



Fast Facts

Georgia has 70,000 miles of rivers, 100 miles of coastline, 850 square miles of estuaries and 425,000 acres of public lakes.

Only 16% of the waterways in Georgia are monitored every year to ensure that they are safe for recreation, fishing and drinking water supplies.

On the Chattahoochee, the most heavily-used river in the state, the EPD does not have the resources to install a real-time water quality station in the river below Atlanta to ensure that environmental standards are met.

For More Information:
Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper,
Sally Bethea

Georgia Water Coalition

Fund Water Monitoring Programs

What's at Stake?

We are fortunate to have 70,000 miles of streams, 100 miles of coastline, 850 square miles of estuaries and 425,000 acres of public lakes in Georgia. Yet, only a small percentage of these waterways are monitored every year to ensure that they are safe for recreation, fishing and drinking water supplies.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requires that each state has an acceptable monitoring program so water permits in accordance with the federal Clean Water Act can be issued; however, Georgia's Environmental Protection Division (EPD) has never received sufficient resources to operate the kind of program that Georgians deserve and need to plan for their communities and families—and that other states provide for their environmental agencies. Without a clear picture of the health of Georgia's waterways, it is virtually impossible to implement common sense protections to ensure an abundant supply of clean drinking water for all Georgians.

Challenges

EPD contracts with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to conduct a cooperative water quality monitoring program statewide that consists of water quality sample collection at 49 long-term stations, as well as the operation of three continuous water quality monitoring stations in the Chattahoochee, Coosa and Savannah Rivers. This critically important \$1.16 million program is funded in part by the USGS with a match of \$400,000, requiring Georgia to contribute \$760,000 annually through an appropriation by the state legislature. Data collected are available to the public at <http://ga.water.usgs.gov> and are used to make water management decisions that affect communities throughout the state.

EPD also conducts its own water quality monitoring in key areas in the state, such as the coast, major lakes, aquifers and waterways where serious problems have been identified. On a five-year rotational basis, EPD concentrates on one of the five major river basins in the state; however, funds for this program are severely limited and need to be increased.

Next Steps

- The Legislature should annually appropriate \$760,000 to EPD for its contract with USGS to continue the long-term cooperative monitoring program that collects water quality data at 52 sites in Georgia.
- The Legislature should appropriate funds to EPD so that the agency has sufficient resources to support its five-year rotational program to sample sites in Georgia's five major river basins.
- Secure funds to ensure that EPD can fund a real-time water quality station in the Chattahoochee River below Atlanta.
- Support EPD's Adopt-a-Stream Program to engage citizens in water quality monitoring.