GEORGIA
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DIVISION

NONPOINT SOURCE PROGRAM

ANNUAL REPORT FFY2024

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Cover Photo: FY2018 Stream Restoration of North Fork Nancy Creek from I-285 to Murphey Candler Lake

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 the October 2023 through September 2024 reporting period of federal fiscal year 2024 (FFY2024). 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.

Figure 1: Veronica Craw leads the Dukes Creek Falls nature walk (Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest of Georgia) as part of Confluence, the annual conference hosted by GA Adopt-A-Stream, March 2024.

Georgia's Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan (Revised 2019) serves as a 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 reaching our statewide goals outlined in the Plan.

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 Plan implementation continues in the future.

Sincerely,

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 FFY2024, 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 FFY2024, the GFC completed and presented the 2023 BMP Survey showing an overall implementation score of **96.81% -** see details in Summary Table. This strong score represents a **4.23%** improvement from the 2021 BMP Survey. In the FFY2024 reporting period, the GFC began forestry BMP Survey Inspections for the statewide 2025 BMP Survey. Summary Table provides a review of actual BMP Implementation scores plus the number of actual Water Quality Risks (WQRs) found for each category in 2023 and 2021.

Summary Table

Practice or Category	2021 IMPLEMENTATION % BMPs Implemented and (# WQRs)	% Point Change from 2021	2023 IMPLEMENTATION % BMPs Implemented and (# WQRs)
Stream Crossings	85.53% (33WQRs)	up 8.85	94.38% (20 WQRs)
Forest Roads	93.49% (0 WQRs)	up 2.08	95.57% (0 WQRs)
Timber Harvesting	97.08% (1 WQR)	up 1.81	98.89% (2 WQRs)
Mechanical Site Preparation	90.20% (0 WQRs)	up 5.85	96.05% (0 WQRs)
Chemical Site Preparation	97.19% (0 WQRs)	up 2.81	100.00% (0 WQRs)
Firebreaks/Burning	81.47% (0 WQRs)	up 8.36	89.83% (0 WQRs)
Artificial Regeneration (Tree Planting)	93.89% (0 WQRs)	up 4.70	98.59% (1 WQRs)
Equipment Servicing	97.41% (0 WQRs)	up 1.94	99.35% (0 WQRs)
Special Management Areas	91.53% (6 WQRs)	up 5.48	97.01% (2 WQRs)
Forest Fertilization	100% (0 WQRs)	NA	NA
Streamside Management Zones (SMZs)	90.98% (18 WQRs)	up 7.00	97.98% (4 WQRs)
Weighted Overall Average	**92.58%** (58 WQRs on just 29 of 260 site) 88.85% of all sites had 0 WQRs	up 4.23	**96.81%** (29 WQRs on just 15 of 266 sites) 94.36% of all sites had 0 WQRs

Table 1: BMP implementation by practice or category, taken from the 2023 Forestry Best Management Practices Implementation Survey Highlights.

GFC conducted statewide BMP Assurance Monitoring of active or recently active forestry operations in response to complaints and requests. In addition, a total of **69** 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
17 in-person events where over **343** copies of BMP brochures distributed **2** in-person Master Timber Harvester (MTH) workshops with **27** people in attendance **15** in-person Continuing Logger Education (CLE) trainings with over **570** attendees **37** talks/trainings on BMPs reaching over **2,000** attendees **237** loggers, timber buyers, foresters, forestry contractors, and landowners attended virtual, CLE and MTH trainings in partnership with the Sustainable Forestry Initiative Implementation Committee	**18** unique complaints requiring a total of **32** complaint site visits/inspections **15** BMP Demonstrations for **179** participants **103** primary specific forestry BMP Advice Visits **247** GFC Firebreak BMP Inspections **18** One to One Logger Conferences in the field with **26** participants **56** BMP Compliance Survey Checks

Agriculture

Georgia Soil & Water Conservation Commission

The Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission (GSWCC) and GAEPD continue to partner in the effort to achieve the goals set forth in the agricultural section of Georgia's Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan (Revised 2019). The GSWCC is committed to providing education and financial incentives that reduce nonpoint agricultural contributions of nutrients, sediment, and pathogens into Georgia's waterways.

During FFY2024, GAEPD and GSWCC continued applying active FY2020 Section 319(h) Grant funds to develop expanded cow/calf and poultry specific editions to the Best Management Practices for Georgia Agriculture Manual and to update the Hard Labor Creek Watershed Management Plan. The cow/calf and poultry editions are in the final draft stages and will be available in digital and print form to these sector-specific producers early in 2025. The expanded editions will provide information on technical and financial resources available to assist interested producers in successfully incorporating BMPs into their operations. The Hard Labor Creek Watershed Management Plan has been updated and is available for stakeholders to reference for BMP implementation projects that address identified areas for improvement within the 104,778-acre watershed. The watershed-based plan update also provided cost-share funding for producers to implement water quality conservation-based BMPs.

