



The mission of South River Watershed Alliance is to protect and restore the water quality and biodiversity of the South River watershed to the beneficial use of people and wildlife.

September 2015

In this issue

Simply AWESOME

Permit approval raises public ire

Nature note

Snapfinger Creek pollution travesty

Upcoming events

Give to South River Rainy Day Fund



South River, DeKalb County: A Gem of a River

"Education and action are the cornerstones of environmental protection".

Follow us on Twitter and keep up with what is going on with SRWA and South River between newsletters. Share this newsletter.

Simply AWESOME



In an awesome show of support, 90 canoeist and kayakers participated in the South River Hidden Gem Paddle, August 22. The 5.5 mile paddle began at Lorraine Park and ended at Oglesby Bridge Road in Rockdale County. This event was a partnership of SRWA, Georgia River Network, Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance, and Rockdale County. Photo: Jackie Echols

Permit approval raises public ire

"Unbelievable". "They should change their name from Environmental Protection Agency to Environmental Destruction Agency". "Who is protecting the environment"? These are just a few of the reactions to approval of the permit for Atlanta's combined sewer system by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). With this action, EPA has once again turned a blind-eye to the importance and struggle of urban waterways.

It would be easy to lay this environmental injustice at the doorstep of the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GA EPD). After all, this is the agency that routinely shows its disregard for Georgia's environment. But to do so, would ignore the fact that ultimately it is EPA that is responsible for enforcing the Clean Water Act.

By approving the new National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for Atlanta's combined sewer system, EPA condoned backsliding, which is prohibited under the Clean Water Act. Backsliding increases the amount of pollution that Atlanta can dump into the South River. To avoid backsliding, the new permit must be as strong as the previous permit and it is not.



Citizens protest in front of EPA in support of South River during May 29, 2015 rally.

The failure of both of these agencies to protect the environment, an obligation that is not only part of their moniker but their mission, serves to further highlight the importance of South River Watershed Alliance's (SRWA) work and your support. Their action will not deter SRWA from its mission to restore the South River, and there are three ways you can show your commitment as well.

First, contribute to SRWA. There is strength in numbers and your generous donation and membership will help to keep the organization strong and active. It will also send an even stronger message that there is wide community support for the South River.

Second, volunteer or participate in one of SRWA's river restoration projects offered throughout the year. Get a better understanding of the South River's ecosystem and wildlife by volunteering to restore rivercane habitat at Panola Mountain State Park, or consider a summer paddle for an up close and personal river experience, or lend a hand to the South River Water Trail designation effort and help to secure the river's future for generations to come.

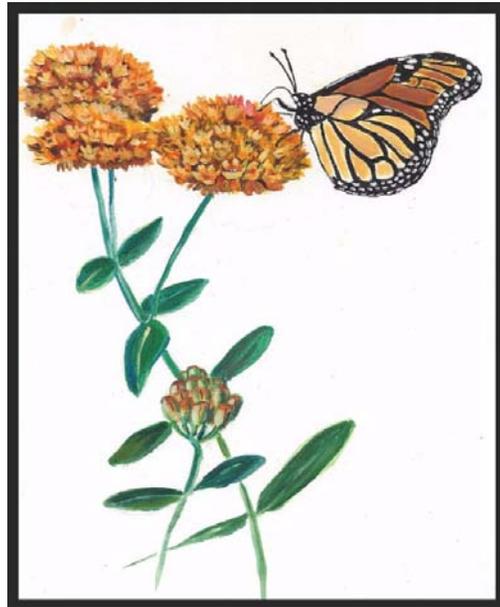
Third, as part of the Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area, there are only 49 national heritage areas in the entire United States, the South River's potential is almost limitless. Encourage your friends, neighbors, and family to visit the heritage area and make it and the South River a favorite recreational destination.

We can't make EPA and GA EPD care about the South River, but we can show them that we do!

Nature note

by Phil Delestrez

September is one of the peak times to see Monarch Butterflies in Georgia. They are following an ancient migration pattern that is still a mystery to biologists. The generations we see in the early fall in Georgia are heading to Mexico to overwinter in an area that is about 73 miles wide, with about 12 points of suitable habitat. Like birds, insects like Monarchs are thought to follow rivers during their migration routes. Look for Monarchs now near waterways like the South River, nectaring on a variety of plants and looking for Milkweed to create more generations of butterflies. These butterflies that will emerge from a chrysalis, will know instinctively to fly to Mexico as well. Next spring, we may see them again as generations make their way north to as far as Canada. A cycle that is as old as the rivers they follow.



