



### Legislative Action: Flint River Drought Protection Act

In 2001, the Flint River Drought Protection Act (FRDPA) was passed into law by the legislature and gave authority to the Environmental Protection Division (EPD) Director to declare “drought conditions” in the lower Flint watershed. Originally, the intent was to provide incentives to farmers to not irrigate during times of an EPD-declared drought. Although voluntary for farmers after a drought declaration, the Director does have authority to initiate non-voluntary suspension of surface water irrigation. An auction allows farmers to name a price per acre to suspend irrigation and recoup costs from a lost crop. Money for the program came from the State’s portion of the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement . An estimated \$4.5 million was spent in 2001 on about 31,000 acres. During the summer of 2012, in-stream flows in the Flint (at multiple USGS monitoring gauges throughout the entire watershed) reached historic lows. A drought was not declared by EPD Director Jud Turner therefore farmers were not offered financial compensation to not irrigate acreage. Heavy use throughout the watershed (mainly municipal use in the upper watershed, and ag-related use in the lower watershed) and a two-year drought has adversely affected the health of the Flint River, and tributaries.

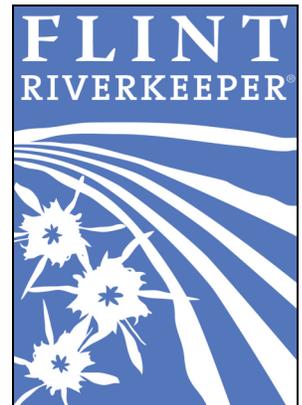
Ichawaynochaway Creek, dry streambed; Summer '11  
Photo courtesy of S.Golladay



To protect the livelihood of our watershed, including the assurance that everyone will have water to use for industrial, agricultural, municipal, and recreational purposes, for now and into the future, Flint Riverkeeper, along with the Georgia Water Coalition, is working this legislative session to revise the FRDPA to allow for better protections of in-stream flows throughout the watershed and ensuring that established policies will benefit users, as well as downstream communities. There is a tremendous amount of work happening for the Flint...and we will be asking YOU, the folks who love the Flint, to help this legislative session by contacting your elected officials to support bills that benefit the Flint, and other Georgia waterways. Sign up for Flint Riverkeeper updates at [www.flintriverkeeper.org/become-a-member](http://www.flintriverkeeper.org/become-a-member)

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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 full-licensed member of the Waterkeeper Alliance, an EarthShare of Georgia member group and participates in the Georgia Water Coalition.

## TASTE the FLINT 2013 Paddle Series Calendar



Join us as we explore the Flint River this year!

Saturday, March 23rd: Upper Flint, Upson County

Saturday, April 20th: Middle Flint, near Montezuma

Saturday in May, TBA, Upson-Thomaston Chamber of Commerce 3rd Annual Poker Float

Saturday, June 15th thru Friday, June 21st: Paddle Georgia visits the Lower Flint (details on page 5)

Saturday in July, TBA, Baker-Mitchell Sheriff's Boys Home Poker Float

Saturday, October 5th: Lower Flint, near Albany

Email updates with registration information will be sent preceding each paddling event—make sure you are receiving these updates by signing up for email alerts at [www.flintriverkeeper.org](http://www.flintriverkeeper.org)



## Addressing Historic Low Flows in the Upper Flint



**American Rivers**  
Rivers Connect Us

Contributed by:

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As drought conditions continue throughout the Flint River basin, the need to restore and protect stream-flows in the river and its tributaries is as starkly apparent as ever. Whether it's the spring-fed swamps and creeks of Southwest Georgia, the Piedmont streams of Metro Atlanta and the Southern Crescent, or the Flint River itself beneath Sprewell Bluff or at Yellow Jacket Shoals, the river system continues to suffer from an unnaturally severe lack of water.

The lack of healthy river flows in the Piedmont portion of the Flint basin, from the headwaters to the Fall Line, is the focus of an ongoing partnership between Flint Riverkeeper and the national conservation organization American Rivers. Based in Washington, DC with offices in Georgia and around the country, American Rivers is the leading organization working to protect and restore the nation's rivers and streams. American Rivers' work in Georgia focuses largely on sustainable water supplies for communities and for the state's rivers.

From its origins in East Point, the Flint runs southward and quickly becomes a water supply source for communities in the southern part of the Atlanta metropolitan area and downstream throughout west-central Georgia. Sadly, the upper Flint River has been running dry in recent years. This is a problem not just for Shoal Bass and the other wildlife that depend on the river, but also for the outfitters and camps that send paddlers through its scenic reaches in the Pine Mountain region, and for the communities that depend on the Flint for water supply.

The reasons for the drop in river flows on the upper Flint are many. They include the urbanization of the landscape at the river's source, wetland loss, changing rainfall patterns with more frequent and intense drought, dams on tributary streams throughout the Flint's headwaters, increasing water withdrawals and a lack of return flows to the river system, and transfers of water from the Flint to neighboring river basins.

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Boy Scout Troop 175 from Peachtree City GA attempt to paddle the Flint River at Flat Shoals near Gay on July 15, 2010. Dramatic low flows increase areas of portage and decrease opportunities for paddle trips.

Photo is courtesy of Keith Larson.