GSWCC partnered with agricultural producers in FFY2024 to implement agricultural BMPs into their operations for a total project value of **$152,212**. Contracted projects included the following BMPs to reduce pollutant loadings from farms in close proximity to targeted surface waters:

Exclusion or Cross Fencing	14,850 linear feet
Pasture improvement	119.5 Acres
Heavy Use Area Protection	10,936 square feet
Streambank Protection	100 linear and 2500 square feet of stabilization

GSWCC District staff partnered with various Lead Organizations on the following Section 319(h) Grant funded projects in FFY2024:

- FY2022 - Bioretention Repair and Retrofit at Lakeside Park in Columbia County
- FY2022 - Implementation of Chattanooga Creek Watershed Management Plan for Nonpoint Water Quality Improvements
- FY2022 - Coahulla Creek Watershed Management Plan Implementation - Phase 2
- FY2022 - Lookout Creek Watershed Management Plan Implementation Project-Phase 3
- FY2021 - South Chickamauga Headwaters Watershed Management Plan Implementation Project - Phase 3
- FY2021 - Southwest Georgia Water Resources Education Program
- FY2020 - Better Back Roads to Improve Water Quality & Aquatic Habitat in Sumter and Webster County Watersheds
- FY2020 - Lookout Creek Watershed Management Plan Implementation Project - Phase 2

Figure 2: Heavy Use Area Protection (Stephens County) - FY2018 Creating and Implementing Watershed Management Plans in Accordance with the Agricultural Section of the State Nonpoint Source Plan

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.

Although the NRCS planned 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, there was no meeting held by the NRCS with the GAEPD Source Water Assessment Team (SWAT) staff during the FFY2024 reporting period.

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 FFY2024, CBH and Section 319(h) grantees partnered on septic system remediation projects in eight 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

CBH and Section 319(h) grant partners completed septic system projects in four watersheds during FFY2024 with the following results:

- FY2019 – Implementation of the Seventeen Mile River Watershed Management Plan: Completed 18 septic system BMPs and one septic maintenance workshop.
- FY2019 – Septic System and Water Quality Improvements of Horsepen Creek Watershed: Replaced 21 and repaired one failing septic systems. Monthly water quality testing showed a significant reduction of fecal coliform bacteria at five testing sites.
- FY2019 – Implementing the 2019 Salacoa Creek Watershed Plan (HUC #0315010207): Repaired/replaced 35 and installed one new septic systems. Monitoring using new E. coli standards showed reductions of bacteria in watershed. Project was approved as USEPA FFY2023 Success Story entitled **Success in Bacteria Reduction in the Pine Log Creek Watershed: It's People that Solve Water Quality Issues.**
- FY2018 – Lynn Creek TMDL Implementation Project: Completed four septic tank cleanouts and four septic system repairs/replacements.

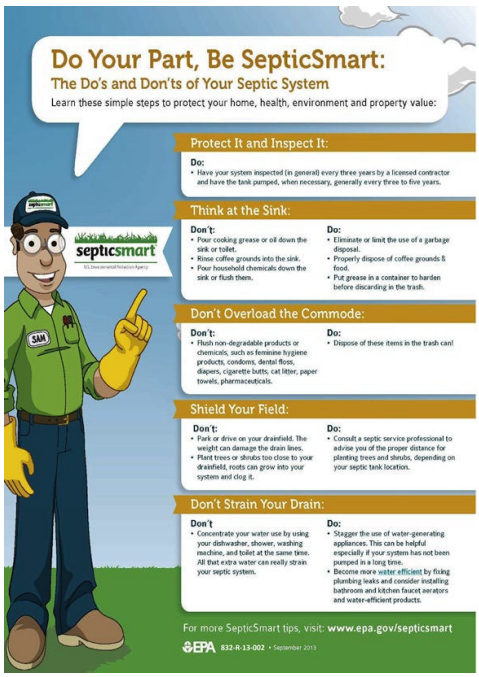

Figure 3: Septic Operations & Maintenance Tips - FY2020 Phase 2 Lookout Creek Watershed Management Plan Implementation Project

Coastal

DNR – Coastal Resources Division

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources – Coastal Resources Division (GADNR CRD) continued supporting the GAEPD's Nonpoint Source Program during FFY2024 by serving as the primary implementing partner agency for the Georgia Coastal Nonpoint Source Program (CNPSP). Ongoing 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.

GAEPD in partnership with GADNR CRD continued to develop and implement regional stormwater education campaigns with assistance from the Coastal Advisory Council, Coastal Hazards & Resiliency partners, the Georgia Healthy Beaches Program, and Green Growth Initiatives. In addition, GAEPD maintained ongoing protection of the 25-foot coastal marshlands buffer backed by GADNR CRD's authority to issue permits through the Coastal Marshlands Protection Act. GAEPD and GADNR CRD also prioritized and tracked channelization and eroding streambanks / shorelines; maintained a hydromodification database; and coordinated with the Living Shorelines Working Group for stabilization / restoration projects and other Living Shorelines activities.

During FFY2024, GAEPD and GADNR CRD continued updating the Coastal Stormwater Supplement (CSS) of the 2016 Georgia Stormwater Management Manual (GSMM) under a FY2022 Section 319(h) grant. Updated sections of the CSS will align Green Infrastructure/Low Impact Development (GI/LID)

Figure 4: Bio-infiltration BMPs in Bradwell Park - FY2019 Peacock Creek Restoration: Green Infrastructure Demonstration in Downtown Hinesville, Georgia

stormwater control designs and practices with current research, new standards, ongoing GSMM goals, and future climate conditions. As of this report, the Needs Assessment Survey has been completed and all Advisory Teams have delivered input to the Technical Review Team for evaluation. Revisions will be enhanced with graphics, photos, tables, and charts and the final updated CSS will be made available as an online document in early 2026.

