Georgia Water Coalition’s “Dirty Dozen” list highlights the worst offenses to Georgia’s waters. While the Dirty Dozen identifies some ongoing and serious pollution problems, it is not a list of the most polluted water bodies in Georgia. Nor is the list in any ranked order.

Instead, the Dirty Dozen shines a spotlight on pending threats to Georgia’s water as well as state policies and failures that ultimately harm—or could harm—Georgia property owners, downstream communities, fish and wildlife, hunters and anglers, and boaters and swimmers.

The pending threats range from proposed mines in Wayne County to a 159-mile gas pipeline through southwest Georgia.

However, the heft of the Dirty Dozen can be traced to inadequate funding for Georgia’s Environmental Protection Division (EPD), a lack of political will to enforce existing environmental protections and ultimately misguided water planning and spending priorities that flow from the very top of Georgia’s leadership.

In recent years, the health of Georgia’s waterways and the health and safety of the state’s citizens has been compromised as funding for EPD has not kept pace with population and economic growth. The agency’s budget this year is nearly 40 percent below 2008 levels, and despite increased state revenues since 2010, allocations for environmental programs have remained stagnant.

Stormwater from industrial facilities pollutes the Chattahoochee River largely because there are only two EPD staffers responsible for inspecting and monitoring more than 2,700 industrial sites, and an important clean up plan for the Coosa River first proposed in 2003 has met with a decade of delays and still has not been implemented.
Governor Nathan Deal’s administration continues a pattern of misguided funding priorities and ill-advised water policy. In what was lampooned in the media as the administration’s “Earth Day Surprise,” EPD announced—on Earth Day—that it would no longer enforce laws designed to protect Georgia’s coastal marshlands, and in July, a long-standing protection for well water on the Georgia coast expired because of inaction on the part of the administration and legislature.

Meanwhile, state spending to expand Georgia’s water supplies has only aggravated a two-decade-long water war with Alabama and Florida. Since taking office, Gov. Deal has directed $196.3 million to construct dams and reservoirs—many of questionable need—in an attempt to store and divert water from downstream neighbors. Yet, from 2010 to early 2013, the state spent just $10.7 million to help communities use their existing water supplies more efficiently.

The Georgia Water Coalition publishes this list as a call to action for our state’s leaders and its citizens to correct pollution problems, eliminate the wasteful use of our state and local tax dollars and restore our streams, rivers, lakes and coastal wetlands.

The Georgia Water Coalition is a consortium of more than 200 conservation and environmental organizations, hunting and fishing groups, businesses, and faith-based organizations that have been working to protect Georgia’s water since 2002. Collectively, these organizations represent more than 300,000 Georgians.
INTRODUCTION:

Georgia’s State Capitol sits at the tip of a ridge in downtown Atlanta that separates water flowing to the Atlantic Ocean from that flowing to the Gulf of Mexico. Rain falling to the Capitol’s west ultimately flows to the Chattahoochee River—the state’s longest river; that falling on the east makes its way to the Altamaha—the state’s largest river. Just like the rain, policies set by state leaders at this Capitol building flow across the state impacting the state’s 70,000 miles of rivers and streams and its relationship with downstream neighbors. And, lately, that policy has been as foul as some of the stormwater flowing off Atlanta’s streets, parking lots and dumpster pads after summer thunderstorms. Hundreds of millions in state funds have been funneled to dams, reservoirs and other projects of questionable need while state funding for water efficiency has languished. Meanwhile, state efforts to claim “ownership” of water flowing to neighboring states has aggravated a water war now spanning more than two decades. For this reason, the “Gold Dome” tops this year’s Georgia Water Coalition Dirty Dozen.

THE WATER:

Georgia’s water is among the state’s most critical natural resources. Our state is home to 70,150 miles of streams and rivers, 425,000 acres of lakes and reservoirs, 429,924 acres of coastal marshlands and 4.5 million acres of freshwater wetlands. These places harbor 265 species of fish and 165 species of freshwater mussels and snails. The state’s rivers and streams fuel business and industry, generate power and provide drinking water for Georgia’s 10 million residents. Additionally, they provide those same citizens with places to boat, swim, fish and hunt.

THE DIRT:

Shortly after taking office, Gov. Nathan Deal created the Governor’s Water Supply Program, a $300 million initiative to provide state loans and direct state investment in “critical, cost-effective” water
supply projects. Though water efficiency and conservation measures are among the most cost-effective ways of expanding water supplies, Gov. Deal refused to allow such projects to be funded under his new initiative.

Since its inception, the program has distributed $196.3 million for dams and reservoirs, with most of those funds going toward projects of questionable need, including $59 million for a project in Paulding County drawing water from the Alabama-bound Etowah River and a still-undetermined amount for a project in Hall County diverting water from Lake Lanier and the Florida-bound Chattahoochee River.

These efforts to capture water in North Georgia before a tri-state resolution is reached on how much water can be used from the big federal reservoirs (Lanier and Allatoona) are premature and have served only to aggravate relations with Alabama and Florida. In October 2013, Florida filed a new suit in federal court, seeking to halt Georgia’s escalating water withdrawals from the Chattahoochee.

The greatest boondoggles of the Governor’s Water Supply Program were two state financial awards funneling $9 million to political cronies of Gov. Deal despite the fact that both projects scored “0” on a scale of 0-100 when evaluated for “need.” These awards funded a new well for Lake Lanier Islands Resort and an experimental and highly speculative flow augmentation scheme on creeks in the Flint River basin.

While a total of $213 million in tax dollars has flowed from the Governor’s Water Supply Program since 2012, funding for water efficiency and conservation has been anemic.

From 2010 through early 2013, the state spent $10.7 million to fund water efficiency projects, and thus far in 2014, $7.8 million has been awarded to communities for projects ranging from replacing leaking water lines to installing more accurate water meters.

Last year, state leaders fired another volley across state lines by adopting a new rule that in effect allows the state to divert water from federal reservoirs and claim “ownership” of it.

These rule changes and the state’s continuing fixation with capturing and diverting water from federal reservoirs leaves us further from a water-sharing agreement with Alabama and Florida. Such an agreement would provide all three states with certainty in water planning and allow Georgia to direct water supply funding where it’s actually needed, rather than where it might be needed.

**WHAT MUST BE DONE:**

To move Georgia toward a water-sharing agreement with Alabama and Florida, state leaders should abandon their “capture and divert” policies.

State funding for new reservoirs should be halted until the amount of water available from lakes Lanier and Allatoona is finally determined. State funding for water efficiency and conservation must be increased to aid communities in using existing water supplies more efficiently.

