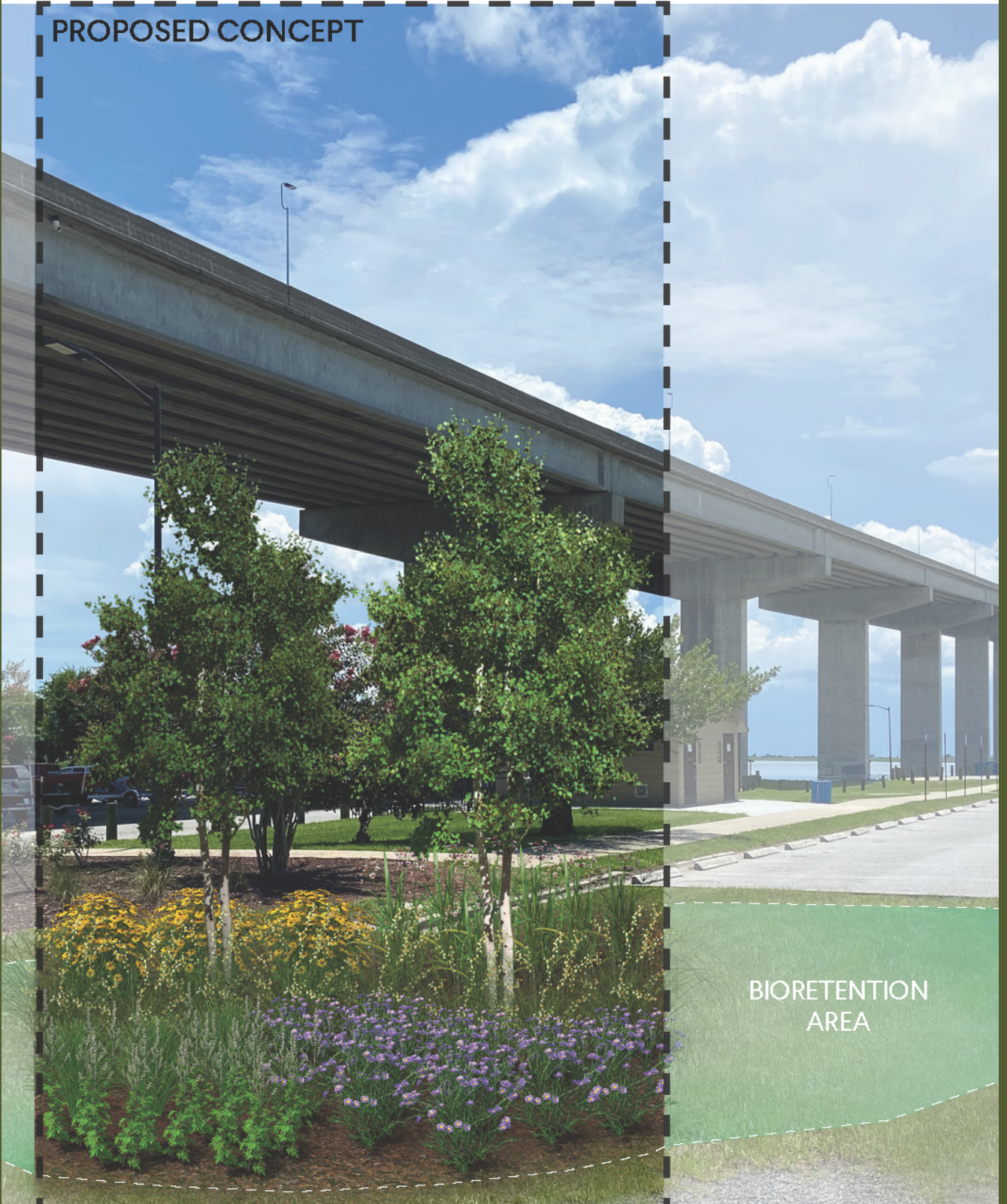


NONPOINT SOURCE PROGRAM

PROPOSED CONCEPT



BIORETENTION
AREA

ANNUAL REPORT

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The preparation of this report was financed through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under provisions of Section 319(h) of the Clean Water Act of 1987, as amended

Cover Photo Credit: City of Brunswick, FY2020 319(h) Project GI/LID Retrofits in Brunswick from Planning to Implementation

Dear Stakeholders:

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GAEPD) is proud to offer this annual report on the activities of Georgia’s Nonpoint Source Program during federal fiscal year 2023 (FFY2023). Financial support from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) through the Section 319(h) Nonpoint Source Implementation Grant allows us to work collaboratively with many state agency partners, including the Georgia Forestry Commission, the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission, and the Coastal Resources Division to address nonpoint source pollution across the state.

Georgia’s diverse watersheds – from the steep slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains to the sandy plains and marshes of the Atlantic coast – continue to be impacted by human activities and climate change.

Georgia’s Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan (Revised 2019) serves as an up-to-date tool for controlling and preventing pollution from nonpoint sources. It continues to implement a watershed approach and is designed to be an informative planning document for all partners and stakeholders involved in the prevention, control, and abatement of nonpoint sources of pollution in Georgia through the implementation of education campaigns, best management practices (BMPs) and restoration activities. GAEPD and our state and local partners are committed to implementing BMPs and other activities to reach our statewide goals outlined in the Plan.



Figure 1: Veronica with ACOE staff surveying potential oxbow restoration sites on the Savannah River in August 2023.

Working cooperatively maximizes financial and human resources to protect our rivers, lakes, shorelines, and streams. This report highlights some of the ways collaborative projects resulted in greater public knowledge of water resources issues, refined designs for structural BMPs, and improved water quality. We look forward to working with both experienced and new partners as our work continues in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Veronica Craw', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Veronica Craw
Nonpoint Source Program Manager
Georgia Environmental Protection Division

Georgia's Nonpoint Source Program

Georgia's Nonpoint Source Program is guided by *Georgia's Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan (Revised 2019)*. Many partners work collaboratively to implement the *Plan*, and in FFY2023, the following organizations led efforts in their respective areas of expertise to reduce nonpoint source pollution and protect our rivers, lakes, and streams.

Silviculture

Georgia Forestry Commission

The Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) encourages and monitors the voluntary implementation of forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs) statewide to prevent or reduce water pollution during forestry operations. GFC compiles a Silvicultural BMP Implementation and Compliance Survey every other year as part of Silviculture Long Term Goal 6 of the Plan to achieve a minimum of 90% compliance for all recommended silviculture BMPs through 2030. During FFY2023, the GFC completed forestry BMP Survey Inspections that will be included in the statewide 2023 BMP Survey. The 2021 BMP Survey had a strong overall implementation score of 92.58%. Further details will be provided in the final FY2023 BMP Survey, to be completed at the end of calendar year 2023.



Figure 2: Forestry BMP Demo Training for Talbot, Hancock, and Warren Counties in August 2023.

GFC conducted statewide BMP Assurance Monitoring of active or recently active forestry operations in response to complaints and requests. In addition, a total of 68 BMP Assurance Exams were completed, the results were documented, and the GFC advised and mediated any necessary corrections. GFC also provided in-person education, technical advice, training, and consultation on forestry BMPs. GFC continued to offer virtual meetings and education workshops as an option for participants and continues to work with its partners to plan and update virtual training programs.

Training Highlights	Technical Assistance
<p>33 in-person events where over 580 copies of BMP brochures distributed</p>	<p>16 unique complaints requiring a total of 27 complaint site visits/inspections</p>
<p>2 in-person Master Timber Harvester (MTH) workshops with 40 people in attendance</p>	<p>6 BMP Demonstrations for 70 participants</p>

<p>15 in-person Continuing Logger Education (CLE) trainings</p> <p>44 talks/trainings on BMPs</p> <p>567 loggers, timber buyers, foresters, forestry contractors, and landowners attended online CLE and MTH trainings in partnership with the Sustainable Forestry Initiative Implementation Committee</p>	<p>104 primary specific forestry BMP Advice Visits</p> <p>25 GFC Firebreak BMP Inspections</p> <p>33 One to One Logger Conferences in the field with 92 participants</p> <p>244 BMP Compliance Survey Checks</p>
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Agriculture

Georgia Soil & Water Conservation Commission

The Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission (GSWCC) is committed to providing education and financial incentives that reduce nonpoint agricultural contributions of nutrients, sediment, and pathogens into Georgia’s waterways.



