



### From your Flint Riverkeeper®: Counting Our Blessings

Believe it or not, once water is taken out of a river system, whether it was withdrawn from a tributary creek, a sustaining aquifer, or the river itself, it is really hard to get it back. This is particularly true if the withdrawal and return infrastructure was not designed to return the water in the first place. In the case of the Flint, as we have detailed in this newsletter series previously, the situation is almost as if the withdrawal/return system was designed to dry up the system. While in fact this is not true, the system was certainly NOT designed to sustain healthy flows. The management of withdrawals and returns by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GAEPD) is at the heart of this problem.

In the upper Flint GAEPD in fact promulgated a policy of 'no returns' in order to protect water quality from poorly treated wastewater returns. GAEPD also has operated a policy of reservoir releases that is only minimally protective of low flows. And, the vast suburban sprawl of southwest Metro Atlanta is serviced in large part by (water) wasteful septic fields and land application systems (LAS's, or, sprayfields). The results have been astounding, with upper Flint flows during dry periods diminished by in excess of 50%, and in some places fully depleted (100%). During average and wet periods we frequently witness flows in the upper Flint that are identical to what were formerly drought flows. GAEPD claims that the policy of 'no returns' is no longer in force, but, the memorandum they issued in 1988 to create the policy has not been rescinded, and GAEPD staff describes the 'new' policy in various ways, depending upon who you talk to.

In the lower Flint GAEPD has pursued a policy of giving out surface water and groundwater (connected to surface water) permits to the point that creek flows have been diminished during dry periods between 70% and 100%. Some areas of the lower Flint have been under a withdrawal moratorium for years, and in 2012 GAEPD placed a full moratorium on lower-Flint agricultural withdrawals from surface waters and from the Floridan Aquifer. While some might label such as 'good' management, our view is that moratoria by definition usurp the property use rights (withdrawal rights) of any private property owner who wishes to exercise their use rights for beneficial purposes. Further, GAEPD continues to grant permits to withdraw from deeper aquifers, with little to no scientific knowledge of what the sustainable yield of those aquifers may be. Thus we are witnessing low flows (and no flows) during normal and drought years that are

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The mission of the Flint Riverkeeper® (FRk) is to restore and preserve the habitat, water quality, and flow of the Flint River for the benefit of current and future generations and dependent wildlife. FRk is a fully-licensed member of the Waterkeeper Alliance, an EarthShare of Georgia member group and participates in the Georgia Water Coalition.



Report wildlife violations to DNR Law Enforcement: **800-241-4113**; report pollution issues to FRk at **229-435-2241**

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virtually institutionalized, plus truncated property rights, a 'regulatory' agency operating in the dark as they issue permits in deeper aquifers, not only without knowledge of sustainable yields, but also not knowing if or to what degree those deeper aquifers are connected to overlying resources.

So, where is the good news? Believe it or not, there is some.

Flint Riverkeeper has been working on these issues since it was founded, and others have been working on the issues even before there was a Flint Riverkeeper. Here are some blessings we can count:

- At least GAEPD says, verbally (several different mid-level managers), that the 'no return' policy (see page 40 of the "Running Dry" report at [www.americanrivers.org/newsroom/resources/running-dry-restoring-upper-flint-river-basin/](http://www.americanrivers.org/newsroom/resources/running-dry-restoring-upper-flint-river-basin/)) for the upper Flint is no longer the policy. Halleluiah. Yet when faced with re-permitting the TenCate facility in Upson County GAEPD was not willing to convert the facility from a LAS to a direct discharge. It is time for GAEPD to start practicing what they preach, and to put the 'new' policy into written form.
- Clayton County has been working on a permit to return a portion of the treated wastewater that they currently send to the Ocmulgee (Altamaha) watershed for several years. They have now completed the engineering, the wasteload research, and the permitting process. GAEPD has granted the permit. Flint Riverkeeper has supported this work since we became aware of it in 2010. We applaud both Clayton County for initiating this conservative initiative and GAEPD for granting the permit, and we anxiously await the budget and construction process to lead us to several million gallons per day of Flint water returned to the Flint.
- Fayette County has recognized the injustice of the situation at Lake Peachtree, where NO releases are made from the dam during low-flow periods. And, they have recognized the inefficiencies in operation of the Lake Kedron/Peachtree complex, not only depriving downstreamers of rightful flow, but also wasting taxpayer dollars (isn't it funny how environmental harm and waste of taxpayer resources go hand in hand so frequently?). We are informed that they will soon apply for a revised permit for releases at the dam, and will follow and comment on the application process, closely.
- Both the City of Griffin and Clayton County have made phenomenal progress on cutting down on the number of leaks in their pure water supply systems. Fewer leaks mean fewer withdrawals.
- Forward looking and thinking agricultural growers are continuing to retrofit their irrigation equipment and install new equipment that is increasingly stingy on water use. While there has not yet been a measureable increase in surface water flows, conservation is always a good thing. Just as fixing leaks in municipal supply systems saves on withdrawals, so does more efficient irrigation equipment.
- A citizens group known as ACF Stakeholders Inc., including agricultural permit holders, representatives of other water-use interests throughout the system, and conservation groups including Flint Riverkeeper has produced a water-sharing plan (see article on page 6) calling for, among many other recommendations, agricultural users in the lower Flint, lower Chattahoochee, and upper Apalachicola to achieve conservation such that a 15% increase in measureable stream-flows is produced. Other recommendations are made for other users, including particular targets in the upper Flint.