Finally, local communities must invest in water efficiency and conservation projects and take advantage of those existing state funding sources.
INTRODUCTION:

It was lampooned in the media as the Deal Administration’s “Earth Day Surprise.” On a day when Georgians celebrated their land, water and air, Deal-appointee Judson Turner, Director of Georgia’s Environmental Protection Division (EPD), announced that his agency would no longer enforce a decade-old law that required a 25-foot no-build-zone or “buffer” to protect Georgia’s coastal marshlands from encroachments by developers. From there, the chasm between EPD’s mission (to protect Georgia’s natural resources) and its policies only widened. In July, a state court ruled that the authors of Georgia’s Erosion and Sedimentation Act intended for all of the state’s waters, including coastal marshlands and freshwater wetlands as well as streams, to be protected by 25-foot buffers. Turner responded by announcing that EPD would not abide by the court ruling and would not enforce the 25-foot buffer protections. These conflicts in interpreting Georgia’s laws now jeopardize millions of acres of coastal marshes and inland wetlands and sets the stage for a pitched legislative battle to clarify which waters deserve protection under Georgia law.

THE WATER BODY:

Georgia is responsible for the second largest amount of saltwater marsh in the United States and 33 percent of the remaining salt marsh on the Atlantic coast. Stretching 100 miles from Savannah to St. Marys and four-to-eight miles wide at any given point, Georgia’s salt marsh systems keep coastal water clean and support a $400 million commercial and recreational fishing industry. Upstream from these critical coastal wetlands are millions of acres of freshwater wetlands and streams that also contribute to the health and productivity of coastal estuaries. Ranging from seepage areas in the mountains to forested swamps in the coastal plain, these wetlands and streams act as the sponges and kidneys of our state, storing water to lessen the impacts of floods, keeping flows up during periods of drought and cleaning the water that passes through them. A critical natural component for clean water, Georgia’s wetlands are one reason that more than 800,000 anglers fish in Georgia’s waters annually, contributing more than $872 million to the state’s economy.
THE DIRT:

Georgia’s original buffer law, the Erosion and Sedimentation Act, was adopted in 1975 with the intent to “conserve and protect land, water, air and other resources of this State.” Since then, the law has been under continuous attack by powerful interests for which extracting revenue from an additional acre of land is more important than protecting the health of streams for downstream neighbors.

Buckling to this political pressure, legislators have repeatedly amended and weakened the law while EPD has selectively applied the law.

Today, the Act requires a 25-foot natural buffer around all waters of the state. No land-clearing or construction activity can take place within that “no-build-zone.” Failure to abide by these rules has resulted in creeks choked with mud, fish spawning grounds destroyed and streams polluted with chemicals and other contaminants from the developed landscape.

For years, there have been questions about whether the state’s buffer requirements were intended only for creeks, rivers and lakes or whether they also applied to freshwater wetlands—those swamps, forested lowlands and other depressions that are just as critical to clean water. In July, the Georgia Court of Appeals answered that question, ruling that all state waters must be protected by buffers.

EPD is now defying that court order, continuing its business as usual. In tandem with the Earth Day declaration that coastal marshlands do not deserve buffer protections, the Deal Administration has thrown down a gauntlet, leaving millions of acres of Georgia’s coastal marshes, inland wetlands and streams, and ultimately all Georgians at risk.

WHAT MUST BE DONE:

To protect Georgia’s waters, EPD must enforce the state’s buffer laws. The Georgia Court of Appeals ruling on July 16 must be allowed to stand, and Georgia’s elected officials must respond to it by drafting legislation during the 2015 legislative session clarifying that all of Georgia’s waters, including coastal marshlands and freshwater wetlands and streams are protected by a 25-foot natural buffer.

For More Information Contact:
Bill Sapp, Senior Attorney, Southern Environmental Law Center
404-521-9900, bsapp@selcga.org
INTRODUCTION:
Since 1999, state leaders have upheld a critical protection for coastal Georgia’s drinking water—a ban on the controversial practice of “storing” chemically-treated surface and groundwater by injecting these waters into the Floridan Aquifer, a vast underground “lake” that serves as the pristine drinking water source for most coastal communities. But that long-standing protection expired during this year’s Georgia General Assembly session, when state leaders refused to consider a measure extending the ban. Thus, today, nothing prevents risky experiments that could contaminate the Floridan Aquifer and leave local residents or state taxpayers holding the tab for failed multi-million dollar aquifer storage and recovery schemes.

THE WATER BODY:
Though it is hidden beneath layers of soil and rock, no other water body means more to the people of South Georgia. The Floridan Aquifer spreads beneath 100,000 square miles of land from South Carolina to Mississippi and south into Florida. Valdosta, Moultrie, Cairo, Brunswick, Savannah and a host of other communities in south Georgia get some or all of their drinking water from the Floridan. It supplies paper plants in Jesup and power plants in Baxley; in Southwest Georgia, it irrigates more than a million acres of crops each summer. In 2005, these agricultural and industrial users pumped 658 million gallons per day from the Floridan. A workhorse for farms and factories, it is also responsible for some of our state’s most breathtakingly beautiful places as it bubbles to the surface creating “blue holes” like Radium Springs in Albany — considered one of Georgia’s Seven Natural Wonders.
THE DIRT:

Some say the solution to meeting Georgia’s water needs lies beneath our feet in the Floridan Aquifer. By injecting water from rivers and streams (and other sources) into it during times of water abundance, these water speculators believe they can retrieve it during times of water scarcity. But, the reality is this is a risky business.

In other places aquifer storage and recovery experiments have contaminated groundwater and proven to be colossal wastes of money. In Florida, wells at more than 50 percent of the state’s aquifer storage and recovery sites have been abandoned or operations suspended for reasons including arsenic mobilization or inability to recover the “stored” water.

In California, a $150 million aquifer storage and recovery scheme that promised to provide 100 billion gallons has failed because when water was pumped into the ground it simply disappeared. Closer to home a privately funded experiment undertaken by Dalton Utilities and the Etowah Water Bank proved a failure because a suitable underground storage “lake” could not be identified.

It remains unclear why legislative leaders abruptly abandoned the long-standing aquifer storage and recovery ban on Georgia’s coast, but in 2012, Gov. Deal’s Water Supply Program funneled $5 million in state funds to a proposed aquifer storage and recovery project in southwest Georgia.

In hearings during the legislative session, Senator Ross Tolleson, Chair of the Senate Natural Resources Committee, denied a committee vote on a bill that would have extended the aquifer storage and recovery ban and instead requested the formation of a study committee to review the issue.