During FFY2023, GAEPD and GSWCC continued developing the watershed-based plan and manual products for the active FFY2020 Section 319(h) Grant project in support of the *Georgia’s Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan (Revised 2019)*. These products include the expanded cow/calf and poultry specific editions of the *Best Management Practices for Georgia Agriculture Manual* and a watershed-based plan update to the Hard Labor Creek Watershed Management Plan. The project also included cost share funding for producers to implement water quality conservation based BMPs.

The first draft of the cow/calf edition was submitted to GAEPD in April 2023. GSWCC will continue with efforts to incorporate more information about common water quality BMPs seen in cow/calf commodity spaces. It is anticipated that work on the poultry manual will begin in 2024. Once completed, these available technical and financial resources will assist interested producers to successfully incorporate BMPs into their operations.

The first draft of the Hard Labor Creek Watershed Management Plan was submitted to GAEPD in March 2023. The plan focused on the watershed of the 303(d) impaired segments in the northern part of the watershed. Initial baseline sampling was conducted and incorporated into the draft plan. It is anticipated that the plan will be finalized in 2024.

Other active GSWCC projects during FFY2023 include:

- FY2019 - Implementing the WMPs for Big Indian Creek and Rooty Creek Watersheds
- FY2018 - Implementing the WMP for Coosawattee River-Carter’s Lake Watershed
- FY2018 - Implementing the WMP for Chickasawhatchee Creek Watershed
- FY2018 - Creating and Implementing Watershed Management Plans for North Fork and Middle Fork Broad River and Wahoo Creek-Little River



Figure 3: Example FY2018 GSWCC Agricultural BMPs cost sharing project. Before: direct access to stream by cattle and After: with installed exclusion fencing.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

The NRCS leveraged an existing National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) partnership with GAEPD to establish a procedure for implementing the Source Water Protection provisions of the 2018 Farm Bill. Actions mandated to complete further refinement of selected areas by September 30, 2021, included refining local priority areas in each State for drinking water protection; providing increased incentives for practices that relate to drinking water quality and quantity, while also benefitting producers; and dedicating at least **10** percent of available conservation funds to source water protection. Local priority areas have been selected in Georgia.

During the FFY2023 reporting period, the GAEPD Source Water Assessment Team (SWAT) staff attended one meeting with NRCS which included an update regarding ongoing activities and an overview of current partner projects in the selected area. Going forward, NRCS plans to host at least one meeting a year to coordinate with state partners and help the focus of NRCS agricultural conservation funding in the priority areas.

Urban – Onsite Sewage Disposal Systems

Georgia Department of Public Health

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), through County Boards of Health (CBH), oversees decentralized systems treating less than 10,000 gpd and discharging into an absorption field, and promotes maintenance among private septic system owners in accordance with the *Manual for On-Site Sewage Management Systems*. The DPH works to minimize health problems related to untreated human sewage, regulate and inspect new on-site sewage management systems (septic tanks/field lines), investigate and evaluate repairs made to improperly functioning on-site sewage



management systems, and educate, train, and certify individuals involved in installing, maintaining, and repairing on-site sewage management systems.

During FFY2023, CBH and Section 319(h) grantees partnered on septic system remediation projects in eleven watersheds. These projects aimed to reduce bacterial impacts on waterways through septic repair and replacement programs.

Section 319(h) Grant Projects Addressing Impacts from Onsite Sewage Disposal Systems

- FY2022 – Coahulla Creek Watershed Management Plan Implementation – Phase 2
- FY2022 – Implementation of Chattanooga Creek Watershed Management Plan for Nonpoint Water Quality Improvements
- FY2022 – City of Homeland – Implementation of the Nine Element EPA Watershed Management Plan for Spanish Creek in Charlton County
- FY2022 – Lookout Creek Watershed Management Plan Implementation Project-Phase 3
- FY2021 - South Chickamauga Headwaters WPM Implementation Project – Phase 3
- FY2020 - Warwoman Creek WMP Implementation Project
- FY2020 - Lookout Creek Watershed Management Plan Implementation Project-Phase 2
- FY2019 - Implementation of the Seventeen Mile River Watershed Management Plan
- FY2019 – Septic System and Water Quality Improvements of Horsepen Creek Watershed
- FY2019 – Implementing the 2019 Salacoa Creek Watershed Plan (HUC #0315010207)
- FY2018 – Lynn Creek TMDL Implementation Project



Figure 4: Example FY2019 Septic Repair BMP Project Installed in Pine Log and Salacoa Creek Watersheds

Coastal

DNR – Coastal Resources Division

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources – Coastal Resources Division (GADNR CRD) continued supporting the GAEPD’s Nonpoint Source Program by serving as the lead agency for the Georgia Coastal Nonpoint Source Program (CNPSP). Coastal programs and guidance policies included the

Georgia Clean Marina Program supported by Clean Vessel Act Pump Out Grants; the Georgia Coastal Management Program (GCMP); the Coastal and Ocean Management Program (COMP); and Georgia Coastal Management Program Section 309 Assessment 2021 to 2025 (2020).



Coastal ambient monitoring continued to be conducted through CRD’s Beach Water Quality Monitoring and Notification Program or Shellfish and Water Quality Monitoring Program for harvesting oysters and clams. In addition, GAEPD protected the 25-foot coastal marshlands buffer backed by GADNR CRD’s authority to issue permits through the Coastal Marshlands Protection Act.

GAEPD in partnership with GADNR CRD developed and implemented regional

stormwater education campaigns with from the Coastal Advisory Council, Coastal Hazards & Resiliency partners, the Georgia Healthy Beaches Program, and Green Growth Initiatives.

Finally, GAEPD and GADNR CRD prioritize coastal projects for 319(h) grant awards, prioritize and track channelization and eroding streambanks / shorelines, maintain a hydromodification database, and coordinate with the Living Shorelines Working Group for a stabilization / restoration projects and other Living Shorelines activities.

During FFY2023, GAEPD and GADNR CRD initiated the Update of the Coastal Stormwater Supplement (CSS) of the 2016 Georgia Stormwater Management Manual (GSMM) using FY2022 Section 319(h) grant funds. Updated sections of the CSS will align Green Infrastructure/Low Impact Development (GI/LID) stormwater control designs and practices with current research, new standards, ongoing GSMM goals, and future climate conditions. The updated CSS is expected to be finalized in 2024.