Coastal Section 319(h) Grant Funded Projects

Ongoing Section 319(h) Grant funded projects in coastal areas during FFY2024 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: Project was amended with additional funding and deadline extended to March 31, 2025, to allow for installation of remaining BMPs.

During FFY2024, GAEPD staff completed the FY2019-Element 13 Section 319(h) Grant contract with the University of Georgia (UGA) Carl Vinson Institute of Government for the project titled *Peacock Creek Restoration: Green Infrastructure Demonstration in Downtown Hinesville, Georgia.* This project addressed nonpoint source pollution impacting an impaired 19-mile segment of Peacock Creek by reducing urban runoff from the City of Hinesville with the installation of 3,800 square feet of bio-infiltration areas (combination of pervious pavers, rain garden, and bioswales) in Bradwell Park.

Coastal Georgia Regional Water Planning Projects

The state funds Regional Water Plan Seed Grants to support and incentivize local governments and other water users as they undertake their Regional Water Plan implementation responsibilities. During FFY2024 GAEPD funded several Seed Grant projects that address nonpoint sources and water quality issues in the Coastal Georgia Regional Water Planning Council area.
Ongoing Regional Water Planning Seed Grants during FFY2024 include:

- SFY2023: Master Irrigator Developmental Program
- SFY2022-01: Effect of Reduced Water Quantities on the Instream Function including Physicochemical Attributes, Nutrients, Algae, and Macroinvertebrates of the Savannah River

During FFY2024, GAEPD staff closed out the following Regional Water Planning Seed Grant projects:

- SFY2021: "Implementing Soil Erosion and Nutrient Control Management Practices in the Altamaha Regional Water Planning Council Area" – Pine Country Resource Conservation & Development Council (RC&D) partnered with various agencies to demonstrate farming BMPs and increase landowner knowledge of nonpoint source pollution and water quality. Project partners advised agricultural producers in the installation of sixteen BMPs within the project area.
- SFY2020: "A Pilot Web-Based Water Dashboard for Coastal Georgia Regional Water Planning" - Georgia Southern University's Institute for Water and Health (IWH) developed and pilot-tested a web-based water dashboard on Tableau to summarize, display, and contextualize historical and current hydrologic conditions based on regional (a) precipitation, (b) streamflow, (c) and groundwater trends. Final dashboard graphics and information were posted on the IWH website and made available to the public.

Land Acquisition and Green Space

GEFA: Georgia Land Conservation Program

GAEPD reviews applications to the Georgia Land Conservation Program (GLCP) administered by the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) to help 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. In FFY2024 GAEPD reviewed one application and found the proposed project 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 project.

The Nature Conservancy acquired the 2,116-acre **Lumberjack Tract** located in Brantley and Camden counties. As stated in TNC's application, the Lumberjack Tract is "located on the lower Satilla River, a coastal, blackwater river that is entirely undammed, supports a wide array of biologically diverse ecosystems, and provides habitat to numerous threatened and endangered species, including hairy rattleweed and shortnose sturgeon. The Lumberjack Tract provides critical bottomland forests and emergent wetlands that filter out contaminants, playing a critical role in improving water quality on the coast. The Lumberjack Tract also includes significant groundwater recharge areas, important for surficial aquifers to combat saltwater intrusion on the coast."

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 2023-2024 cycle awarded in March 2024 committed **$20.6 million** in funding to support local parks, trails systems, and state-owned lands. Grantees have pledged an additional estimated **$26 million** in matching funding. Of the **12 selected projects**, five were awarded to local governments and non-profit organizations for the acquisition, development or stewardship of local parks or trail systems. Three proposals center on the acquisition of conservation lands by DNR, while four are designated for stewardship projects on state lands. The Nonpoint Source Program expects the following projects to specifically provide stormwater and other nonpoint source management benefits in addition to land conservation:

Pike County Parks and Recreation Authority | Pike County Recreation Complex Improvements: Removal of invasive species and replanting the area along the stream buffer with native plants to create wildlife habitat, and stabilization of a section of the streambank to prevent erosion.

Trust for Public Land | Chattahoochee RiverLands Regional Trailhead: Repair ecological damage and construct new woodlands, meadows, and green infrastructure.