Nearly five months later and well after the ban had expired, Sen. Tolleson in August convened the first meeting of the study committee.

WHAT MUST BE DONE:

To protect Georgia’s most pristine sources of drinking water, during the 2015 legislation session, the Georgia General Assembly should draft and adopt legislation that prohibits aquifer storage and recovery projects across the state.

Before committing tax dollars to these risky water supply schemes that have the potential to contaminate our underground water sources, state leaders should first invest in proven water conservation and efficiency efforts that aid Georgia communities in extending already existing water supplies.

For More Information Contact:
Emily Markesteyn, Ogeechee Riverkeeper
866-942-6222, Emily@ogeecheeriverkeeper.org
INTRODUCTION:
Following a tip from an Atlanta resident complaining of a black, oil-like substance flowing from an industrial facility near the Chattahoochee River, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper found American Sealcoat Manufacturing, LLC, in Atlanta discharging oily asphalt material into a stream just 300 yards from the river—and this on a day without rain. When it rains, even more petroleum-based chemicals can flow from this site into the river.

Unfortunately, the company is just one particularly egregious example of hundreds of industrial facilities across the state that operate without safeguards to keep pollution out of nearby neighborhoods and our state’s rivers and streams. While Georgia law requires these safeguards, Georgia’s Environmental Protection Division (EPD), charged with enforcing these laws, has only two staff members dedicated to keeping tabs on thousands of facilities statewide.

THE RIVER:
The Chattahoochee is Georgia’s longest and most important river. Nearly four million people – about 70 percent of metro Atlanta’s population – rely on the river for drinking water. Its water powers electric generating facilities, fuels business and industries and millions take to its water to fish, swim and boat. In recent years, the river’s 65-mile run below the City of Atlanta has become dramatically cleaner and private and public investment along the river is growing. Chattahoochee Bend State Park in Coweta County was established in 2011 and other public lands and boating trails are slated for development. Yet, while longstanding pollution from municipal wastewater treatment systems is being cleaned up, the river continues to be harmed by stormwater run off from hundreds of industrial facilities in metro Atlanta.
THE DIRT:
When it rains across metro Atlanta, more than rainwater is filling up the Chattahoochee. A filthy stew is flowing with the stormwater to streams that feed the region’s primary drinking water source. This is especially true downstream of industrial facilities like chemical and other manufacturing plants, food-processing facilities, cement and asphalt plants and landfills and junkyards. These facilities can be major sources of pollution during rain events when stormwater carries toxic chemicals, sediment, bacteria and other pollutants into nearby waterways.

All industrial facilities in Georgia are required to have plans in place to prevent contaminated stormwater from leaving their site and polluting local streams. These plans, filed with EPD, include details about pollution controls, inspections, monitoring and reporting. Yet, despite these requirements, hundreds of businesses have no plans in place, and those with plans often fail to inspect and monitor their pollution controls to confirm they are working.

Management of the state industrial stormwater program falls to EPD, and here the breakdown begins. EPD has only two staff members assigned to manage more than 2,700 permitted facilities statewide, and that number does not include the hundreds of facilities currently operating without permits.

WHAT MUST BE DONE:
To address the failure of EPD to enforce the state’s industrial stormwater laws, the Georgia General Assembly must approve a state budget that includes additional funding for EPD to fill at least four new positions in its industrial stormwater program.

Additional staff and technical resources will provide compliance assistance, inspections, and enforcement for permitted industries and also start to identify the hundreds of facilities that are operating without permits.

For More Information Contact:
Jason Ulseth, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper
404-352-9828, julseth@chattahoochee.org
INTRODUCTION:
Since the mid 1950s, Georgia Power has sucked millions of gallons of water a day from the Coosa River at Plant Hammond near Rome, used it cool the plant’s coal-fired power generators and then sent most of it back to the river as hot water. Now, more than 40 years after the passage of the Clean Water Act and more than a decade after state tests showed the Coosa was suffering from depleted oxygen—one consequence of the hot water discharge—Georgia’s Environmental Protection Division (EPD) has still not required the company to install a cooling system that would dramatically reduce water use at the plant and restore healthy oxygen levels in the river. A cleanup plan that was originally proposed in 2003 has never been implemented and EPD now says it will not be ready until 2016.

THE RIVER:
The upper Coosa River basin is considered North America’s most biologically unique river basin with 30 endemic aquatic species, and the Coosa River in particular is unique because it is one of only a handful of locations in the country where land-locked striped bass still spawn. The Coosa River in Georgia also feeds Weiss Lake in Alabama, a 30,200-acre Alabama Power reservoir that is the economic calling card for Centre, Alabama and Cherokee County. Tourism associated with the lake is the county’s primary industry, with an economic impact of $250 million annually. More than 450,000 people visit the lake each year and some 4,132 lake-related jobs generate more than $36 million in wages.

THE DIRT:
Power generating facilities are the biggest users of water in Georgia, and Plant Hammond on the Coosa is one of a handful of coal-fired power plants in the state that still rely on out-dated “once-through” cooling systems. These systems require a massive amount of water to cool the plant’s operating system. While little water is “consumed” in the process, after coursing through the plant, the water is pumped back to the river at an elevated temperature.
The 590 million gallon a day (MGD) withdrawal and discharge at Plant Hammond is a double whammy for Coosa River fish. The plant’s intake structure sucks fish and their eggs to their death while the warm water discharge deprives surviving fish of oxygen. To put the facility’s massive withdrawal in perspective, during periods of drought, flows on the Coosa just upstream from Plant Hammond routinely dip below 590 MGD, and local anglers tell stories of the river flowing upstream at the plant’s intake. Studies of fish impingement at power plants in Alabama show that more than 600 fish a day can die at a single power plant intake.

Yet despite these impacts which have been ongoing for a half century and despite tests that show the oxygen levels in the Coosa are unsafe for fish and other wildlife, EPD has not yet required Georgia Power to update its antiquated cooling water system.

The state agency first took action to correct the problem in 2003, releasing a proposed cleanup plan that would have required Georgia Power to install new cooling technology. That change would have dropped the water withdrawal to 30 MGD and dramatically reduced the thermal impact to the river.

Objections from Georgia Power and other entities – as well as questions about EPD’s monitoring data – scuttled that original plan. Instead, EPD embarked on a multi-year data collection program. That program ended in 2008, and a new cleanup plan based on this data was supposed to be finalized thereafter.