Coastal Section 319(h) Grant Funded Projects

Ongoing Section 319(h) Grant funded projects in coastal areas during FFY2023 include:

- FY2022 - Element 09: Stream Restoration & GI/LID Retrofits in Little Lotts Creek Watershed
- FY2022 - Element 14: Implementation of the Nine Element Watershed Management Plan for

Spanish Creek in Charlton County

- FY2020 - Element 07: GI/LID Retrofits in Brunswick – From Planning to Implementation

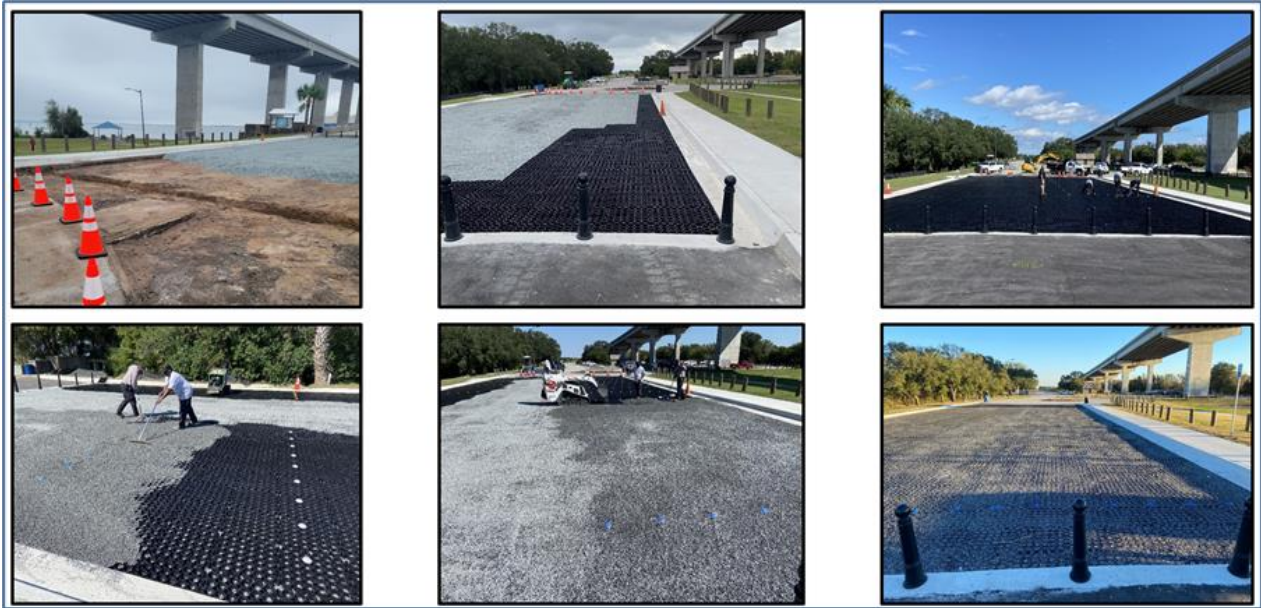


Figure 5: Permeable Pavement installed as part of FY2020 GI/LID Retrofits in Brunswick

During FFY2023, GAEPD staff completed the FFY2017 – Element 05 Section 319(h) Grant contract with the University of Georgia (UGA) Marine Extension & Georgia Sea Grant (MarEx GSG) for the *Coastal Green Infrastructure/Low Impact Development BMP Implementation Project*. This project designed and installed an enhanced wet swale (Jekyll Island) and developed permeable pavement, bioretention, bioswale (Jessup/Wayne County), and raingarden (Rincon/Effingham County) designs for future implementation. The enhanced wet swale system (8,336 CF) manages over 100,000 gallons of stormwater runoff annually from a 2.75-acre Public Safety Complex site and removes 0.78 pounds of nitrogen, 0.31 pounds of phosphorus, 4.9 pounds of BOD, and 0.2 tons of sediment per year (pollutant load reductions ranging 2-11%). The Jekyll Island Authority (JIA) partnered with MarEx GSG on an additional bioswale installation that provides 10,260 CU FT of storage and treatment.

Coastal Regional Water Planning Projects

The state funded Regional Water Plan Seed Grants are provided to support and incentivize local governments and other water users as they undertake their Regional Water Plan implementation responsibilities. During FFY2023 several Seed Grant funded projects in the Coastal Regional Water Council were conducted that address nonpoint sources and water quality issues.

Ongoing Regional Water Planning Seed Grants during FFY2023 include:

- SFY2022-01: Effect of Reduced Water Quantities on the Instream Function including Physicochemical Attributes, Nutrients, Algae, and Macroinvertebrates of the Savannah River
- SFY2021: Implementing Soil Erosion and Nutrient Control Management Practices in the Altamaha Regional Water Council Area
- SFY2020: A Pilot Web-Based Water Dashboard for Coastal Georgia Regional Water Planning

Two Regional Water Planning Seed Grants were completed in FFY2023.

- SFY2018: Integrating UGA Extension with the Altamaha, Coastal Georgia and Suwanee-Satilla Regional Water Councils Plans project resulted in data collected and disseminated through water quality/conservation programs to multiple audiences across three different Regional Water Planning Councils.
- SFY2020: Regional Analysis and Prioritization for Fecal Coliform Impairment Sources project produced a study on regional waterbodies in northwest Georgia impaired by excess fecal coliform (FC) and recommended priority areas for BMP implementation.

Land Acquisition and Green Space

GEFA: Georgia Land Conservation Program

During FFY2023, GAEPD continued to assist the Georgia Land Conservation Program (GLCP) administered by the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) to identify high-value conservation lands - particularly those lands that, if put into conservation, would have the greatest impact on mitigating nonpoint source pollution and protecting source waters.



This fiscal year GAEPD reviewed two applications and found the proposed projects would support the Land Acquisition and Green Space Long-Term Goals and Strategic Plan of Georgia's Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan. The GEFA Board approved the use of Clean Water State Revolving Fund dollars for the acquisition of both projects.

The City of Watkinsville acquired the 100-acre parcel of the Thomas Family Farm located within the city limits. Located in the Oconee River basin, the proposed Thomas Family Farm project may help address nonpoint source impairments in Calls Creek (HUC 030701010307), which is listed as Not Supporting for fecal coliform on Georgia's 2022 305(b)/303(d) List.



Figure 6: View of Thomas Family Farm located within the City of Watkinsville. Photo Credit: Sharyn Dickerson (Watkinsville). <https://www.cityofwatkinsville.com/254/Greenspace>

The Nature Conservancy purchased a 110-acre tract adjacent to the Chattahoochee National Forest. The project includes riparian lands of a tributary to Little Armuchee Creek (HUC 031501030403) that is currently supporting its designated fishing use. The tract will "expand the footprint of the National Forest within the Appalachian landscape, an area very high in climate resiliency and biodiversity."

GADNR Outdoor Stewardship Program

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GADNR) oversees the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program (GOSP), and funds projects consistent with the state's conservation goals through the Conserve Georgia Grant. Funds come from a dedicated 40% of an existing state sales tax on outdoor sporting goods and are distributed as grants or loans awarded to proposals approved by GADNR for the acquisition or stewardship of conservation lands.



The 2022-2023 cycle awarded in February of 2023 committed \$28.7 million in funding to support local parks, trails systems and state-owned lands. Grantees have also committed an estimated \$35 million to match grant dollars. Of the 12 selected projects, six are by local governments for the acquisition, development or stewardship of local parks or trail systems. Five proposals are for the acquisition of conservation land by GADNR, and one is for a stewardship project on state lands. Two local projects are expected to specifically provide stormwater and other nonpoint source management benefits in addition to land conservation:

City of Milton - Milton Greenspace will include bioswales and green infrastructure to manage stormwater runoff.

Clayton County Water Authority - Huie Group Camping, Outdoor Learning and Archery will include green infrastructure and buffer enhancements in a source water watershed. Section 319(h) funds have also been awarded to this project to strengthen water quality protection measures at the site.



Figure 7: Outreach event hosted by GADNR Wildlife Management Division releasing trout fingerlings into the Chattahoochee River.

Section 319(h) Nonpoint Source Implementation Grant

Since 1990, Congress has annually appropriated grant funds to states under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act to implement their approved Nonpoint Source Management Program. GAEPD uses these grant funds to administer its Nonpoint Source Program (NPSP), implement goals of Georgia's Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan (Revised 2019), and make awards available to public agencies in Georgia. Since 2012, Georgia has received approximately \$3.6 million each year to address nonpoint source pollution. Local governments, project partners, and citizens have annually contributed a minimum of 40 percent of total project costs in matching funds or in-kind services to these efforts.

FFY2023 Program Funds

GAEPD applies 50 percent of its Section 319(h) grant funds to resources and programmatic efforts for staff to successfully carry out the milestones and goals of the state's *Plan*.