Monarch Butterfly on Milkweed
Illustration: Phil Delestrez

Original acrylic paintings and prints available at <https://www.etsy.com/shop/DelestrezArts>
www.ArtPal.com/Delestrezart;

Snarfinger Creek pollution travesty

Sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) in DeKalb County continue virtually unchecked even though the county is under a federal consent decree. Why, because a specific annual reduction in the number of SSOs is not required. This is the primary reason for the lack of progress in addressing this problem more than halfway through the 8 year consent decree. This failure points to a well-known fact - only that which gets measured, gets done.

Since at least 2006, thousands of gallons of sanitary sewage have poured into Snarfinger Creek from a single manhole located in a wooded area just off Snarfinger Woods Drive in south DeKalb County. Department of Watershed Management documents confirm that for at least the last decade, these illegal discharges have continued. On August 16, 2010, at about the time the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the consent decree, 8,910 gallons of sewage spewed from the manhole pictured below.



Pool of sanitary sewage from manhole remains near creek after overflow. Photo:Jackie Echols (8/14/2015)



Tomato seeds carried by sewage grow next to manhole littered with human waste. Photo: Jackie Echols (8/14/2015)

There have been other overflows since 2010, but the latest occurred August 12, 2015. Upon inspection, the large bolt that was supposed to secure the manhole cover was loose, to allow the sewage to freely spill into the surrounding area and creek. Egregious, yes, preventable, yes, but without accountability and currently there is none required under the consent decree, this travesty will continue.

That which gets measured gets done and that which is not measured gets ignored. Until there is the requirement that sanitary sewer overflows are reduced in number, amount, or other measurable terms, this travesty and others like it will continue.

Sanitary sewer overflows are illegal under the Clean Water Act. Not addressing the problem now only leaves the citizens of DeKalb County vulnerable to another costly consent decree in the future. Make your voice heard. Call the EPA Water Management Division at (404) 562-9345 and demand measurable reductions in sanitary sewer overflows.

Upcoming Events

EVENT CANCELLED. South River Jamboree, "Celebrating 5 Years, One River, and You", Saturday, September 26, Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Center, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m .

Rivercane Restoration Project, October 17 and 24, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., Panola Mountain State Park. Join SRWA for year two of removing privet from rivercane at Panola Mountain State Park. Meet up at Alexander Lakes parking area at the intersection of Flatbridge Road, SW and Alexander Lake Road, Stockbridge, GA. Check SRWA's events calendar at www.southriverga.org for additional volunteer dates. Questions call Jackie (404) 285-3756..

Fun Friday Hike with Ranger Robby, September 18, 8:00 - 10:00 a.m., Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Center, 3787 Klondike Road, Lithonia, GA. Start your weekend off right with an exhilarating hike with Ranger Robby. Explore the less-traveled areas of the Davidson-Arabia Nature Preserve and discover the wonders of flora and fauna found in this protected landscape. This guided hike is moderately difficult, so remember your good hiking shoes, a bottle of water, bug spray and an adventurous spirit.

Your State Park Day and Ice Cream Thank You Event, September 26, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m., Alexander Lakes @ Panola Mountain State Park, 4835 Flat Bridge Road SW, Stockbridge, GA. Celebrate Your State Parks Day and National Public Lands Day by volunteering for several exciting projects. Throughout the park you can help by cleaning up rivers and lakes, removing non-native plants, and restoring

native grassland by planting wildflowers. During the day you'll also have the opportunity to learn about the park's resources, meet other people, and become a steward of the park!

[Find out more](#)

Give to South River Rainy Day Fund

It would be great if we could depend on EPA and Georgia EPD to protect the South River but the truth is, we can't.

Another truth is that SRWA cannot protect the South River alone. We need your help!

Please donate \$25, \$50, \$100 or more or whatever you can afford via Paypal at www.southernriverga.org or mail your check to: SRWA, PO Box 1341, Decatur, GA 30031.



Fly-fishing on South River in Rockdale County. Progress worth protecting.
Photo: Cathy Moll