Since then, EPD has repeatedly delayed completion. Planned for release as early as 2012, EPD now estimates that the cleanup plan will be ready for review in late 2015 after “complex” modeling is completed. Meanwhile, the state permit that allows Georgia Power to discharge the warm water to the river remains outdated and inadequate. Even though the permit is so flawed, EPD allows the company to continue operating under it.

**WHAT MUST BE DONE:**

To restore the health of the Coosa and stop the ongoing death of fish at Plant Hammond’s water intake, EPD must expedite the long-delayed Coosa River cleanup plan and ultimately require Georgia Power to install new cooling technology. Furthermore, EPD must issue an updated operating permit for Plant Hammond that requires a study of the plant’s water use and results in measures to permanently protect the river from the large withdrawal and dangerous discharges.

Georgia Power, which itself recognizes the need for new cooling technology and plans to construct a cooling tower at the facility in 2019, should begin that project immediately, bringing relief to the Coosa sooner, rather than later.

**For More Information Contact:**
Joe Cook, Coosa River Basin Initiative, 706-409-0128, jcook@coosa.org
Ashten Bailey, GreenLaw, 678-948-6494, abailey@greenlaw.org
INTRODUCTION:

Nearly three decades ago, Georgia’s Environmental Protection Division (EPD) established a well-meaning, but short-sighted policy to keep the Flint River clean: rather than have cities and industries discharge highly treated sewage directly to the river, they could instead treat it to lower standards and put it anywhere but the Flint. This included spraying it on fields where pollutants and nutrients could be absorbed into the soil and used by plants. As water use has grown, these “land application systems” (LAS) have been partially responsible for starving the river of its flow. Recently, one Upson County manufacturer’s system has revealed an additional disadvantage of LAS for industrial wastewater. TenCate, a fabrics manufacturer has expanded operations and in doing so overtaxed its sprayfields, leading to pollution of neighboring property and nearby creeks. EPD could correct this pollution problem and restore some of the Flint’s historic flows, but the agency seems satisfied with the status quo.

THE RIVER:

The upper Flint in Upson and adjacent counties is a national treasure. With the Pine Mountain range cutting into the county and the Flint River carving through it at Sprewell Bluff State Park, the views on the Flint here are among the most beautiful in Georgia. Below the bluffs in the river’s rapids is a world famous shoal bass fishery, and while the fish attract anglers, the rapids attract thousands of paddlers each year and support local businesses. Adjacent to the TenCate facility, the Boy Scouts of America hosts thousands of scouts each year on its 2,500-acre Gerald I. Lawhorn Scout Base, known as Camp Thunder. And, all along the river, cozy homes attest to the beauty that draws locals and visitors to this special natural place. Meanwhile, TenCate itself, which depends upon the region’s water resources to manufacture its specialized protective fabrics, provides jobs to some 220 residents with a payroll of more than $6 million annually.
THE DIRT:
At TenCate, EPD has the opportunity to restore a small portion of the flows to the Flint and protect local residents from pollution stemming from the company's overburdened land application system. Unfortunately, the state agency seems content to stick with the status quo.

For at least five years, TenCate's growing business has outpaced the capacity of its land application system. The result: foul odors that trouble neighbors and polluted runoff that spills on to their property. The pollution has devalued property and left once clean creeks and beaver swamps fouled with industrial waste.

Flint Riverkeeper and residents impacted by Tencate's pollution have urged EPD to require the company to install modern pollution controls that would return highly treated wastewater directly to the Flint, but EPD has thus far balked.

Earlier this year, EPD issued a draft wastewater permit for TenCate tightening pollution controls. EPD even went so far as to calculate how much of the company's waste the Flint could handle, but the agency is still allowing the company to continue use of its LAS. In September, EPD extended the company's old discharge permit, allowing pollution to continue during an analysis of the situation.

Meanwhile flows on the Flint continue their downward spiral. Statistics demonstrate a 50 to 70 percent decrease in minimum flows in the upper Flint since 1980, a time period corresponding to EPD's policy of promoting land application systems.

WHAT MUST BE DONE:
To restore flows to the Flint, protect the property of TenCate's neighbors and clean up streams and groundwater impacted by the company's pollution, EPD should require TenCate to install a wastewater treatment system that will discharge highly treated water directly to the Flint or one of its tributaries.

Additionally, TenCate should be required to clean up any polluted groundwater resulting from its land application system, test adjacent property for pollution and restore properties where pollution is found.

For More Information Contact:
Gordon Rogers, Flint Riverkeeper
229-435-2241, gordon@flintriverkeeper.org
INTRODUCTION:
The Savannah River is a workhorse, providing drinking water for millions, supporting Georgia's largest port and supplying critical water for countless industrial uses. But, this workhorse has problems—too much water is taken out of it and too many pollutants are dumped into it. In fact, only two other rivers in the nation carry a greater toxic pollutant load than the Savannah, according to a 2014 report by Environment Georgia. These pollutants, in tandem with massive water withdrawals for electric-generating facilities along the river, are sucking the life out of the Savannah, resulting in depleted oxygen levels in the river that threaten wildlife. Now, Georgia Power Co. and its utility partners want to add two more nuclear reactors to Plant Vogtle that will permanently remove even more water from this already stressed river.

THE RIVER:
Flowing more than 300 miles along the Georgia-South Carolina state line, the Savannah River is Georgia's second largest river basin. At the Georgia coast, it supports the fourth largest port in the United States. Up river, it is no less important, supplying drinking water for 1.4 million people, including its namesake city as well as Augusta, among other municipalities. Three federal reservoirs above Augusta provide recreational opportunities and hydropower for the region. Together Clarks Hill, Russell and Hartwell reservoirs attract 17.5 million visitors annually. Meanwhile, beneath the river's surface is a treasure trove of biological diversity, including the federally protected Atlantic and shortnose sturgeons that spawn in the Savannah. The first river to be explored by Georgia's founders in 1733; 280 years later it remains a vital part of the state's economy and cultural and natural heritage.

THE DIRT:
Healthy rivers depend on enough water to dilute the waste that those living and working along it dump into it. Therein lies the rub for the Savannah. Water is being pumped out of the Savannah at a
rate that results in unhealthy concentrations of pollution and low oxygen levels that stress fish and other river fauna and can even impact drinking water supplies downstream.

One of the biggest consumers of the Savannah River is Plant Vogtle, a nuclear power plant operated by Georgia Power Co. and its utility partners Oglethorpe Power, MEAG and Dalton Utilities who are currently building two more reactors that will double the amount of water permanently removed from the river.