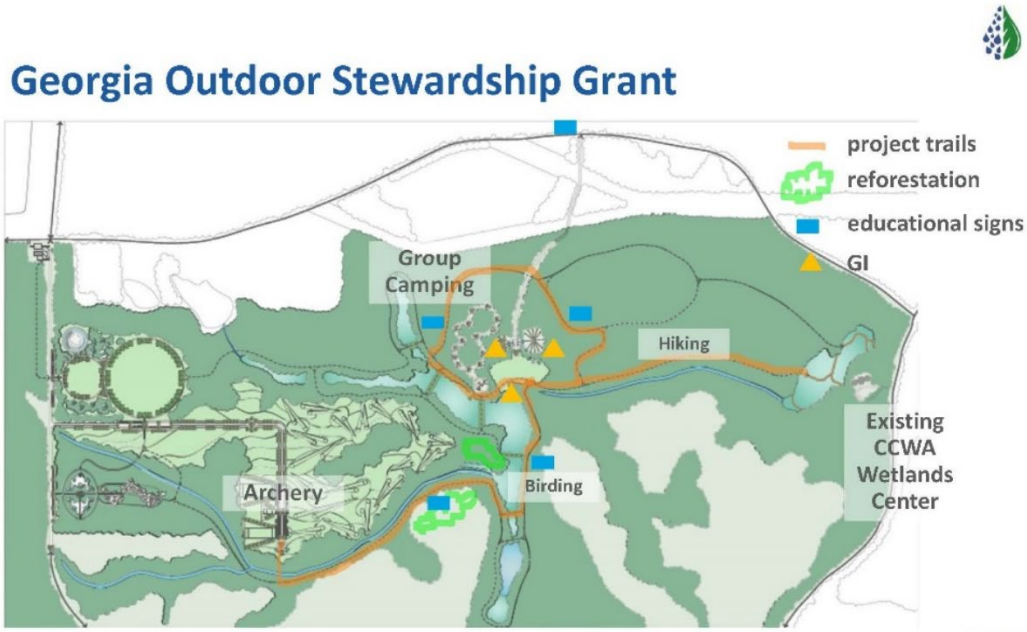

Figure 5: Project Area Map – FY2022 Revegetation & Watershed Protection in the Pates Creek Watershed and FY2023 Huie Site Detailed Recreational Master Plan (GOSP) projects

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 (NPS) Management Plan (Revised 2019), and make awards available to public agencies in Georgia. Over the past decade Georgia has received between $3.5 and $4.2 million in federal funds 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. In FFY2024 GAEPD closed out both the **FFY2018** and **FFY2019** grants totaling **$3,713,000** and **$3,540,768 in federal fund expenditures**, respectively.

FFY2024 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 Georgia's Statewide NPS Management Plan (Revised 2019).

Grants Unit: Administering Section 319(h) Grants

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

Figure 6: Septic & Stormwater presentation - FY2022 UGA/CAES Water Resources Research and Education Facility education project

- 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 FFY2024.

- Georgia Association of Water Professionals Stormwater Committee Meeting ("BMP Performance Monitoring and GSMM Results"), Marietta, GA - September 20, 2024
- NRCS State Technical Committee Meeting, Online/Virtual - September 11, 2024
- Georgia Environmental Conference Agriculture/Forestry Track ("State NPS Plan Update"), Jekyll Island, GA - August 21-23, 2024
- Georgia Association of Water Professionals 2024-2025 Committee Chairs Workshop, Marietta, GA - August 14, 2024
- Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) Interagency Roundtable, Atlanta, GA - August 8, 2024
- UGA Marine Extension/Coastal Resources Division "Updates to the Coastal Stormwater Supplement", Brunswick, GA - July 18, 2024
- Georgia Association of Water Professionals Annual Conference, Savannah, GA - July 15, 2024
- Savannah River Restoration Board, Online/virtual - July 16, 2024
- Savannah River Restoration Board, Online/virtual – June 18, 2024
- 2024 National Training Workshop on Water Quality Assessment and Plans: Maximizing CWA Programs to Achieve Water Quality Goals, Online/Virtual - June 4-6, 2024
- Savannah River Restoration Board, Online/Virtual - May 21, 2024
- Georgia Association of Water Professionals Stormwater Specialty Conference, Atlanta, GA - May 17, 2024
- Georgia WaterFirst Workshop, Athens, GA - May 15, 2024
- Section 319(h) Site Visits, Avondale Estates and Decatur, GA - May 10, 2024
- 2024 Adopt-A-Stream Confluence Conference, Unicoi State Park, GA - March 22–24, 2024
- Georgia Aquatic Connectivity Team, LaGrange, GA - March 6, 2024
- DNR Wildlife Resources Division State Wildlife Action Plan Priority Watersheds Workshop, Online/Virtual - March 1, 2024
- FFY2024 Section 319(h) Grant Application Workshop, Online/Virtual - March 1, 2024
- Savannah River Restoration Board, Online/Virtual - February 20, 2024
- GA-ACT Project Management Committee, Online/Virtual - February 26, 2024
- NRCS State Technical Committee, Online/Virtual - January 9, 2024
- Savannah River Restoration Board, Online/Virtual - January 12 and January 16, 2024
- Section 319(h) Site Visits, Peachtree Corners, Doraville, Chamblee - January 24, 2024
- Upper North Fork Nancy Creek Stream Restoration Pre-Construction Workshop & Meeting, Brookhaven. GA - January 25, 2024
- Lake Chatuge Nonpoint Source Pollution Abatement (Towns County), Online/Virtual - January 26, 2024
- Savannah River Restoration Board, Online/Virtual - December 8, 2023
- National Nonpoint Source Workshop "Climate & Hazard Mitigation in NPS Management" Plenary Session ("Building Resilience through GI on Georgia's Coast"), Minneapolis, MN - November 6–9, 2023
- Georgia Funders' Forum Workshop, Columbus, GA - October 19, 2023
- Savannah River Restoration Board, Online/Virtual - October 17, 2023
- American Rivers Dam Removal Workshop/Georgia Aquatic Connectivity Team, Location, GA - October 4, 2023

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 7: Light Greets Water - National & GA State River of Words Winner William Ma, Grade 9, Color Pencil, Johns Creek. GA

During FFY2024, Project WET conducted **46** certification training workshops resulting in **966** educators certified in water science education and facilitated **1,833** preK-12 students in River of Words poetry and art projects resulting in **three** national grand prize winners, **77** national finalists, and **53** state winners. The Georgia program welcomed **150** students, family members, and teachers to the annual Georgia River of Words Awards Ceremony, celebrating creativity and environmental awareness.