*Continued on page 3*

are real, and all will eventually produce results. Flint Riverkeeper has been hard at work in many venues using many methods to produce actual flow results for you, and we will keep at it.

Thank you for your continued support,



Gordon Rogers, Executive Director & Flint Riverkeeper

### Tencate Permit Update

Over \$6 million in payrol and worth of multiyear involvement in attempting to get the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GAEPD) to correct the numerous problems at the Tencate protective manufacturing facility in Upson County. Adjacent landowners are experiencing chronic, continuous water pollution in perennial streams on their private property impairing their use rights. These streams are

structures conversion of the base approach to a highly treated direct discharge. This would eliminate the odors, eliminate the pollution of adjacent streams, and return some (clean) flow to the Flint River that is withdrawn from her tributary, including on public roads, the fumes from

upwards of 70% consumptive of water, primarily through evaporation. In the case of slight burn to eyes and nostrils. the Tencate systems, since there is direct pollution of adjacent streams, there is probably less evaporative loss, but there is still a loss. GAEPD wants to determine if a direct discharge to the Flint adjacent to the plant, but in the end renewed the LAS permits with some very slight improvements.

Since the renewed permit went into effect, foul odor off of Tencate property continues, and water pollution continues. We agree that the jobs and economic impact of the Tencate facility are important to the Upson and remainder of the west middle Georgia area. Over 200 jobs and

## Upcoming Events

Please check [flinriverkeeper.org](http://flinriverkeeper.org) for more details and other events, or call 229.435.2241 with any questions.

**June 27:** Albany Fish Fry Membership Meeting, 5-7:30pm @ Knights of Columbus Banquet Hall, 2009 Gillionville Road, Albany 31707; \$15 Tickets available at [www.flinriverkeeper.org](http://www.flinriverkeeper.org) or call 229.435.2241

**July 18:** Lee County Rivers Alive Cleanup, Hwy 18 (Smithville/Bronwood) Kinchafoonee Creek downstream to Flint River. Sign up with Lee County Chamber of Commerce: (229) 759-2422; Bluegrass and BBQ for volunteers at Chehaw Park afterwards

**August 29-30th:** River Tubing and Overnight Camping Trip at Morgan's Buzzard Roost Farm, Woodbury, GA

**September 25:** Annual Dinner Event, private riverside location, Thomaston, GA

**October 8-12:** Paddle Georgia's 2nd Annual Fall Float on the Flint, Albany to Bainbridge, GA; registration opens July 2015, [www.garivers.org/paddle\\_georgia/fallfloat](http://www.garivers.org/paddle_georgia/fallfloat)

Other Flint paddle trips, clean-ups and meetings throughout the year will be announced. Sign up for email alerts at [www.flinriverkeeper.org/become-a-member](http://www.flinriverkeeper.org/become-a-member) to receive information.

## Become a Member to Protect YOUR Flint River!

Can you give a generous tax-deductible donation today, to make certain one of Georgia's most treasured waterways can be saved for current and future generations? To make a donation, visit [www.flinriverkeeper.org](http://www.flinriverkeeper.org) OR make checks payable to Flint Riverkeeper® and mail this form to 211 N. Jefferson Street, Ste. 8, Albany, GA 31701, or return this form with your credit card information for a secure transaction. Flint Riverkeeper® is a 501c3 charitable organization. THANK YOU for your support!

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**Membership Levels:** (please indicate giving level)

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A confirmation email will be sent to you. Please ensure that we have your email address by completely filling out the form above, as well as your other contact information.

**Flint RIVERKEEPER®**

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[www.flintriverkeeper.org](http://www.flintriverkeeper.org)

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Flint Riverkeeper was established in 2008 to address the various issues that are threatening the Flint River and its tributaries. We are working to restore and protect the quality and flow of this immensely valuable resource.

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Your Flint Riverkeeper *Points* is designed and edited by Jayme Smith, with contributions from staff, and guest submissions as noted. If you have an issue, article or pictures to share, please contact [jayme@flintriverkeeper.org](mailto:jayme@flintriverkeeper.org)

**THANKS for SUPPORTING YOUR  
FLINT RIVERKEEPER!**

## Lower Flint River Boating Maps Available

This endeavor began as a project of the FRk Board's Natural Resources Committee, chaired by Marilyn Royal, in response to numerous inquiries from the public for a resource to assist paddlers planning trips down the lower Flint. This guide begins at the Lake Blackshear dam (mile 133) and ends at Lake Seminole's Woodruff Dam (mile 0).

Maps are available for purchase at a cost of \$10 per map from Flint Riverkeeper. Call 229.435.2241 or email [jessica@flintriverkeeper.org](mailto:jessica@flintriverkeeper.org).

This project was made possible through a grant from the Mitchell EMC "Round Up" project; an in-kind printing donation from Georgia Power's Land Division; the GIS talent and passion for paddling of Professor Tom Weiland of Georgia Southwestern University; the dedication and expertise of Brandon Rutledge; and the work of Jeff Hamilton at the Southwest Regional Commission. In addition, historical maps and knowledge passed down from generations of Flint River users were gathered from FRk board members and dedicated members.

This map has been a labor love to empower paddlers and boaters to explore and understand the beautiful natural treasure we know as the lower Flint River. FRk is working to extend this mapping project up stream to include the middle and upper sections of the Flint.