Already, Vogtle returns only one-third of what it withdraws for its two existing reactors. Expanding Vogtle could result in a loss from all four reactors of 84 million gallons a day (MGD) from the river. That's enough water to provide for 1.1 million Georgia residents daily.

The consequences of pumping this massive amount from the river include lower oxygen levels, further stressing the river's aquatic fauna, higher concentrations of pollutants in the river and the probability of more movement of saltwater into the mouth of the river where Savannah residents have already had freshwater drinking sources contaminated with salt water.

Yet despite these known problems as well as a federal mandate to address low oxygen levels in the river and a pending state study focusing on drought management in the Savannah, Georgia’s Environmental Protection Division (EPD) is poised to issue a water withdrawal permit that does not require Vogtle’s operators to initiate any effective measures to minimize the facility's negative impact on the Savannah.

WHAT MUST BE DONE:

To prevent further pollution of the Savannah River, EPD should deny approval of Vogtle’s water withdrawal and discharge permits and/or:

- delay issuance until the Savannah River drought management plan and the state plan for addressing low dissolved oxygen in the river are finalized.
- significantly reduce the water withdrawal limits and require implementation of water-saving cooling technologies such as wet/dry-hybrid cooling at Plant Vogtle or at other power plants on the river, or close other facilities.
- institute low flow requirements and require proven mitigation measures that will increase oxygen levels in the river.
- require river rehabilitation by reconnecting the artificially removed bends between Augusta and Savannah, allowing the river to flow more naturally and better handle the negative impacts from large water withdrawals and pollutant discharges.
- determine the Savannah River’s long-term sustainability and conduct climate modeling, since the reactors could operate for more than 60 years.

For More Information Contact:
Tonya Bonitatibus, Savannah Riverkeeper, 706-826-8991, info@savannahriverkeeper.org
Sara Barczak, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, 912-201-0354, sara@cleanenergy.org
INTRODUCTION:
It’s a lesson that’s been around since Biblical times: build your home on sinking sand and it is bound to fail. Unfortunately, too often in modern-day Georgia, developers seek out marginal land not suited for supporting homes—places called “wetlands” that are naturally intended to hold, filter and distribute water. This is exactly what happened in Glynn County at Merritt Landing, a small subdivision that was built atop a wetland in 2008. Earlier this year, the Glynn County Health Department condemned most of the homes in the neighborhood because of “fecal flooding” and other health hazards that occur when rain floods the property causing septic tank failures. More of these catastrophic developments may be in Georgia’s future if powerful lobbyists are successful in derailing a new proposed U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rule designed to protect the country’s small streams and wetlands and prevent disasters like Merritt Landing.

THE WATER BODY:
Of Georgia’s 38 million acres of land, some 4.5 million are classified as wetlands by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. While most Georgians think Okefenokee Swamp when they think “wetlands,” Georgia’s wetlands are tremendously diverse, ranging from seepage areas in the mountains to tidal flats on the coast. These forested floodplains and wetlands may not seem directly linked to our rivers and streams, but they play an important role in holding water during rain events and dispensing it during dry periods. The sponges and kidneys of our state, wetlands mitigate major floods, lessen the impacts of drought, and clean the water that passes through them, while regulating the amount of freshwater entering Georgia’s coastal estuaries where commercially important seafood find critical habitat. Additionally, these wetlands provide important habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife that support Georgia’s multi-million dollar hunting and fishing industry.

If wetlands serve as our state’s kidneys, its small streams serve as the critical blood vessels that drain lands and slowly but surely build up to the major rivers that so many Georgians enjoy. Over 70,000 miles of streams weave through Georgia. It is estimated that 57% of these streams, especially streams that dry up during droughts or hot summer months, have been targeted by those who would like to strip them of their current protections under the Clean Water Act.
THE DIRT:

Since the passage of the federal Clean Water Act in 1972, federal and state environmental agencies have regulated what activities and developments can take place within the country’s wetlands and other waters. The Clean Water Act gives EPA authority to regulate the waters covered by the Act and repeatedly the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld this authority. But, court opinions in 2001 and 2006 also raised questions about what water bodies qualified as wetlands under the Clean Water Act. Since then, developers and their lawyers have used this ambiguity in an attempt to erode federal regulations of what streams and wetlands are protected.

In response, EPA and the Corps of Engineers earlier this year released a proposed rule designed to eliminate that ambiguity and clarify which “waters of the United States” are protected under the Clean Water Act and which are not.

While the proposed rule does not extend protection to any waters not historically covered by the Clean Water Act, a powerful cadre of anti-government lobbyists representing developers, industrial agriculture, chambers of commerce and the fossil fuel industry are using the opportunity to launch a massive publicity campaign aimed at derailing the rule. This coalition of industry “experts” has organized the deceptively named Waters Advocacy Coalition which claims amongst its members the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Mining Association, and the National Association of Home Builders.

Though the rule includes multiple exemptions for farms and ranches, this campaign has led farmers to believe that they’ll be prohibited from walking cows across wet fields or streams and that every ditch on their land will be regulated. “Ditch the Rule” bumper stickers have popped up on farm trucks around the country.

While the scare tactics may not have derailed the rulemaking process yet, they have derailed honest debate about this important rule.

If EPA and the Corps are unable to clarify what waters of the U.S. are granted protection, the continuing ambiguity over the Clean Water Act could lead to the likelihood of more catastrophes like Merritt Landing, with unscrupulous or ill-informed developers taking “sinking sand” and selling it as “solid rock.”

WHAT MUST BE DONE:

The misleading voices of powerful lobbyists need be drowned out by those with cooler heads that want to see the Clean Water Act continue to be enforced as it has for more than four decades.

EPA should move forward with finalizing its proposed rule, and Congress should stand back and allow the agency to do its work. Individuals should contact their legislators and urge them to support the EPA and Corps Waters of the U.S. Rule.

For More Information Contact:
Jennette Gayer, Advocate, Environment Georgia
404-370-1764, jennette@environmentgeorgia.org
INTRODUCTION:
Southwest Georgians are fighting an invader—one every bit as worrisome as the boll weevil that destroyed cotton harvests in the 1900s, except this one takes farmers’ land as well as crops. The 21st century invader is a 500-mile-long, 3-foot-diameter natural gas pipeline running from Alabama to central Florida that will cut a 159-mile-long, 100-foot-wide swath through at least nine Georgia counties, bringing with it the risk of contaminating the region’s well water and rivers and streams through leaks as well as noise and air pollution from a compressor station located in a densely populated area near Albany. The Sabal Trail underground pipeline will feed Florida Power & Light (FPL) electric generation facilities in central Florida, but studies show that the Sunshine State utility could generate the same amount of electricity with solar power while impacting half as much land.