Rivers Alive is 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 **177** Rivers Alive cleanups involving **7,936** volunteers who removed **351,026** pounds of trash.

Figure 8: The Weber School Rivers Alive Clean Up (79 volunteers) - FY2021 Phase 3 South Chickamauga Headwaters Watershed Management Plan Implementation Project (Ringgold).

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 Quality Assurance Program Plan to train volunteers and collect water quality monitoring data. Achievements during the FFY2024 reporting period included:

- **339** Adopt-A-Stream Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) monitoring trainings
- **8** Adopt-A-Stream outreach workshops – (4 Visual Stream Survey + 4 Intro to Monitoring)
- **1,100** water quality monitoring volunteers certified (new volunteers)
- **13,438** water quality tests (Chemical + Bacterial + Macro)
- **909** Habitat assessments
- **189** groups at **457** 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 FFY2024 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.

Georgia 305(b)/303(d) Integrated Report

Section 305(b) of the Clean Water Act requires states to assess their water quality every two years. Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act requires states to submit a list of all waters that are Not Supporting Designated Use and need to have a **Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)** developed. **Georgia's 2024 Integrated 305(b)/303(d) List Documents were approved by U.S. EPA on September 3, 2024.**

GAEPD uses the state's Listing Assessment Methodology to compare water quality data collected across Georgia against official state Water Quality Standards, and places each assessed waterbody into one of three broad assessment categories; 1) Supporting Designated Use; 2) Not Supporting Designated Use; or 3) Assessment Pending. Based on these listing assessments, GAEPD publishes the 305(b)/303(d) integrated report titled "Water Quality in Georgia" with the 305(b)/303(d) list of waters found in Appendix A of the report. This list is organized by waterbody type (e.g. Rivers/Streams, Lakes/Reservoirs, etc.) and provides the name, location, and assessment category. If the designated use is not being supported, causes of impairment are listed along with potential sources of pollutants.

Prioritization Framework for Georgia 303(d) Waters

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 during the "Bridge Period" - the time between the end of the first Vision Period (September 30, 2022) and when states completed a new TMDL Prioritization Framework in 2024.

During the "Bridge Period," GAEPD completed Bacteria TMDLs for waterbodies in Category 5 on the 2022 303(d) list of waters for all but two river basins. Bacteria TMDLs for the Chattahoochee and Flint River Basins were placed on public notice in October 2023 and later approved by USEPA on December 26, 2023. This proactive approach to TMDL development allowed GAEPD to formulate the 2024 303(d) list without requiring any Bacteria TMDLs to be established. In addition, GAEPD revised existing fecal coliform TMDLs that USEPA had developed with the BASINS watershed modeling approach between 1998 and 2006. Georgia used the loading curve approach currently being applied for all Bacteria TMDLs to revise these USEPA TMDLs and included waste load allocations and TMDLs for the new bacterial indicators. Completed TMDL documents can be found on the **Final TMDLs web page** under individual river basins.

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Water Quality Standards from 2022 Triennial Review

The Clean Water Act section 303(c) and Federal Regulation 40 §CFR **131.20** requires Georgia to review and revise its water quality standards from time to time, but at least once every three years. This process, which revises water quality standards every 3 years, is known as the Triennial Review.

During the FFY2024 reporting period, GAEPD held a virtual public meeting on Wednesday, February 7, 2024, at 11:00 am and on Monday, October 7, 2024, at 10:00 am to provide the public and interested stakeholders the opportunity to discuss human health criteria values being proposed for the 2022 Triennial Review and to learn about the proposed updates to Georgia's Water Quality Standards. The comments received to date and GAEPD's responses are summarized on the GAEPD website at https://epd.georgia.gov/watershed-protection-branch/watershed-planning-and-monitoring-program/georgia-water-quality#toc-triennial-review-2

Among the changes being proposed are adoption of USEPA's recommended aquatic life criteria for diazinon, nonylphenol, and selenium, updated human health criteria for 83 pollutants and new human health criteria for 5 pollutants, adoption of site-specific criteria for Lakes Burton, Rabun, and Tugalo, revision of the designated uses to change 11 waterbody segments to recreation and 7 to drinking water.

A final public hearing will be held on Tuesday, January 28, 2025, to provide the public a final opportunity to comment and offer input on the proposed rule amendments.

- The public notice and proposed rule amendments may be viewed at **https://epd.georgia.gov/chapter-391-3-6-rules-water-quality-control**.

- The supporting technical document "**Updated Human Health Criteria Technical Support Document**" describes development of proposed human health criteria with the use of probabilistic risk assessment.

- The supporting technical document "**Lakes Burton, Rabun, and Tugalo: Proposed Criteria Technical Support Document**" describes development of the site-specific lake standards.

- The supporting technical document "**Designated Use Change Technical Support Document**" describes the decision making process used by EPD for updating 11 waterbody segments to include Recreation designated use and 7 waterbody segments to include Drinking Water designated use.