Order your Honeypot luminary from Bee Natural with this link:

<http://tinyurl.com/bnflint>.

**25% of the proceeds from your order are donated to your Flint Riverkeeper!**



Mark your calendar for Conservation Lobby Day: February 28, 2013

Join the Georgia Water Coalition Partners in Atlanta for a legislative breakfast followed by lobbying activities at the Capitol. Details at

[www.garivers.org/gawater/index](http://www.garivers.org/gawater/index)

*Addressing Historic Low Flows in the Upper Flint cont'd-*

The goal of this partnership is to restore and protect river flows in the upper Flint River by doing five things:

1. Working in partnership with municipal water providers and state agencies to leave more water in the river through water efficiency and eliminating waste;

2. Restoring baseflows in the upper Flint River through replac-

ing hard surfaces with green infrastructure that harnesses nature, such as rain gardens, restored wetlands and natural floodplains;

3. Advocating for sustainable water supply solutions that are cheaper, faster, less risky and more reliable than any new dams;

4. Developing an understanding of the water supply infrastructure in the Flint River basin, and assessing the relative impacts on river flows from a variety of factors including reservoirs, water withdrawals and discharges, climate change, urbanization and water transfers between river basins – so that we can best target work to restore river flows; and

5. Spearheading a long-term river protection strategy that ensures river health and reliable clean water supplies for surrounding communities.

Stay tuned for updates from this important partnership on a key piece of the puzzle in the Flint River basin as we work to restore healthy river flows in the upper Flint.



Low flows and sedimentation allow for proliferation of grasses in river bed. July 2011, Photo courtesy of Christopher Drummond

For more information, contact Ben at: 108 East Ponce de Leon Ave., Suite 212 | Decatur, GA 30030  
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[www.americanrivers.org](http://www.americanrivers.org)

## Holiday Dinner Event at White Oak Pastures

Flint Riverkeeper® board and staff welcomed almost 100 friends from throughout the watershed to White Oak Pastures in Bluffton on Saturday, December 8th for the first annual Holiday Dinner Event. Guests were treated to appetizers and an open-bar preceding tours of the grassfed beef and free-range chicken pastures, the 4-acre organic garden and the two abattoirs. Tours were led by owners Will Harris, his daughter (and Flint Riverkeeper board member) Jenni Harris (White Oak Pastures' Marketing Manager) as well as Hollis Smith, Inventory Manager. After touring the farm and as the sun set, attendees dined on a supper of herb-roasted free-range chicken accompanied by Southern comfort foods and followed by a selection of dessert favorites. The evening's program was emceed by incoming Board Chairman Glenn Dowling. Individual presentations were made honoring the 2012 Flint Riverkeeper Award winners (see page 6 for details). A silent auction and live auction offered unique items and some fun bidding wars. Our thanks are extended to everyone who attended, donated auction items and to our sponsors of the events. Extra special thanks to the volunteers who worked to ensure the evening was a success!



Representative Debbie Buckner with her husband Mike enjoying dinner.



Randy Vining accepting his River Guardian'12 award from Glenn Dowling.

### Sincere THANKS to our Event Sponsors



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**Flint River Physical Therapy  
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## FRk Welcomes Paddle Georgia 2013 to the Lower Flint

Flint Riverkeeper welcomes Paddle Georgia, a project of Georgia River Network, to the Lower Flint June 15-21, 2013, 106 miles from Warwick, below the dam, to the boat basin in Bainbridge

**Registration opens February 14, 2013**

To sign-up for the information list, visit [www.garivers.org](http://www.garivers.org) and follow the Paddle GA link.

- **DAILY PADDLING TRIPS AVERAGING 15 MILES**
- **NIGHTLY CAMPING WITH MEALS, GAMES, ENTERTAINMENT AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**
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## 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.flintriverkeeper.org](http://www.flintriverkeeper.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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**Flint RIVERKEEPER®**

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

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 Gordon Rogers and guest submissions as noted. If you have an issue, article or pictures to share, please contact

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**THANKS for SUPPORTING YOUR  
FLINT RIVERKEEPER!**

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## Flint Riverkeeper 2012 Awards

At the end of each year, Flint Riverkeeper recognizes individuals and businesses who contributed time and resources to improve the Flint River watershed and the work of Flint Riverkeeper®. Here are the 2012 recipients:

**River Hero'12:** **Richard Huggins, Huggins Outboard**  
*Profound actions to restore or protect the Flint watershed*

**River Steward'12:** **Marty McLendon**  
*Actions on private property that restore and protect the Flint watershed*

**River Guardian'12:** **Randy Vining: the River Pirate**  
*Volunteer of the Year*

**Young Flint Warrior'12:** **Edward Newcomb**  
*Youth under 18 who has performed outstanding work in the Flint watershed*

**Flint for Life'12:** **Butler Wooten & Fryhofer**  
*Lifetime Achievement Award*

**Voice of the Flint'12:** **Heather Duncan, Macon Telegraph**  
*Outstanding journalistic coverage of issues affecting the Flint watershed*

**Public Servant of the Flint'12:** **Representative Debbie Buckner**  
*Outstanding legislative voice and representation of the Flint or general Georgia water issues that benefit the Flint watershed*