THE WATER BODIES:
The Sabal Trail pipeline’s path across southwest Georgia would require boring underground pipelines beneath the Withlacoochee, Flint and Chattahoochee rivers as well as numerous smaller streams, and will course underground above the Floridan aquifer. The Floridan aquifer is the region’s most important water source, providing more than 600 million gallons a day to irrigate crops, run industries and supply homes and businesses with drinking water. The currently proposed pipeline route runs through Stewart, Webster, Terrell, Lee, Dougherty, Mitchell, Colquitt, Lowndes and Brooks counties—a swath of land that is home to rare wildlife including the Georgia state reptile—the federally endangered gopher tortoise—along with the federally protected indigo snake and red cockaded woodpecker. Other communities in the region may be impacted depending on the final route chosen.

THE DIRT:
While the Sabal Trail pipeline’s parent companies, Spectra Energy and NextERA Energy would have residents believe their 3-foot-diameter pipe is a benign neighbor, the history of gas pipeline accidents and environmental ills paints a different picture.
A 2011 pipeline explosion in Alabama incinerated 65 acres of forest, and a 1994 explosion at one of Spectra's lines in New Jersey set fire to an apartment complex, injuring dozens and leaving hundreds homeless.

Given the karst geology of southwest Georgia, the dangers of an underground pipeline are especially profound. Sinkholes are increasingly common in the region and may cause pipeline leaks that could easily contaminate the underground aquifers that serve as the drinking water source for many rural residents.

Meanwhile residents of Albany are particularly alarmed because a compressor station would be located near homes, churches and parks. Pipeline compression stations are a major source of noise pollution and also emit nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds that can cause respiratory problems.

Though these dangers are real, the political cards seem stacked against residents of southwest Georgia. Spectra Energy earlier this year donated $10,000 to Gov. Nathan Deal's election campaign, and Florida Gov. Rick Scott, also up for reelection, is an investor in the pipeline project. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) which is charged with approving the pipeline's route through Georgia, is a federal agency that receives all of its funding from fees collected from the energy industry.

One of the issues that FERC will weigh is the project’s “need,” and that need is very much in question. In documents filed with FERC and in public testimony, Sabal Trail Transmission LLC confirmed that solar power facilities built on half the acreage that will be required for the 500-mile long pipeline could produce the same amount of energy. In comments to FERC, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency questioned the need for the pipeline, citing data that shows that electricity demand nationwide is declining due to increased efficiency.

Spectra Energy and NextERA Energy expect to file for approval for the project with FERC later this year and hope to begin construction by June 2016. Before any work commences, the companies must first secure air quality permits from Georgia’s Environmental Protection Division (EPD) as well as water permits from Florida environmental regulators.

**WHAT MUST BE DONE:**

With the politics of gas pipelines stacked against them, impacted residents must organize and forcefully voice their opposition to derail this project.

Citizens should urge...

- local governments to adopt land use and other ordinances that prevent pipeline construction in vulnerable lands and neighborhoods.
- EPD to deny air quality permits for the project; and
- FERC to deny any certifications of need for the project, as well as all possible routes

For More Information Contact:

John S. Quarterman, WWALS Watershed Coalition (Willacoochee, Withlacoochee, Alapaha and Little Rivers), 229-242-0102, wwalswatershed@gmail.com
Gordon Rogers, Flint Riverkeeper, 229-435-2241, gordon@flintriverkeeper.org
Stephanie Stuckey-Benfield, GreenLaw, 404-659-3122, sbenfield@greenlaw.org
INTRODUCTION:
The “Marshes of Glynn,” and the Golden Isles of Georgia are the vacation
destination for millions, but tucked in those marshes near Brunswick is
a toxic site riddled with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), caustic soda,
mercury and lead. Twenty years after the LCP Chemicals plant closed
and 18 years after the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) first
ordered a cleanup of the site, the contaminants remain, leaching into
underground drinking water supplies and contaminating wildlife and
humans with cancer-causing chemicals. In fact, the Turtle River which
flows by the 500-acre LCP Chemical site has the distinction of being home
to the world’s most contaminated bottlenose dolphins, with PCB levels
more than one and a half times greater than levels recorded in Pacific
Ocean killer whales which were once thought to be among the world’s
most contaminated marine mammals. The creatures that thrill visitors to
Georgia’s coast are now suffering from health problems including immune
suppression and anemia, and their plight suggests that humans, like
dolphins that eat fish from the Turtle River, may be unwittingly poisoning
themselves with the LCP Chemical’s toxic legacy.

THE RIVER:
The gateway to the Port of Brunswick, Turtle River supports a vast
network of coastal marshes that stretches from the barrier islands of St
Simons, Jekyll and Sea Island to Brunswick and beyond. That robust coastal
Georgia marsh network accounts for 33 percent of the remaining coastal
marshes on the Atlantic coast and fuels a $400 million commercial and
recreational fishery on the Georgia coast. The scenic beauty of the
marshes and barrier islands attract some 2.5 million people annually.
Those visitors create some 25,000 local jobs and pump about $1
billion into the coastal Georgia economy. A birdwatcher’s paradise,
the Turtle River and its tributaries support a productive estuary and
serve as a calving ground for federally protected manatees.
THE DIRT:

A suspected cancer-causing chemical, PCBs were banned in the late 1970s, but they are long-lived and persist in the environment, especially around highly contaminated sites like LCP Chemical. There, they have worked their way into the aquatic food chain and ultimately concentrate at the top of the chain—in top consumers like dolphins...and humans.

Yet despite this serious risk to wildlife and local residents, and despite caustic, mercury-contaminated pools of water beneath the LCP site that are slowly eating away soil and leaching into groundwater, a full cleanup of the Superfund site still has not been completed—more than 30 years after the problem was first identified by EPA.

Since the early 1990s when LCP closed its doors, company employees have been convicted of environmental crimes and served jail time, former employees have won a $22 million lawsuit based on exposure to toxins, Glynn County settled claims against the company amounting to $25 million and private property owners impacted by LCP’s toxic legacy won a similar settlement.

Still, a real cleanup of the site remains elusive. Poor management and inadequate studies have resulted in ongoing delays and the continued contamination of the Turtle River, nearby marshes and groundwater.

The LCP site was used by various manufacturing and power generation entities for nearly a century; and if the cleanup foot dragging continues, it could be another century before the Turtle River is safe again for dolphins and their distant land-based cousins...us.

