear, but Hollingsworth did operate a brick kiln, furniture factory, woolen mill and his ferry. A family history claims that he also built a bridge across the river—one that was said to have been destroyed during the Civil War...obviously before Col. Brownlow and his men arrived. The ferry operated for more than 100 years, finally shutting down in 1978. A Department of Natural Resources boat ramp now marks the site.

Mile 6.6—Hilly Mill Falls & Alan Jackson—On river left here is the mouth of Hilly Mill Creek. A short distance up the creek on private property is Hilly Mill Falls, a beautiful cascade of about 20 feet that spills into an equally beautiful swimming hole. The Falls were the site of a grist mill in the 1800s operated by William S. Hilley. In the early days of Heard County and into the 20th century the falls were a popular community gathering spot (Paddle Georgia participant Joe Kidd grew up swimming here). The pool at the falls' base was also employed for baptisms by nearby Enon Grove Baptist Church. In more recent times, Hilly Mill inspired Newnan native and country music superstar Alan Jackson to pen "Chattahoochee," a song that was voted country music's top single in 1993. Like many generations of Coweta and Heard county residents, Jackson grew up swimming at the creek "way down yonder on the Chattahoochee." This location will also serve as our pit stop for the day. Taylor Glover, a former Chattahoochee Riverkeeper board member, owns the property with other members of his family and agreed to allow the Paddle Georgia navy to visit the site. Enjoy the falls! This is a special place.

Mile 8.4—Red Bone Creek Falls—Not as impressive as Hilly Mill, but still worth the visit. The falls on Red Bone Creek splash down about 10 feet and are visible from the river. The falls here and at Hilly Mill are more evidence of the Brevard fault.

Mile 10—Bushhead Shoals & Islands—This set of three islands totaling 20-acres is perhaps the largest island complex on the length of the river. In high water, numerous channels can be navigated, leading to Bushhead Shoals at the end of the islands. At the head of each island it is not uncommon to find mammoth flotillas of trash—today's very visible signs of metro Atlanta's impact on the river. In the 1940s, timber on these islands was harvested by a crew using axes and saws. A team of mules and horses was employed to drag the timbers to the river where they were then winched across the channel to a waiting diesel-powered sawmill. While the horses and mules stayed on the islands for the duration of the six-month operation, the work crew ferried themselves to work each day. The sawmill hands reported that there were the remains of many moonshine stills on the islands. Today, the land is fully-forested and worthy of exploration. The Nature Conservancy was instrumental in purchasing the islands as well as adjacent and nearby land on both sides of the river for protection as a state park, though no plans for the land have yet been developed. The best course through the shoals at the tail of the island is through the middle of the river. Take the far right channel around the islands and then work your way back to the center to run a chute over a small ledge. It's nearly a mile from the head of the islands to the final shoal below the islands.

Mile 12.1—Daniel Shoals—The largest natural shoal on the river between Atlanta and Lake West Point, Daniel Shoals is a long ledge that is best navigated on far river left. An island marks the beginning of the shoals and the river becomes very shallow adjacent to the island. Paddlers should move to the left of the island and hug the bank on river left. Look for the large chute that flows to the center of the river. In high water, the shoal is navigable on both sides of the island.

Mile 13.9—Centralhatchee Creek— This tributary's moniker comes from the Creek language: "Sundal" meaning "perch" and "hatchee" meaning "creek." The stream was recorded on earlier maps as Sundalhathcee. You'd hardly guess by looking at it now, but in the 1800s this tributary was of economic significance. In 1834, the Georgia General Assembly adopted a law requiring that "Central Hatchie" creek remain open for the free passage of lumber boats from Tompkins Mill downstream to its confluence with the Chattahoochee. Today, Centralhatchee remains important to the area, serving as one of Heard County's water sources.

Mile 14.8—Franklin/Chattahoochee Old Town—Our week-long journey ends where the river is said to have gotten its name. Modern-day Franklin is believed to sit on the site of the Creek Indian town of Chattahoochee. In 1799, Benjamin Hawkins, the U.S. Indian Agent for the area wrote: "The name of the river derived from 'Chatto,' a stone, and 'hoche,' marked or flowered; there being rocks of this description in the river above Hoithletigua at an old town Chattahoochee." A short walk across the river and up the riverside recreational path will take you to the Heard County Jail Museum to learn more about the region's cultural history. Or, if you want to stay in your boat and continue the journey, it's only 231.8 miles to the river's end at Jim Woodruff Dam on the Georgia-Florida state line!