

## **Georgia River Network**

# **MEDIA ADVISORY**

**Contact:** Dana Skelton, Georgia River Network, 706/549-4508 or [dana@garivers.org](mailto:dana@garivers.org)

## **Winners of 2010 River Awards To Be Recognized**

**Who:** Winners of the 2010 River Celebration River Awards:

- Coosa River Basin Initiative, Rome GA - Watershed Group of the Year;
- Lee Becker, Athens GA - Volunteer of the Year; and
- Gordon Rogers, Waynesville/Albany, GA - River Conservationist of the Year

**What:** River Celebration Awards Ceremony, in conjunction with the 2010 Georgia River Network Annual Conference

**When:** Friday, February 19, 2010, 6:00 pm

**Where:** Jekyll Island Convention Center, GA

Georgia River Network will hold the sixth annual River Celebration Awards to recognize the successes and dedicated efforts of river advocates in Georgia. Honorees will receive awards in a special ceremony as part of the 2010 Georgia River Network Annual Conference.

## **Award Winners**

### **Watershed Group of the Year:**

#### **Coosa River Basin Initiative (Rome, GA)**

Since its founding in 1992, CRBI's advocacy, education, restoration and water monitoring programs have helped improve water quality in the Coosa River Basin and have helped citizens better understand water resource issues. The organization's major accomplishments include:

- Winning a half-million dollar settlement against a developer for Clean Water Act violations that is being used to conserve natural lands along the rivers and provide public access for fishing, boating, and paddling.
- Winning a lawsuit requiring the EPA to set limits on the amount of pollution allowed to enter already-polluted waterways.
- Stopping a plan to "transfer" metro Atlanta sewage to the Coosa River Basin by working successfully with state legislators to force metro Atlanta communities to rethink their growth strategies.
- Stopping a hot water discharge on Smith-Cabin Creek in Floyd County by Temple-Inland Paperboard & Packaging.
- Training hundreds of citizens to monitor rivers and creeks throughout their river basin. Trends in water quality are noted and any unusual findings are researched to ensure no illegal activities are affecting water quality.
- Teaching hundreds of the children about water pollution control and water protection in classrooms.

- Getting hundreds of local people out on their rivers through their regular guided river trips.
- Celebrating and raising needed funds at their many events including an annual fish fry, adventure race, community WaterFest, and River Revelry celebration.
- Educating thousands of Coosa River Basin citizens in civic meetings, public forums, workshops, print and broadcast media, website, blog, and in their quarterly newsletter.
- Working alongside fellow river, environmental, and conservation groups to advocate for strong statewide protections for our waterways.
- Their fight continues as they work to stop transfers of water from their river basin, floodplain development, and a proposed reservoir on Shoal Creek - a tributary to the Etowah River in Dawson Forest.

### **Volunteer of the Year:**

#### **Lee Becker (Athens, GA)**

Lee Becker's contributions to the Oconee County area are twofold: beginning with the formation of the Friends of Barber Creek in early 2006, he has been a key observer of issues – environmental and otherwise – that formerly received little attention in the county. Also since 2006, he has used his Oconee County Observations blog to become an important news source focusing on issues facing Oconee County. It is not a stretch to say that Lee, who is both a professor of journalism and a 21<sup>st</sup>-century citizen journalist, has changed the landscape in Oconee County.

To take just one example, his coverage of plans for the Hard Labor Creek Reservoir in the Apalachee River basin has been unequalled. The facts and the story have come from Lee, and without them, fellow activists interested in the reservoir's planning would be at a significant disadvantage. His dogged pursuit of information – and his lack of hesitation to call upon relevant open records laws in doing so – has made his first-hand, one-man-show reportage invaluable.

Information is power, of course, and Lee's dispensing of information contributes directly to an environment of citizen empowerment on a whole range of issues – especially those related to growth, sustainability and the Oconee River basin – that will continue to change his county for the better for years to come.

### **River Conservationist of the Year:**

#### **Gordon Rogers (Albany, GA)**

Flint Riverkeeper Gordon Rogers is a stalwart of the river protection community in Georgia. He became the Flint Riverkeeper last fall, after the organization received its Waterkeeper Alliance license in June of 2008, but Gordon has been a part of our collective efforts at river preservation for many years. Gordon was a founding board member of the Altamaha Riverkeeper organization, and served as the Satilla Riverkeeper for five years from 2004 to 2009, working diligently with local municipalities and officials to protect wetlands and floodplains, investigating altered hydrology and stormwater flows in the Satilla basin, and seeing to the health of the river from its blackwater sources to its saltwater estuary.

Gordon brought this wealth of experience to the Flint Riverkeeper when he came to the new organization in November of last year. The creation of the Flint Riverkeeper has been a major step forward in the work of protecting Georgia's waterways. The

organization's inception and its hiring of Gordon Rogers have come at a time when the Flint River faces critical threats, including (but not limited to) the proposals to dam the river in its spectacular lower Piedmont runs. In the months since he started at his new office in Albany, Gordon has been busy building more support for the organization and making its case to citizens and elected officials throughout the Flint basin and at the Capitol.

GRN recognizes Gordon as the River Conservationist of the Year for all of his work past, present and future. Gordon's passion for protecting rivers, his understanding of how rivers work, and his ability to bring people together to protect waterways have led to many successes for Georgia rivers, and we hope they will lead to many more.

#####

*Georgia River Network is a statewide organization working to ensure a clean water legacy by engaging and empowering Georgians to protect and restore our rivers from the mountains to the coast. Visit [www.garivers.org](http://www.garivers.org) for more information.*