Grants Unit: Administering Section 319(h) Grants

During FFY2023, GAEPD administered **64** Section 319(h) grant-funded projects, totaling more than **\$18.4** million in federal funds and **\$14.2** million in matching funds or in-kind services. The Grants Unit is responsible for the management of Section 319 Grants, certain state-funded grants, and other administrative functions. Unit activities for this fiscal year included:

- Partnering with other state agencies that manage agricultural, forestry, coastal, and urban programs addressing nonpoint source pollution
- Developing work plans, contracts, and inter-agency agreements
- Providing assistance to applicants developing competitive grant application work plans
- Reviewing and ranking final application work plans for competitive grant funds
- Advising selected sub-grantees on incorporating staff comments into work plans
- Tracking and accounting for expenditures and match contributions of grant awards
- Assisting financial personnel with reconciliation of any cost discrepancies that may occur during the invoicing process
- Submitting reports (work plans, progress, annual, and final reports), project budgets, invoices, and watershed information through the USEPA Grants Reporting Tracking System (GRTS) database

Grants Unit: Outreach Efforts

GAEPD is committed to sharing funding opportunities, technical knowledge, and lessons learned with partners and potential sub-grantees. Outreach to these organizations and individuals was conducted throughout the State of Georgia and to national audiences in FFY2023.

- Georgia Water Funders' Forum Workshop, Buford, GA – October 2022
- Georgia Association of Water Professionals, Marietta, GA – February 2023
- Georgia Water Resources Conference, Athens, GA – March 2023

- Georgia Association of Floodplain Managers, Flowery Branch, GA – April 2023
- Georgia Rural Water Association Conference, Jekyll Island, GA – May 2023
- Georgia Water First Workshop, Alto, GA – May 2023
- Georgia Water Funders' Forum Webinar, online – August 2023
- National Water Quality Monitoring Conference, Virginia Beach, VA – April 2023

The NWQMC presentation “*Monitoring Urban Green Infrastructure Projects in Georgia: Lessons from Section 319(h) Watershed Improvement Projects*” was selected by a national committee and allowed GAEPD to meet its Urban Nonpoint Source Program – Stormwater Long-Term Goal 1/Activity 2: Disseminate relevant GI research and BMPs through partnerships with existing conferences, institutions, and organizations. Target relevant stakeholders, including practitioners and elected officials.

Participation with USEPA’s National Nonpoint Source Program

In FFY2023 GAEPD was pleased to engage with USEPA headquarters staff and nonpoint source program staff from other states on several national initiatives. GAEPD staff attended meetings and provided input on two national workgroups: the 319 Guidelines Revision: Workplan Elements State/USEPA Workgroup and NPS Natural Hazard Mitigation and Climate Workgroup.

Outreach Unit: Educating Georgians on Nonpoint Source Pollution

GAEPD uses Section 319(h) Grant program funds to implement education activities to all age levels on the causes and impacts of nonpoint source pollution.

GAEPD reaches a statewide audience through a variety of programs and media: from classroom curricula to waterway cleanup activities, to a robust online presence. Each program serves its targeted stakeholders, and all programs work collaboratively to meet the needs of Georgia residents.

Project WET is an interdisciplinary, hands-on, water science curriculum that can be integrated into existing academic programming. The platform provides water education through published curricula, training workshops, community water events, and a worldwide network of educators, water resource professionals, and scientists. The goals of Georgia Project WET are to facilitate and promote awareness, appreciation, knowledge, and stewardship of water resources through classroom-ready teaching aids aligned to state education standards. In addition, Georgia Project WET offers educators the opportunity to participate in the River of Words, an international poetry and art contest for preK-12th grade students focused on the theme of watersheds. Each year, all winning art and poetry pieces from Georgia are published in a full color Art and Poetry Journal, are featured on the Georgia Project WET website, and may be available for display at libraries, schools, museums, conferences, non-profit organizations, and State buildings.

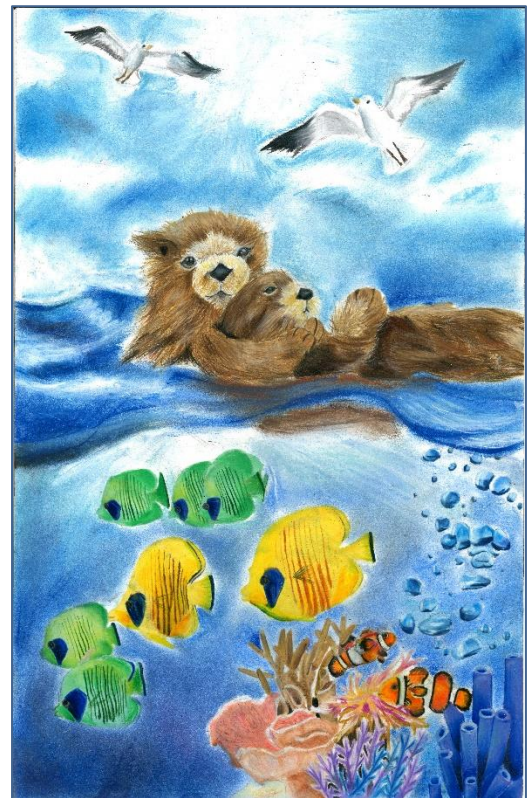


Figure 8: *Made for Each Otter* by Joy Yang, Grade 5, School: SKA Academy of Art and Design, Duluth, River of Words Grand Prize Winner 2023

During FFY2023, Project WET conducted **64** certification training workshops resulting in **518** educators certified in water science education and facilitated **1,900** preK-12 students in River of Words poetry and art projects resulting in **two** national grand prize winners, **30** national finalists, and **41** state winners.

Rivers Alive an annual, volunteer, waterway-cleanup partnership between GAEPD, the 20-member Rivers Alive board, local cleanup organizers, and a fiscal partner to process corporate funding in support of program activities. During the reporting period, the partnership produced **143** Rivers Alive cleanups involving **12,419** volunteers who removed **410,299** pounds of trash.



Figure 9: Rivers Alive Clean Up Event with GAEPD Watershed Protection Branch staff in the South River watershed. October 2023.

Georgia Adopt-A-Stream (AAS) is a citizen-based, volunteer monitoring and stream protection program targeting all waters in the state. Local governments, universities, and watershed organizations are encouraged to establish AAS programs and serve as coordinators and trainers, following the



Figure 10: Adopt-A-Stream Training on Pine Log Creek.

Quality Assurance Program Plan to train volunteers and collect water quality monitoring data. Achievements during the FFY2023 reporting period included:

- **299** Adopt-A-Stream Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) workshops
- **1,491** water quality monitoring volunteers certified
- **4,604** water quality testing events
- **181** groups at **578** active monitoring sites

These activities led to a greater awareness of water quality and nonpoint source pollution, active cooperation between the public and local governments in protecting water resources, and the collection of baseline water quality data. The AAS Program also assists with paddling events that involve teams of volunteers spending one day to a week taking one-time samples from multiple sites and conducting in situ and lab analysis to make a holistic assessment of water conditions within a watershed or river reach. The goal of

these large-scale monitoring events is to help set priorities to assure the most effective monitoring strategies.

While stream monitoring and educational workshops will continue to be the backbone of the Outreach Unit, staff has engaged in additional local watershed stewardship activities. These efforts include stream stabilization and rain garden projects that provide opportunities for homeowners and communities to help reduce nonpoint source pollution and improve water quality.

Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Unit: Developing Prioritized Section 305(b)/303(d) Listed Watersheds for TMDLs and TMDL Implementation

The work of GAEPD's TMDL Unit provided 100% match to the FFY2023 Section 319(h) Grant. The Unit's primary objectives are to develop TMDLs that will be used by state and local entities to restore impaired waters and lead to their "Supporting" the state's designated use. The TMDLs developed help set funding priorities for use of Section 319(h) grant funds.

