



**Georgia Water Coalition names 2015 “Dirty Dozen”
12 of the worst offenses to Georgia’s water; Plus a “Clean #13”**

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Individual contacts for each item listed in the Dirty Dozen report are available online:
<http://www.garivers.org/gawater/dirtydozen2015gwc.html>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE November 4, 2015 – Today, Georgia’s leading water coalition named its “Dirty Dozen” for 2015, highlighting 12 of the worst offenses to Georgia’s waters. The annual Dirty Dozen shines a spotlight on threats to Georgia’s water resources as well as the polluters and state policies or failures that ultimately harm—or could harm—Georgia property owners, downstream communities, fish and wildlife, hunters and anglers, and boaters and swimmers.

“The Dirty Dozen is not a list of the most polluted water bodies in Georgia, nor are they ranked in any particular order,” said Joe Cook, Advocacy & Communication Coordinator at the Coosa River Basin Initiative. “It’s a list of problems that exemplify the results of 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.”

The Coalition’s full report details the history of each site and provides solutions to correct these ongoing problems and eliminate the listed threats. A short list can be found below. The full report—including updates from previous Dirty Dozen reports—is available online:
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“Over the past decade, the health of Georgia’s creeks, rivers, streams, lakes and coastal waters, and the safety of Georgia citizens has been compromised as funding for Georgia’s Environmental Protection Division has not kept pace with population and economic growth,” said Juliet Cohen, Executive Director of Chattahoochee Riverkeeper.

The problems highlighted in the report include:

- Georgia’s groundwater lacks adequate protection, which is a problem because 20 percent of the water used in Georgia homes and businesses is pumped from wells tapping our state’s underground aquifers. Many of those communities, like Waycross, are also burdened with one or more of the 500 identified hazardous waste sites found statewide where toxic contamination is known to exist and poses a threat to water and local residents. (Item 4) If the Georgia House of Representatives passes Senate Bill 36 (Item 12), then the Department of Natural Resources would be required to implement rules protecting the state’s groundwater and communities like Waycross from harm.

- Spectra Energy’s Sabal Pipeline poses threats to Georgia communities, as well as their air, water and property, while providing no benefits to these same communities. For southwest Georgia residents the pipeline project is all risks and no rewards. (Item 11)
- State spending to expand Georgia’s water supplies has aggravated a two-decade-long water war with Alabama and Florida. Since 2012, the Governor’s Water Supply Program has directed over \$190 million to construct dams and reservoirs—many of questionable need—in an attempt to store and divert water from downstream neighbors. In a shocking course correction away from reservoir building, Newton County commissioners recently placed a 15-year old reservoir proposal on the shelf after spending \$20 million. (Item 10)
- This summer the Georgia Supreme Court reversed lower court decisions and placed the protection of Georgia’s rivers, streams and lakes in question. The high court limited the methods used by Georgia’s EPD to determine streamside protection zones to a single narrow test that leaves many of the state’s streams without protection. (Item 2)

Despite these ongoing problems, the Dirty Dozen Report celebrates the decision by the Georgia Department of Transportation (DOT) to deny a petroleum pipeline company the authority to use eminent domain for a pipeline running from Augusta through coastal Georgia to Florida. DOT’s action to stop the proposed Palmetto Pipeline earned that issue special recognition as “Clean #13,” making the 2015 report a baker’s dozen of issues.

“The Georgia Water Coalition publishes this annual list as a call to action for our state and federal leaders and our fellow citizens to come together to correct pollution problems, eliminate the wasteful use of our tax dollars and restore our streams, rivers, lakes and coastal waters,” said Gordon Rogers, Flint Riverkeeper. “We also give credit for doing the right thing where credit is due.”

The Georgia Water Coalition is a consortium of 228 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 250,000 Georgians.

2015 Dirty Dozen

1. Cooper Creek: Timber Harvest To Muddy Mountain Streams
2. Georgia’s Stream Buffers: Confusing State Law Leaves Some Streams Without Protection
3. Chattahoochee River: EPD Water Grab Threatens Health of State’s Most Critical Water Supply
4. Georgia’s Hazardous Waste Sites: Toxic Legacies Pose Public Health Risk
5. Chattahoochee River: Chattahoochee Tubers’ Trash Draws Ire of Riverfront Landowners
6. Altamaha River: Rayonier Pulp Mill Fouls Altamaha; State Allows Pollution to Continue
7. Georgia’s Coast: Offshore Drilling Poses Threat to Coastal Tourism, Fisheries
8. Coosa River: Power Plant Killing Fish on the Coosa
9. Little Satilla Creek & Penholloway Creek: Strip Mine Threatens Property Values, Water in Wayne County
10. Bear Creek: Reservoir Deal in Newton County a Boondoggle for Taxpayers
11. Withlacoochee River and Floridan Aquifer: Gas Pipeline Invasion in Southwest Georgia Risks Drinking Water
12. Georgia’s Groundwater: Legislative Inaction Leaves Well Water At Risk

And...A Clean 13, Georgia’s Coastal Waters: Gov. Nathan Deal Supports Georgians Fighting Petroleum Pipeline

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