Nutrients

Since 2005, Georgia has been implementing a strategy for addressing **phosphorus** loadings in state waters. GAEPD intends to complete updates to this strategy in January 2025. The 2013 Nutrient Criteria Development Plan includes milestones through 2024 and will be revised in 2025.

GAEPD's final *Roadmap for Developing and Updating Nutrient Reduction Strategies* 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. Focused on a comprehensive nutrient permitting strategy for point sources, the roadmap as well as other nutrient management

documents are available online at: https://epd.georgia.gov/forms-permits/watershed-protection-branch-forms-permits/wastewater-permitting/permitting-strategies

In FFY2024 Georgia continued to apply site specific nutrient criteria adopted for several major lakes and their tributaries Additionally, GAEPD continues to conduct nutrient monitoring at all state 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.

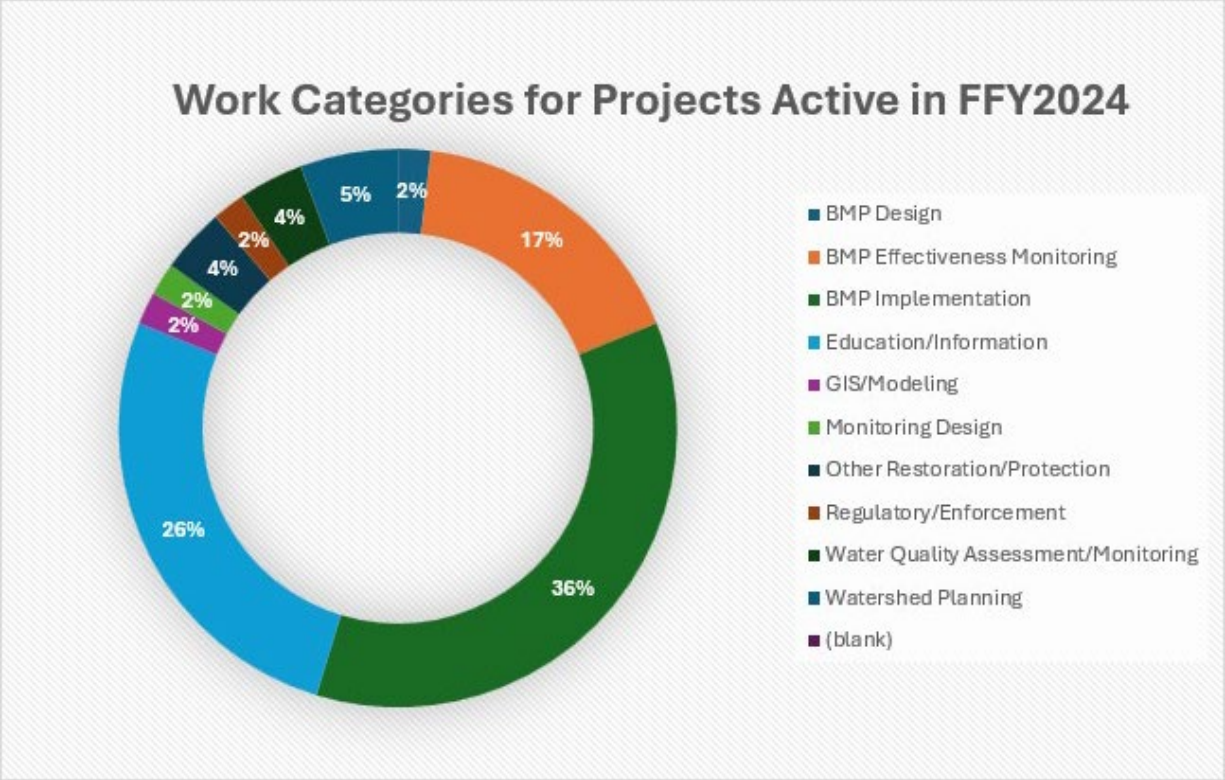
Figure 9: Big Sandy Creek non-forested wetland area upstream of the Adcock Road crossing - FY2020 Implementing the Agricultural Section of the Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan

FFY2024 Project Funds

Each year Georgia competitively awards at least 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



FFY2024 Projects

During FFY2024, GAEPD administered **67** Section 319(h) grant-funded projects, totaling nearly **$18.3** million in federal funds and over **$14** million in matching funds or in-kind services. GAEPD awarded grants nd contracted projects in FY2024 to a diverse group of grantees located in watersheds in all ecoregions of the state. GAEPD was pleased to offer awards to **six (6)** partner organizations, including **five (5)** first-time grantees (indicated by an *) this fiscal year.

1. ***Atlanta Development Authority d/b/a Invest Atlanta - Proctor Creek at North Ave:** The project will address bacteria and biota (fish) impairments in the GAR031300020103 Proctor Creek watershed located entirely within the City of Atlanta through green infrastructure (GI) practices to reduce the impact of urban runoff along 900 linear feet of the creek.
2. ***City of Dunwoody - Dunwoody Nature Center Stream and Wetland Improvements:** The project goal is to stabilize eroding streambanks, enhance existing riparian wetland, replace invasive species with native vegetation, and preserve the healthy status of Ball Mill Creek by reducing sediment loads within the Crooked Creek-Chattahoochee River watershed.
3. ***City of Rome - Urban BMPS, Stabilization, and Education in the City of Rome:** A shovel-ready project will minimize erosion, protect infrastructure, and reduce impervious surfaces by stabilizing degraded urban stream banks with sloping swales, infiltration gardens, and riparian plantings at the highly trafficked confluence of the Etowah and Oostanaula Rivers.
4. **City of Avondale Estates - Cobbs Creek Channel Improvements and Citizen Education:** Project objectives are to reduce erosion and sedimentation from urban stormwater runoff in the Cobbs Creek watershed by piping an open channel, installing catch basins and a bioretention area, monitoring water quality, and educating citizens in stormwater management.