In September 2022, USEPA developed and released guidance for a new Vision Period (2022 – 2032). States were asked to submit a list of TMDLs, TMDL alternatives, or Protection Plans that each State planned to work on in FY 2023 and 2024. This period of time is referred to as the "Bridge Period" as it bridges the time between the end of the first Vision Period (September 30, 2022) and when States will develop a new TMDL Prioritization Framework in 2024. On September 20, 2022, GAEPD submitted to USEPA the list of plans to be developed during the Bridge Period. GAEPD is planning to develop TMDLs for all waters in Category 5 for Fecal Coliform Bacteria on the 2022 305(b)/303(d) list (163 waters). The goal is to have all these TMDLs completed before the 2024 305(b)/303(d) list is completed. The reason GAEPD chose these TMDLs to work on is because the bacteria criteria changed from fecal coliform to E. coli or Enterococci as part of the 2019 Triennial Review.

In addition to developing bacteria TMDLs for waters in Category 5 on the 2022 list, GAEPD also developed TMDL supplements for all the fecal coliform TMDLs that were developed in the past. These TMDL supplements provide translators from Fecal Coliform to the new bacteria criteria E coli or Enterococci. Forty (40) TMDL supplement documents were submitted to USEPA on January 31, 2023, and were accepted by USEPA on May 11, 2023.

USEPA developed many fecal coliform TMDLs for GAEPD in the past using the BASINS watershed modeling approach. Most of these TMDLs were completed between 1998 and the early 2000's in response to the TMDL lawsuit. In the mid-2000s, GAEPD revised a majority of fecal coliform TMDLs that had developed using BASINS. The revised TMDLs used a Loading Curve Approach instead of BASINS. The TMDLs developed by USEPA were not revised at that time. GAEPD decided to revise all the fecal coliform TMDLs that USEPA developed in the past to use the Loading Curve Approach and to include waste load allocations and TMDLs for the new bacterial indicators. These TMDLs were included as part of the TMDL documents developed as part of the Bridge Metrics.

Progress toward completing Bridge Metric TMDLs and in revising USEPA fecal coliform TMDLs is provided below. In FY2023, GAEPD completed all the TMDLs included as part of the Bridge Metrics except for those in in the Chattahoochee and Flint River Basins. The Chattahoochee and Flint TMDLs were placed on public notice in October 2023 and have been submitted to USEPA for approval.

Final TMDLs Approved in FFY2023

- Altamaha River Basin Bacteria for Four Stream Segments – May 2023
- Coosa River Basin Bacteria for Thirty Stream Segments (22 new, 8 revised) – June 2023
- Ochlockonee River Bacteria for Three Stream Segments – January 2023
- Ocmulgee River Basin Bacteria for Nineteen Segments (14 new, 5 revised) – May 2023
- Oconee River Basin Bacteria for Twenty-Two Stream Segments (15 new, 7 revised) – May 2023
- Ogeechee River Basin Bacteria for Nine Stream Segments (7 new, 2 revised) – September 2023
- Satilla River Basin Bacteria for Eight Stream Segments - January 2023
- Savannah River Basin Bacteria for Eighteen Stream Segments (3 new, 15 revised) – September 2023
- St. Marys River Basin Bacteria Two Stream Segments – January 2023
- Suwannee River Basin Bacteria Eleven Stream Segments – January 2023
- Tallapoosa River Basin Bacteria Three Stream Segments (2 new, 1 revised) – June 2023
- Tennessee River Basin Bacteria Eight Stream Segments (3 new, 5 revised) – June 2023

Water Quality Standards from 2022 Triennial Review

As part of the 2022 Triennial Review of Water Quality Standards, GAEPD has derived draft human health ambient water quality criteria for 94 pollutants for which USEPA published updated criteria recommendations in 2015. GAEPD chose to derive state specific criteria using a probabilistic risk assessment method, which utilized data distributions from national drinking water and body weight data and regional fish consumption rate data. The probabilistic risk assessment method allowed EPD to make transparent risk management decisions when selecting criteria values to protect the target population. GAEPD has held two public meetings to explain the criteria derivation process and will hold a third in February 2024 to present the draft criteria values.

Other topics under consideration for the 2022 Triennial Review are USEPA's 2016 selenium criteria recommendation and the re-designation of several waterbodies to include the designated use of recreation based on public comments. GAEPD is planning to adopt USEPA's 4-part selenium criteria outright and has held stakeholder meetings in 2023 to discuss the criteria recommendation and solicit feedback. Nominating parties for waterbodies under consideration for a change in designated use will engage with stakeholders in 2024 to ensure community support for the designated use change.

Nutrients

Nutrients are essential for growth and development of healthy aquatic ecosystems. However, if not properly managed, nutrients in excessive amounts can have detrimental effects on human health and the environment, creating such water quality problems as excessive growth of macrophytes and phytoplankton, harmful algal blooms, dissolved oxygen depletion, and an imbalance of flora and fauna.

In Georgia, site specific nutrient criteria have been adopted for several major lakes and their tributaries, including most recently Lakes Oconee and Sinclair. Four of these lakes, Allatoona, Carters, Lanier, and Walter F. George, have been listed as impaired for chlorophyll a, which is the primary biological indicator in lakes for nutrient over enrichment. TMDLs, based on watershed modeling, have been completed to address the nutrient issues for Lake Allatoona (2013), Carters Lake (2016) and Lake Lanier (2017). These TMDLs require both point and nonpoint source reductions. Additionally,

nutrient monitoring is conducted at all GAEPD lake, estuary, stream and river monitoring sites. Nutrient monitoring is a requirement of all publicly owned treatment works (POTW) and many non-POTW National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits in Georgia.

Since 2005, Georgia has been implementing a strategy for addressing phosphorus loadings in state waters. The 2013 Nutrient Criteria Plan includes milestones through 2021 and will be revised in early 2024. In September 2023, GAEPD finalized Georgia's roadmap for the development of a comprehensive Nutrient Reduction Strategy for point and nonpoint source discharges. This document builds upon a draft roadmap focused on the development of a comprehensive nutrient permitting strategy for point sources that went through public review and feedback beginning in 2022. The document addresses existing laws, guidance documents, and permitting strategies, as well as GAEPD's proposed actions and timelines for revising or developing various related strategies and plans. The Roadmap for Developing and Updating Nutrient Reduction Strategies is available online at: <https://epd.georgia.gov/forms-permits/watershed-protection-branch-forms-permits/wastewater-permitting/permitting-strategies> .



Figure 11: Example of algal blooms due to excessive nutrients in livestock pond. Photo: GSWCC

FFY2023 Project Funds

Each year Georgia competitively awards fifty percent of Section 319(h) grant funds to local projects implementing watershed-based plans. Guidelines for these competitive awards are updated annually and are designed to ensure funding is directed to watersheds that are impaired due to nonpoint source pollution, have the greatest possibility of being restored to “Supporting” status on the Section 305(b)/303(d) list, and meet Georgia’s overall goals of reducing nonpoint source pollution in priority watersheds.

Section 319(h) Grant Priorities for Competitive Projects

- Small watersheds (HUC 10 and smaller)
- Restoration of impaired waters
- Protection of quality waters
- Implementation of TMDLs, Watershed Improvement Plans, Watershed Based Plans, and WMPs
- Leveraging other community resources to address nonpoint source pollution

FFY2023 Projects

GAEPD awarded and contracted projects in FY2022 to a diverse group of grantees located in watersheds in all ecoregions of the state. GAEPD was pleased to offer awards to **four (4)** partner organizations, including **one (1)** first-time grantee (indicated by an *) this fiscal year.

*City of Doraville - Community Garden Streambank Restoration in Northwoods Creek Watershed

This project will implement BMPs identified in the North Fork Peachtree Creek Watershed Improvement Plan (NFPCWIP) to meet water quality goals in the Northwoods Creek watershed. The project is designed to reduce bacteria and total suspended solid (TSS) pollutant loads into a community garden area next to the creek by implementing stream restoration on 420 linear feet of eroded streambank, removal of invasive vegetation, planting native vegetation, and education and outreach opportunities. Based on the *Climate and Economic Screening Tool (CEIST)*, the awarded FFY2023 project in the City of Doraville will benefit a census tract identified as disadvantaged based on Linguistic Isolation (94th percentile), Low Income (82nd percentile); and High School Education (26 percent).