WHAT MUST BE DONE:

Continued delays at the LCP Chemical Superfund site must cease, and EPA, Georgia’s Environmental Protection Division and the corporations responsible for the mess must take decisive action to once and for all rid the Turtle River and Brunswick of this toxic legacy. Contaminated marsh must be removed and restored, and sources of groundwater contamination must be eliminated.

For More Information Contact:
Daniel Parshley, Glynn Environmental Coalition
912-466-0934, gec@glynnenvironmental.org
INTRODUCTION:
In the City of Waycross, toxic plumes of groundwater and contaminated soils occurred within a cluster of at least three industrial sites, including CSX Railroad’s Rice Yard, Atlanta Gas Light, a long-abandoned coal gas plant, and the Seven Out industrial waste facility, a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Superfund site. City parks and surrounding neighborhoods are nearby. Many local residents suffer a variety of illnesses and are apprehensive about their proximity to these historically toxic areas and the potential for contamination of their property. Decades of unsophisticated waste management at these sites has brought attention to these industries and may have created a toxic stew that polluted nearby creeks, wells, soil and air. The threat of a poisonous chemical legacy has taken a toll on the health and wellbeing of the local residents, with worries about their drinking water and exposure in the creeks where they fish and swim.

THE RIVER:
Situated adjacent to neighborhoods of in-town Waycross, this toxic hotspot is drained by streams and canals that flow through the city to Tebeau Creek and on to the Satilla River. These urban drainage ways can spread contamination downstream, providing multiple avenues for residents to come in contact with contaminated soil, air and water. Children play in canal waters at a nearby city park. A thriving sport and subsistence fishery on the Satilla offers yet another pathway for humans to be poisoned by widespread pollution – by eating contaminated fish. A blackwater river lined with sugar-white sandbars, the Satilla is a southeast Georgia treasure, flowing 260 miles through the coastal plain and skirting the towns of Waycross and Woodbine before emptying into the Atlantic Ocean at St. Andrew Sound and Cumberland and Jekyll Islands.
THE DIRT:

Waycross sits on the sandy soils of Georgia's Coastal Plain. This landscape promotes a significant connection between shallow groundwater and flows in streams and rivers, which creates multiple pathways for pollution to leave toxic sites and impact local residents. Thus, concern is growing among the nearby residents that the local water is dangerous to drink.

The list of known toxins in soil and groundwater at these sites includes arsenic, barium, cadmium, chromium, mercury, lead, benzene, toluene, cyanide, vinyl chloride, Dichlorethylene (DCE), Trichlorethylene (TCE) and oil. Many of these contaminants have been found near the Waycross Canal, but levels of contamination in sediment and in water entering the canal are not known. Some contaminants may have been spread by the canal system through neighborhoods and into the Satilla River, and local residents suspect these toxins are responsible for a cluster of diseases, including neurological illness and cancer in nearby neighborhoods.

Also troubling for local residents is the Georgia Environmental Protection Division’s (EPD) tepid response to their concerns. When federal regulators and local residents recommended EPD examine contamination at CSX’s rail yard, the state agency tested only three private wells and soil at three homes—a sampling that produced limited and unreliable data. A more robust second round of sampling showed contamination by various chemicals.

Additionally, recent high rainfall in the Waycross is suspected of moving large amounts of contaminated groundwater and soil from these sites into the stream system. Wind may have distributed contaminated dust over a wide area before cleanups were ever begun.

WHAT MUST BE DONE:

To protect the health of Waycross residents, EPD must initiate a more robust analysis of contamination in the vicinity beyond the boundaries of these historically toxic sites. In particular, the potential for toxic soils to migrate by wind and water on residential areas for a period of years may be associated with the perceived cluster of diseases. This connection must be acknowledged and checked, and if necessary, move people out of danger or otherwise eliminate contact with contamination.

EPD must thoroughly test the city’s streams or canals, the residential drinking water supply, and soil and air offsite, especially near the interface of the 850-acre rail yard with the Waycross Canal. Testing should be conducted on the sediment in the canal and soils in residential neighborhoods along the canals. Due to the volatility of many of these organic chemicals, both air and water, should be tested in residential areas to determine the extent that toxins have migrated into local waterways and neighborhoods. This EPD initiative must include an evaluation of the cumulative effects of the toxins, regardless of their source, on the health of the community and natural systems.

EPA should place contaminated sites in this area on the National Priorities List of Superfund Sites in order to elevate this location as a whole for federal priority enforcement actions and long term cleanup funding.

For More Information Contact:
Ashby Nix, Satilla Riverkeeper, 912-510-9500, riverkeeper@satillariverkeeper.org
Joan McNeal, Silent Disaster Group, 912-281-6897, jtm@silentdisaster.org
Stephanie Stuckey-Benfield, GreenLaw, 404-659-3122, sbenfield@greenlaw.org
INTRODUCTION:
In the sand atop a forested ridge separating the water of the Altamaha and Satilla rivers in southeast Georgia lie deposits of titanium dioxides, staurolite and zircon—minerals that the DuPont Company would like to mine and convert into paints, abrasives, glass, metal and plastic products. But, the extraction process, which will spread over 2,254 acres of forests and wetlands near Jesup, is not without its problems. Mining cells as deep as 50 feet will likely impact groundwater—the drinking water source for nearby residents—and dozens of acres of wetlands—the “kidneys” for the Altamaha and Satilla river systems—will be destroyed. Furthermore, residents will be faced with noise, dust and night-time light pollution from mining and processing facilities located adjacent to homes, schools and local parks.

THE WATER BODIES:
Millions of years ago, Georgia’s coastal ridges were once barrier islands and sandy beaches, but as the ocean receded, the ridges were left high and dry except for pockets of wetlands that dot the ridge slopes. These wetlands play critical roles in keeping the water of nearby streams like Penholloway and Little Satilla creek clean and flowing. Left in their natural state, they trap sediment and pollutants and release a steady flow of water to these tributaries of the Altamaha and Satilla rivers, mitigating both flood events and droughts. Beneath the surface of these sand ridges lie vast underground aquifers that serve as the primary drinking water source for the region.

THE DIRT:
DuPont’s proposed mining operation near Jesup came with so many unanswered questions that earlier this year local residents rallied in unison against the project. The opposition was such that in August, DuPont withdrew its application for a surface mining permit from Georgia’s Environmental Protection Division (EPD) until it could address “various points” raised by concerned citizens and reapply for a new mining permit.
The concerns are many. Done without regard to wetlands within the extraction site, the mine and processing facilities will destroy 194 acres of wetlands. Excavation of sands up to 50 feet deep will affect shallow wells that many in the community depend upon for drinking water. And, the mine’s close proximity to homes, schools and county parks has raised concerns about noise, air and light pollution.