5. ***Brunswick-Glynn Joint Water & Sewer Commission - Arco Community Septic Conversion and Resiliency Project:** The project will reduce non-point source contributions of oxygen demanding materials to the Turtle River watershed by converting 268 private septic systems to sanitary sewer service and educating the community on septic system conversion.
6. ***Meriwether County Board of Commissioners - Better Back Roads for Meriwether County:** Project goals are to develop a watershed-based plan to reduce sediment loadings in the Flat Shoal Creek - Yellow Jacket Creek watersheds, train public work crews in better back road BMPs, recruit future citizen scientists, educate the public in nonpoint source pollution, and monitor water quality downstream of BMP sites.

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 FFY2024

- FY2023 - Phase 2: Town Center Stream Restoration and Pond Improvements
- FY2023 - Community Garden Streambank Restoration in Northwoods Creek Watershed
- FY2022 - Butler Bridge Park Recreation Area Improvement, Green Stormwater Infrastructure, and Stream Restoration
- FY2022 - Revegetation & Watershed Protection in the Pates Creek Watershed
- 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 1: Town Center Stream Restoration and Pond Improvements
- FY2021 - Huron Street & Champlain Street Bioretention Basin Improvement Project
- FY2021 - Green Stormwater Infrastructure Demonstration Site at UGA Griffin Research and Education Gardens
- 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

Figure 10: City of Avondale Estates rain garden planting - FY2021 Cobbs Creek Green Infrastructure and Citizen Stormwater Education

Success Story

On October 13, 2023, USEPA Headquarters accepted a Type 2 Success Story "showing progress towards achieving WQ goals" in impaired waters from the State of Georgia entitled **Success in Bacteria Reduction in the Pine Log Creek Watershed: It's People that Solve Water Quality Issues.**

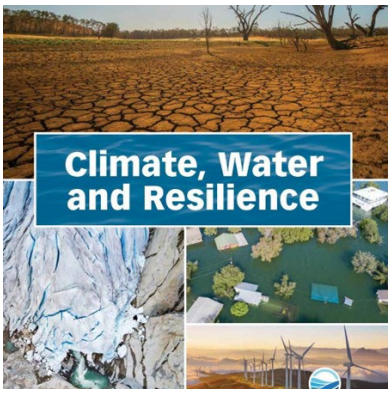


Figure 11: The Climate, Water and Resilience guide helps educators teach middle and high school students about climate and climate change.

During FFY2024 GAEPD submitted a Type 5 Success Story entitled **New Outreach Workshop Empowers Georgia Educators to Understand Nexus of Water Quality, Climate Resiliency, and Public Health** describing "new interim and protection metrics for measuring, tracking, and reporting" progress toward implementing Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan (NPSMP) goals.

The story highlights Georgia's above and beyond innovations to meet and exceed the education and outreach milestones of its statewide NPSMP by correlating climate resiliency with public health issues in its Project WET (Water Education Today) program for Geogia educators. In 2023 Georgia's Project WET team enhanced the national Project WET training titled, "Climate, Water and Resilience" by creating the "Climate, Water and Resilience" Public Health Supplement to further explain to educators the nexus of climate, water quality health, and human wellbeing. In partnership with Georgia State University and funded by a grant from the CDC Foundation to the national Project WET organization, Georgia's Project WET team offered a new workshop focused on public health to teachers in metro Atlanta. The team received national recognition for its innovative content and original approach when the CDC Foundation filmed and featured the new workshop in a nationwide highlight video.

Nonpoint Source Program Management Goals

Tracking Milestones

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.

Statewide Milestones & Load Reductions

Statewide Milestones for Water Quality Improvement	2024 Milestone Progress
WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS FROM NONPOINT SOURCE CONTROLS	
Number of stream segments supporting designated use on Georgia's 305(b)/303(d) list of waters: Identify the number of stream segments supporting designated use by meeting all water quality standards (List of waters published every two years).	**1108**
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: 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).	**42**
INTERIM PROGRESS TOWARD RESTORED WATER QUALITY AND HYDROLOGY	
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: Submit NPS success story to USEPA.	**One** Type 5 Title: *Success in Bacteria Reduction in the Pine Log Creek Watershed: It's People that Solve Water Quality Issues.* pending USEPA approval (GAEPD NPSP Outreach Unit Project WET)
Tracking ambient water quality vs. stream water quality standards for Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Fecal Coliform, Dissolved Oxygen, and Biota: Number of streams where water quality data was collected by Adopt-a-Stream or GAEPD for use in addressing water quality issues.	Monthly sampling of **151** rivers/streams, **23** lakes & **11** estuaries for routine parameters (nutrients, BODS, TSS, DO, pH, temperature, conductivity) at **258** sites; for ortho-phosphate at **79** sites; for bacteria at **230** sites; for metals at **54** sites; for chlorophyll a at **74** sites; for diatoms at **4** sites; and for macroinvertebrates at **6** sites.
Tracking target trophic status in lakes and estuaries: Produce waterbody reports documenting trophic status in Georgia lakes and estuaries.	Monthly ambient water quality sampling during the growing season: **28** lakes and embayments at **68** sites includes **8** lakes with and **20** lakes without criteria and **11** estuaries at **14** sites