City of Johns Creek - Town Center Stream Restoration and Pond Improvements

This project aims to implement BMPs identified in the Johns Creek Stormwater Management Master Plan to meet water quality goals in the Johns Creek watershed. The project is designed to reduce bacteria and total suspended solid (TSS) pollutant loads into Johns Creek by implementing retrofit of a existing wet pond, stabilize perennial streambank, vegetate stream corridor, and education and outreach opportunities.

Limestone Valley Resource Conservation & Development Council - Upper Oostanaula River implementation Phase 2

This project will continue to implement the Upper Oostanaula River Watershed Management Plan to meet water quality goals of several 303(d) impaired streams within the HUC10 watershed. BMPs will include at least 15 Agricultural practices on at least four farms, repairs for at least 27 failing septic systems, water quality monitoring, and education and outreach activities.

City of Sandy Springs - Abernathy Greenway South Improvements

This project will implement BMPs identified in the City of Sandy Springs 2019 Impaired Waters Phase II Plan to meet water quality goals in Marsh Creek. The project is designed to reduce bacteria and total suspended solid (TSS) pollutant loads into a tributary to Marsh Creek that runs through the Abernathy Greenway South by implementing stream restoration on 300 linear feet of eroded streambank, planting 500 linear feet of stream buffer vegetation, and five GI/LID practices.

Advancing Green Infrastructure

States, federal agencies, and local jurisdictions throughout the country are shifting to a new paradigm for managing urban stormwater runoff by using Green Infrastructure (GI) and Low Impact Development (LID) to protect or mimic natural hydrology. *Georgia's Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan (Revised 2019)* encourages implementation of GI/LID practices through the following goals:

- Track research on the performance, effectiveness, costs, and maintenance of GI/LID practices and collect performance data from Georgia projects in a range of locations and applications to ensure the highest levels of effectiveness
- Ensure that potential implementers of GI/LID practices, including the construction industry and municipalities, are aware of and have access to the necessary information to successfully install, maintain, and monitor their projects. Continue to support the implementation of GI and LID projects in priority and impaired watersheds, with an emphasis on operations and maintenance and post-construction monitoring
- Document and disseminate the costs and benefits of GI and LID practices and promote resources, including financial resources, that are available for their implementation

The majority of Georgia's competitively awarded Section 319(h) grant projects now include elements of green infrastructure or low impact development. Implementing GI/LID BMPs is the primary activity of some projects, while others focus on education and building understanding of how GI/LID can benefit communities and waterways.

Green Infrastructure Projects Active in FFY2023

- FY2022 – Lookout Creek Watershed Management Plan Implementation Project - Phase 3
- FY2022 - Coahulla Creek Watershed Management Plan Implementation Project - Phase 2
- FY2022 - Implementation of Chattanooga Creek Watershed Management Plan for Nonpoint Water Quality Improvements
- FY2022 - Stream Restoration & GI/LID Retrofits in Little Lotts Creek Watershed
- FY2022 – Bioretention Repair and Retrofit at Lakeside Park in Columbia County
- FY2022 – Water Quality Improvements at Roswell City Hall
- FY2021 – Phase 2 - Biota Improvement in an Urban Stream through Aquatic Habitat Restoration
- FY2021 - South Chickamauga Headwaters Watershed Management Plan Implementation Project - Phase 3
- FY2021 - Water Quality Improvements in West Jesters Creek Watershed
- FY2021 - Elaine & Ellsworth Green Infrastructure
- FY2021 - Pittman Park Green Infrastructure Improvements
- FY2021 - Cobbs Creek Green Infrastructure and Citizen Stormwater Education
- FY2020 - GI/LID Retrofits in Brunswick from Planning to Implementation

- FY2020 - Utoy Creek WMP Implementation Project - Phase 2
- FY2020 - Implementing Green Infrastructure BMPs in the Nancy Creek Watershed
- FY2020 - Nancy Creek at Windsor Meadows Park Stream and Water Quality Improvements
- FY2020 - Lookout Creek Watershed Management Plan Implementation Project-Phase 2
- FY2019 - Peacock Creek Restoration: Green Infrastructure Demonstration in Downtown Hinesville, Georgia
- FY2019 - Phase II - Coastal Green Infrastructure/Low Impact Development Stormwater Best Management Practices Implementation
- FY2018 - Lynn Creek TMDL Implementation Project
- FY2017 - Coastal Green Infrastructure/Low Impact Development BMP Implementation Project
- FY2017 – Wills Park Buffer Enhancement and Native Planting



Figure 12: Clean-up of Little Lotts Creek, Statesboro, GA as part of FY2022 Stream Restoration & GI/LID Retrofits in Little Lotts Creek Watershed project.



Figure 13: Outreach meeting hosted by City of Sandy Springs as part of FY2020 Nancy Creek at Windsor Meadows Park Stream and Water Quality Improvements project.

Success Story

On October 13, 2023, USEPA Headquarters accepted the Success Story from the State of Georgia entitled *Success in Bacteria Reduction in the Pine Log Creek Watershed: It's People that Solve Water Quality Issues*. The Success Story is a Type 2 which is "Showing progress towards achieving WQ goals" but not delisted from the 303(d) list of impaired waters.

The Success Story highlights Pine Log Creek which was added to Georgia's Clean Water Act (CWA) section 303(d) list of impaired waters for exceeding bacteria standards in 1998. Water quality monitoring of fecal coliform in 2001 and 2019 showed no improvement after limited watershed improvement efforts in 2006 and 2013. In 2017, partners reenergized implementation using Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) funding to develop the 2019 Salacoa and 2020 Pine Log Creek watershed management plans (WMPs). Since 2020, four septic best management practices (BMPs) and 12 agricultural BMPs have been implemented using CWA section 319(h) and NRCS funds in the Pine Log Creek watershed. Monitoring conducted in 2022 using new *Escherichia coli* standards shows bacteria reductions and improvements in water quality in Pine Log Creek.

For FFY23 Success Story, GAEPD opted to use the new online format developed by USEPA. The new format allows flexibility in story creation by streamlining the narrative text and removing the restrictions on the number of pictures and data graphs previously limited to the previous 2-page format. GAEPD submitted nine images including maps, photos, and a data graph.

NONPOINT SOURCE SUCCESS STORYGEORGIA

Success in Bacteria Reduction in the Pine Log Creek Watershed: It's People that Solve Water Quality Issues.

Abstract	Water Quality	Highlights	Partners & Funding
<h3>Story Highlights</h3> <p>For over 15 years, GAEPD has worked to improve water quality in the Pine Log and Salacoa Creek watersheds. In 2017, NRCS began a pilot project for priority assessment using NWQI funds. GAEPD was asked for watershed recommendations for these new additional planning funds. Local CWA 319 partner, the Limestone Valley Resource Conservation and Development Council (LVRCD), was selected by NRCS and led the development of the 2019 Update to the Salacoa WMP and the 2020 Pine Log Creek WMP. These planning activities helped jump-start local interest in improving water quality and habitat in several 303(d)-listed streams in both watersheds. The working partnership of GAEPD, NRCS, and LVRCD, as well as new interest from local communities and landowners, initiated multiple implementation efforts in both the Salacoa and Pine Log Creek watersheds. In 2020, LVRCD was awarded Fiscal Year 2019 CWA 319 funds to implement both</p>			

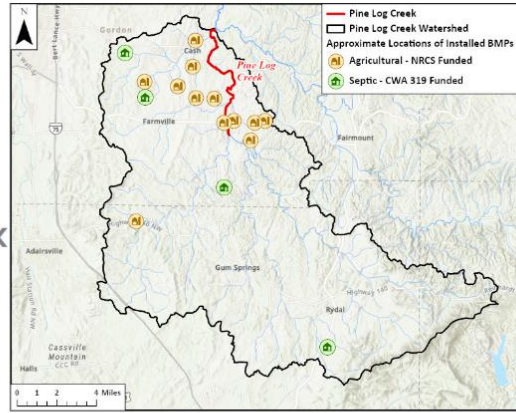


Figure 3 Approximate Locations of Agricultural and Septic BMP Projects in Pine Log Creek Watershed

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Figure 14: FFY23 Success Story in new online format will be available on the USEPA website.