The history of similar mines in southeast Georgia suggests that citizen opposition is warranted. In recent decades, Iluka, an Australian-based producer of titanium and zircon, destroyed hundreds of acres of wetlands in neighboring Brantley County.

WHAT MUST BE DONE:

To protect the citizens of Wayne County and the region’s unique wetlands and free-flowing blackwater streams, action is needed at local, state and federal levels.

The Wayne County Commission must affirm its duty to regulate destructive land use activities and adopt protective ordinances to limit the effects of industrial strip mining on the scale contemplated by DuPont.

At the state level, EPD must ensure that DuPont will avoid all wetlands on the proposed mining site. Similar operations in the area have successfully extracted minerals in an environmentally safe way, and EPD should hold DuPont to those same standards.

At the federal level, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, charged with protecting the country’s wetlands, should not grant a permit to DuPont to destroy more than 190 acres of wetlands, especially when impacts to those wetlands can be avoided altogether.

For More Information Contact:
Jennifer Hilburn, Altamaha Coastkeeper, 912-437-8164, coastkeeper@altamahariverkeeper.org
Ashby Nix, Satilla Riverkeeper, 912-510-9500, riverkeeper@satillariverkeeper.org
Bill Sapp, Southern Environmental Law Center, 404-521-9900, bsapp@selcga.org
Steve Caley, GreenLaw, 404-659-3122, scaley@greenlaw.org
2012 Ogeechee River: Settlement Brings Improvements to Ogeechee After State’s Largest Fish Kill
The Ogeechee River landed on the Dirty Dozen list in 2011 after discharges from the King America Finishing textile plant in Screven County led to the state’s largest fish kill ever. It made a repeat appearance in 2012 after Georgia’s Environmental Protection Division (EPD) slapped the company on the wrist with a $1 million fine. In November 2013, the textile manufacturer settled a Clean Water Act lawsuit brought by Georgia Water Coalition partner, Ogeechee Riverkeeper. That settlement forced King America to spend $5 million to restore the river, and the company’s permit to discharge treated wastewater to the Ogeechee that stemmed from the lawsuit is believed to be the strictest ever issued in Georgia.

2012 Tired Creek: Court Victory Secures Protections for Georgia’s Water and Wetlands
Tired Creek was included on the 2012 Dirty Dozen because it was the target of a Grady County dam project that would destroy 300 acres of wetlands and nine miles of streams to create a fishing lake. In 2012, Georgia Water Coalition partners Georgia River Network, American Rivers and Southern Environmental Law Center challenged EPD permits issued for the project and after multiple rounds of litigation, in July 2014 the Court of Appeals of Georgia ruled in the groups’ favor, deciding that all Georgia’s water—including wetlands—deserve protection under Georgia’s Erosion and Sedimentation Act. The court victory should halt construction of the $20 million fishing lake and is expected to result in a legislative showdown in 2015 in which lawmakers will wrangle over what Georgia waters deserve protection.

2013 Ocmulgee River: Coal Ash Still Threatens Waterways and Communities
Georgia leaders have taken no action to deal with the potentially dangerous and polluting coal ash dumpsites at Georgia’s Plant Scherer near Macon. Despite being home to 11 similar sites and ranking eighth in the nation for generation of coal ash waste, Georgia continues to lag behind in protecting the public and our waterways from this toxic threat. This year our neighbors in North Carolina experienced the third largest coal ash spill in US history and found more illegal pollution at several Duke Energy dumpsites. These problems have prompted action in that state where the legislature passed coal ash regulations during the 2014 session. Meanwhile, the first-ever federal coal ash rule is due this December.

2013 Altamaha River: Altamaha Riverkeeper Steps in to Force Cleanup at Pulp Mill in Jesup
Making appearances on the Dirty Dozen list in 2011, 2012 and 2013, Rayonier’s pulp mill in Jesup has polluted the Altamaha River for more than half a century, but change may finally be in the works thanks to a Clean Water Act lawsuit filed by Georgia Water Coalition partner, Altamaha Riverkeeper. Litigation is currently pending. Meanwhile, the river continues to feel the effects of up to 60 million gallons of wastewater from the plant daily—a discharge that discolors the rivers and fouls it with an acrid smell.

2013 Flat Creek: Lake Lanier Tributary Polluted by Chicken Plant Getting Attention from EPD
For some five years, Georgia Water Coalition partner Chattahoochee Riverkeeper has petitioned EPD to take appropriate action against Pilgrim’s Pride to cleanup its bacteria-laden stormwater flowing to Flat Creek near Gainesville. Those efforts finally paid off this summer when EPD notified the facility that it has three years to correct its ongoing pollution problem. EPD also turned its attention to other industrial operators along the creek—issuing five letters documenting pollution problems at these facilities. Meanwhile, water quality testing of Flat Creek continues to show extremely high levels of bacteria contamination.

2013 Lake Alice: Cleanup After Forsyth County Dam Failure Begins; Safe Dam Laws Need Attention
Georgia’s aging and dangerous dams made the 2013 Dirty Dozen when a small dam near Cumming failed in May of that year, sending a plume of mud and sediment down Little Ridge Creek and into Lake Lanier. Nearly a year and a half later, EPD has mandated that the dam owners stabilize the structure, clean up the sediment choked stream below the dam and remove all sediment deposited in Lake Lanier. Though the plans have been agreed upon, implementation has been slow. Meanwhile, the state legislature has not taken action to strengthen the state’s safe dam laws, nor have they appropriated funds to expand staffing of EPD’s Safe Dams Unit.

2013 Ogeechee and Ocmulgee Rivers: Proposed Coal-Fired Power Plant Mostly Dead
Listed in 2011 and 2013, Plant Washington, a proposed coal-fired power plant near Sandersville that threatened both the Ogeechee and Ocmulgee rivers, appears all but dead, thanks in large part to the advocacy efforts of these Georgia Water Coalition partners: Fall Line Alliance for a Clean Environment, Sierra Club, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, Ogeechee and Altamaha Riverkeepers, GreenLaw, Southern Environmental Law Center and Environment Georgia. Since first proposed a half decade ago, ten Electric Membership Cooperatives have walked away from the project, leaving its primary proponent, Allied Energy Services with inadequate funds to build the facility. Though the company continues to petition EPD for necessary environmental permits, it appears the plug has been pulled on this dirty power plant.