Nonpoint Source Program Management Goals

Tracking Milestones, Benchmarks and Timeline

GAEPD uses three primary mechanisms for tracking the progress of *Georgia's Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan (Revised 2019)*:

1. USEPA Grant Reporting and Tracking System (GRTS) to document Section 319(h) grant project outcomes (water quality improvements, reductions in NPS pollutant loadings).
2. GAEPD NPSP Annual Reports to USEPA to summarize progress in meeting milestones and goals associated with TMDLs, watershed planning, outreach and education, wetlands certification, grant administration, success stories, partners, and other strategies.
3. GAEPD Water Quality Integrated Report to evaluate the water quality of surface water and groundwater and the nature, extent, and causes of documented water quality problems in Georgia. This Report complies with requirements of the Clean Water Act Sections 303(d), 314, and 319, and summarizes ongoing water planning efforts; wetland, estuary, and coastal public health/aquatic life issues; and water protection, groundwater, and drinking water programs.

Additional methods of measuring progress include Water Quality Tracking Tables and Programmatic Indicator Tracking Tables that will be combined into one *Georgia's Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan (Revised 2019)* Implementation Table and updated annually. The 2019 *Plan* revision also includes a new "Assessment of Plan Implementation" chapter describing how GAEPD will assess BMP efficacy and restoration efforts by explicitly connecting implementation to water quality. In the past, GAEPD has not directed the full potential of a substantial amount of collected data toward consistently and comprehensively assessing the impact of implementing *Georgia's Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan (Revised 2019)* on water quality. To this end, GAEPD will develop a model for connecting all relevant components of NPSP activities, as identified in *Georgia's Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan (Revised 2019)*, to water quality outcomes. The "Assessment of Plan Implementation" chapter provides a framework for identifying new opportunities and data gaps over the next five years and sets the groundwork for an iterative assessment process.

Typically, USEPA requires state nonpoint source plans to be revised every five years. Following that schedule, GAEPD staff and partners are in active development of the revised *Georgia's Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan* with a target finalization date of summer 2024. In October 2023, USEPA released *Draft Revision for Public Comment of NPS Grants Guidelines for States and Territories* which includes new flexibilities and expectations to ensure the equitable delivery of §319 NPS program benefits for communities impacted by water quality challenges as well as incorporates new science and information to advance climate resilience through nonpoint source solutions. The revised USEPA guidelines are projected to be finalized in spring 2024. GAEPD will be using the draft revised USEPA guidelines to steer the revisions of the future *Georgia's Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan*.

During FFY2023, GAEPD continued to compile data on progress to meet Georgia's Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan (Revised 2019) milestones shown in the chart below. The symbol "-" means "not required in current Report". Due to release of the draft USEPA guidelines and the ongoing revision of the *Georgia's Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan*, milestones for 2024 were not included.

Statewide Milestones & Load Reductions

Statewide Milestones for Water Quality Improvement	2023	Milestone Progress
WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS FROM NONPOINT SOURCE CONTROLS		
<p><u>Number of stream segments supporting designated use on Georgia's 305(b)/303(d) list of waters:</u> Identify the number of stream segments supporting designated use by meeting all water quality standards (List of waters published every two years).</p>	-	1068
<p><u>Cumulative number of stream segments on Georgia's 305(b)/ 303(d) list of waters where one or more impairments have been restored to meet water quality standards:</u> Identify the number of stream segments where one or more impairments have been restored to meet water quality standards (List of waters published every two years).</p>	-	39
INTERIM PROGRESS TOWARD RESTORED WATER QUALITY AND HYDROLOGY		
<p><u>Report on water bodies identified on Georgia's 305(b)/303(d) list of impaired waters as being primarily NPS impaired that are partially or fully restored or show water quality improvement:</u> Submit NPS success story to USEPA.</p>	1	<p style="text-align: center;">One Type 2 Title: <i>Success in Bacteria Reduction in the Pine Log Creek Watershed: It's People that Solve Water Quality Issues.</i> Accepted October 2023 (Limestone Valley RC&D, NRCS, Gordon County)</p>
<p><u>Tracking ambient water quality vs. stream water quality standards for Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Fecal Coliform, Dissolved Oxygen, and Biota:</u> Number of streams where water quality data was collected by Adopt-a-Stream or GAEPD for use in addressing water quality issues.</p>	50	<p>Monthly sampling during calendar year 2023 of 150 rivers/streams, 22 lakes & 11 estuaries for routine parameters (nutrients, BODS, TSS, DO, pH, temperature, conductivity) at 230 sites; for ortho-phosphate at 78 sites; for bacteria at 162 sites; for metals at 75 sites; for chlorophyll a at 71 sites; for diatoms at 4 sites; and for macroinvertebrates at 6 sites.</p>
<p><u>Tracking target trophic status in lakes and estuaries:</u> Produce waterbody reports documenting trophic status in Georgia lakes and estuaries.</p>	On-Going	<p>Monthly ambient water quality sampling during the growing season: 22 lakes and embayments at 60 sites and 11 estuaries at 14 sites</p>

Statewide Milestones for Water Quality Improvement	2023	Milestone Progress
<p><u>Green infrastructure within watersheds:</u> Target number of 319 funded projects that are implementing green infrastructure BMPs.</p>	3	<p>FFY21-09 <i>Pittman Park Green Infrastructure Improvements</i> City of Atlanta \$1,000,000 (\$400,000 federal/600,000 match)</p> <p>FFY20-10 <i>Implementing Green Infrastructure BMPs in the Nancy Creek Watershed</i> City of Peachtree Corners \$792,749 (\$400,000 federal/\$392,749 match)</p> <p>FFY20-07 <i>GI/LID Retrofits in Brunswick - From Planning to Implementation</i> City of Brunswick \$489,023 (\$293,289 federal/\$195,734 match)</p>
PROTECTION OF HIGH QUALITY WATERS		
<p><u>Attain specific load reduction or maintenance goals in protection oriented plans covering healthy watersheds:</u> Attaining specific load reduction goals (Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Sediment, Fecal Coliform) for grant projects implementing Healthy Watershed Initiative WMPs that meet USEPA's nine elements.</p>	1	<p>FY22-09 Stream Restoration & GI/LID Retrofits in Little Lotts Creek Watershed City of Statesboro</p> <p>ongoing</p>
<p><u>Number of BMPs implemented in HWI projects:</u> Track the number of BMPs grant projects implemented in concurrence with Healthy Watershed Initiative WMPs.</p>	1	<p>FY22-09 Stream Restoration & GI/LID Retrofits in Little Lotts Creek Watershed City of Statesboro</p> <p>1,050 linear feet of Stream Restoration</p> <p>1,200-square foot GI/LID bioretention/bioswale</p>
NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTANT LOAD REDUCTION		
<p><u>Estimated annual reductions in pounds of nitrogen to water bodies (from Section 319 funded projects):</u> Annually review information from NPS staff and project stakeholders for NPS load reductions of nitrogen; and include information in NPS annual report and GRTS.</p>	60,000 lbs.	8,236 lbs.*

Statewide Milestones for Water Quality Improvement	2023	Milestone Progress
<p><u>Estimated annual reductions in pounds of phosphorus from NPS to water bodies (from Section 319 funded projects):</u> Annually review information from NPS staff and project partners for NPS load reductions of phosphorus; and include information in NPS annual report and GRTS.</p>	25,000 lbs.	1,639 lbs.*
<p><u>Estimated annual reductions in tons of sediment to water bodies (from Section 319 funded projects):</u> Annually review information from NPS staff and project partners for NPS load reductions of sediment; and include information in NPS annual report and GRTS.</p>	15,000 tons	6,490 tons*
*Lower load reductions were expected due to the number of projects installing small scale GI/LID BMPs.		
IMPLEMENTATION OF NONPOINT SOURCE CONTROLS		
<p><u>Number of TMDLs or alternatives developed for impaired watersheds:</u> Develop TMDLs or alternatives for impaired waters.</p>	5	<p>Ninety Four final Bacteria TMDLs approved Forty Three revised final Bacteria TMDLs approved</p>
<p><u>Statistically based survey of implementation rates:</u> Conduct the Biennial Silviculture implementation survey.</p>	-	<p>The results from the 2023 statewide Biennial Silviculture implementation survey will be completed at the end of calendar year 2023.</p> <p>Previous survey was completed in 2021. The BMP Survey evaluated 50,420.69 acres of forestry operations at 260 eligible sites.</p> <p>Rating for overall BMP implementation: 92.58% Rating for statewide overall stream mileage in full BMP compliance: 93.90%</p>
PUBLIC EDUCATION, AWARENESS, AND ACTION		
<p><u>Participation rates in citizen monitoring activities:</u> Maintain a database of number of active Georgia Adopt-A-Stream monitoring sites annually.</p>	300	4,604 water quality testing events were conducted at 578 active monitoring sites
<p><u>Participation rates in public awareness and education efforts:</u> Maintain a database of Rivers Alive volunteers to determine number of active participants annually.</p>	20,000	143 Rivers Alive cleanups involving 12,419 volunteers removed 410,299 pounds of trash

Statewide Milestones for Water Quality Improvement	2023	Milestone Progress
<p><u>Participation rates and activity of local watershed groups:</u> Maintain a database of Georgia Adopt-A-Stream participating volunteers to track productivity and diversity of local watershed groups. Track the number of active watershed groups annually.</p>	150	<p>299 Adopt-A-Stream QA/QC workshops certified 1,491 water quality monitoring volunteers; 181 active watershed groups participated in water quality testing</p>
PROGRAM MEASURES OF SUCCESS		
<p><u>Track number of partners in watershed project implementation:</u> Use Grants Reporting and Tracking System to annually track the number of partners participating in watershed project implementation.</p>	15	<p>During FFY2023 for grant years FFY2017 – FFY2023:</p> <p>28 different partners 13 City Governments 1 Community Improvement Districts 1 Consolidated Government 1 County Governments 4 RC&Ds 2 Regional Commissions 1 Soil & Water Conservation District 4 State Government Agencies 1 State University</p>
<p><u>Number of nine element watershed-based plans created or updated:</u> Nine element watershed-based plans developed by NPS plan.</p>	1	<p>FY20-05 Implementing the Agricultural Section of the State Nonpoint Source Program Plan (includes developing Hard Labor Creek WMP) - ongoing</p>
<p><u>Progress in reducing unliquidated obligations (ULO):</u> Percentage of ULO funds anticipated yearly GAEPD (total remaining funds/total awarded = percentage ULO).</p>	USEPA R4 Target	<p>FY17 – 0% FY18 – 29% FY19 – 48% FY20 – 86% FY21 – 86% FY22 – 95% FY23 – 100% (GRTS: December 28, 2023)</p>

Advancing State and National Goals

With continued support from USEPA, partner agencies, and local sub-grantees, GAEPD is eager to continue efforts to protect and restore watersheds next year and beyond. Our largest effort for FFY2024 will be to submit Georgia's updated Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan to USEPA for approval. The process to update the plan will include both technical review and engagement efforts to ensure the state's goals, objectives, and annual milestones are current.

Equity and Environmental Justice Efforts

GAEPD remains committed to advancing equity and environmental justice efforts at the state level. Goals for FFY2023 and beyond include:

- Collaborate with the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) and the Georgia Funders' Forum to align affordability criteria and definitions of "disadvantaged community" or "environmental justice community" for use in funding decisions.
- More deliberate use of USEPA's EJScreen: Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool, the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, and other prioritization tools to identify projects in areas of greatest need and environmental impact.
- Create agency workgroup to support environmental justice goals among GAEPD's Nonpoint Source Program and our permitting and monitoring programs.

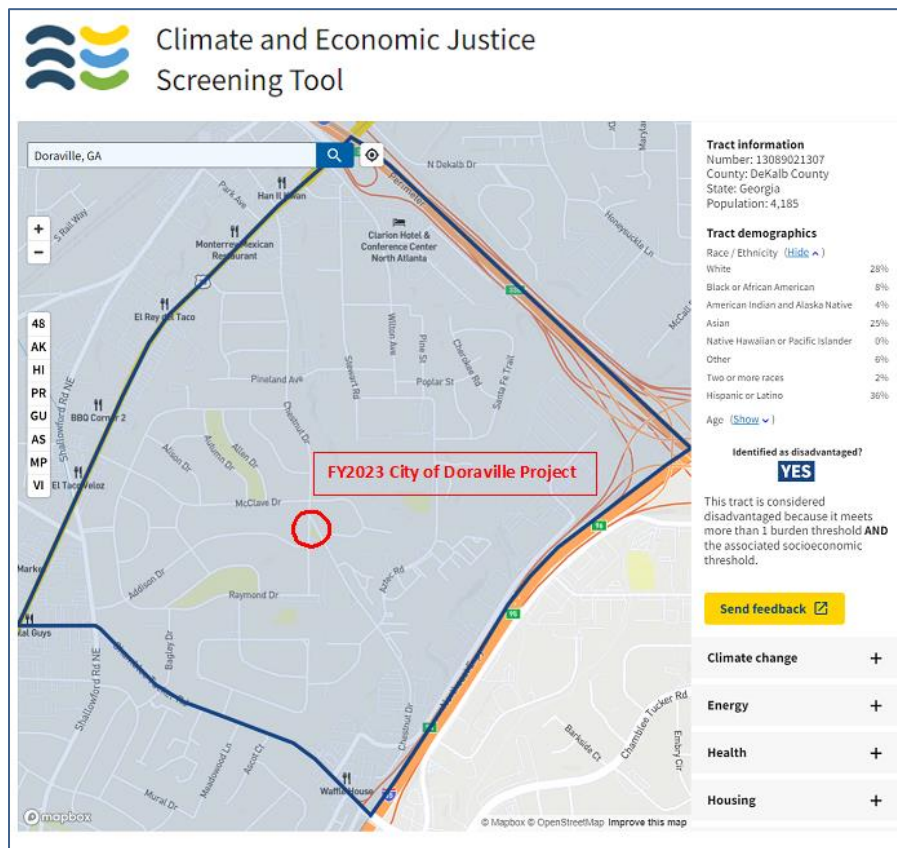


Figure 15: Recent example use of CEJST used to identify FY2023 City of Doraville project area as disadvantaged.

Priority Watersheds

GAEPD will be refining new priority watersheds using USEPA's Recovery Potential Screening (RPS) tool. At a minimum, GAEPD anticipates developing two priority lists - one for healthy watersheds and one for impaired watersheds. Using the RPS will allow Georgia to compare watershed conditions and ensure Section 319(h) funds will be invested in watersheds with high potential for successful protection and restoration.

Revision of Statewide NPS Plan with National Priorities

GAEPD will use the process of updating its Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan as an opportunity to ensure nonpoint source work throughout the state is closely aligned with national priorities. The updated plan will include goals and activities to specifically address:

- Nutrient Pollution
- Equity and Environmental Justice
- Healthy Waters and Watersheds
- Climate Resilience
- Innovative Financing for Nonpoint Source Solutions



Figure 16: Headwaters of Warwoman Creek in Upper Savannah River Basin.