Statewide Milestones for Water Quality Improvement	2024 Milestone Progress
<u>Green infrastructure within watersheds:</u> Target number of 319 funded projects that are implementing green infrastructure BMPs.	**24**
PROTECTION OF HIGH QUALITY WATERS	
<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.	FY22-09 Stream Restoration & GI/LID Retrofits in Little Lotts Creek Watershed City of Statesboro FY22-17 Revegetation & Watershed Protection in the Pates Creek Watershed Clayton County Water Authority FY22-18 Butler Bridge Park Recreation Area Improvement, Green Stormwater Infrastructure, and Stream Restoration Henry County Board of Commissioners

NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTANT LOAD REDUCTION	
Estimated annual reductions in pounds of nitrogen to water bodies (from Section 319 funded projects): Annually review information from NPS staff and project stakeholders for NPS load reductions of nitrogen; and include information in NPS annual report and GRTS.	**8,244 lbs.**
Estimated annual reductions in pounds of phosphorus from NPS to water bodies (from Section 319 funded projects): Annually review information from NPS staff and project partners for NPS load reductions of phosphorus; and include information in NPS annual report and GRTS.	**1,840 lbs.**
Estimated annual reductions in tons of sediment to water bodies (from Section 319 funded projects): Annually review information from NPS staff and project partners for NPS load reductions of sediment; and include information in NPS annual report and GRTS.	**6,713, tons**
IMPLEMENTATION OF NONPOINT SOURCE CONTROLS	
Number of TMDLs or alternatives developed for impaired watersheds: Develop TMDLs or alternatives for impaired waters.	**71** final Bacteria TMDLs approved **63** revised final Bacteria TMDLs approved
Statistically based survey of implementation rates: Conduct the Biennial Silviculture implementation Survey.	Results from the 2023 statewide biennial Silvicultural BMP Implementation and Compliance Survey BMP Survey evaluated **56,477+ acres** of forestry operations at **266 eligible sites.** Rating for overall BMP implementation: ***96.81%*** Rating for statewide overall stream mileage in full BMP compliance: **98.98%**
PUBLIC EDUCATION, AWARENESS, AND ACTION	
Participation rates in citizen monitoring activities: Maintain a database of number of active Georgia Adopt-A-Stream monitoring sites annually.	**13,438 water quality tests (Chemical+Bacterial+Macro)** were conducted at **457** active monitoring sites
Participation rates in public awareness and education efforts: Maintain a database of Rivers Alive volunteers to determine number of active participants annually.	**177** Rivers Alive cleanups involving **7,936** volunteers removed **351,026** pounds of trash

Participation rates and activity of local watershed groups: 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.	**339** Adopt-A-Stream QA/QC trainings certified **1,100** water quality monitoring volunteers; **189** active watershed groups participated in water quality testing
PROGRAM MEASURES OF SUCCESS	
Track number of partners in watershed project implementation: Use Grants Reporting and Tracking System to annually track the number of partners participating in watershed project implementation.	During FFY2024 for grant years FFY2018 – FFY2024: **37 different partners** **18** City Governments **1** Community Improvement Districts **1** Consolidated Government **3** County Governments **1** County Water Authority **3** RC&D Councils **3** Regional Commissions 2 Soil & Water Conservation District **4** State Government Agencies **1** State University
Number of nine element watershed-based plans created or updated: Nine element watershed-based plans developed or updated.	FY23-08 Community Garden Streambank Restoration in Northwoods Creek Watershed – Update North Fork Peachtree Creek Watershed Improvement Plan (NFPCWIP)
Progress in reducing unliquidated obligations (ULO): Percentage of ULO funds anticipated yearly GAEPD (total remaining funds/total awarded = percentage ULO).	FY18 – 0**%** FY19 – 0**%** FY20 – 71**%** FY21 – 74**%** FY22 - 90**%** FY23 – 98**%** (GRTS: December 27, 2024)

Ongoing and Future Efforts to Address Nonpoint Source Pollution

With continued support from USEPA, partner agencies, and local sub-grantees, GAEPD is eager to continue efforts to protect and restore watersheds. Our largest effort during FFY2024 and into FFY2025 will be to complete and submit Georgia's updated *Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan* to USEPA for approval.

Update of Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan

USEPA requires state nonpoint source plans to be updated every five years. Following that schedule, GAEPD staff and partners have been updating *Georgia's Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan* during the reporting period, with completion anticipated in early 2025. The process to update the Plan has included technical review and stakeholder engagement. GAEPD hosted five public meetings in October 2024 throughout the state to review and discuss changes to the Plan. Discussions held with stakeholders at the in-person events as well as written comments received on or before November 15, 2024, are being considered for the update. A summary of the public meetings, feedback results, and responses to comments will be included in the Plan and summarized in the FFY2025 Nonpoint Source Program Annual Report.

Priority Watersheds

In alignment with Section 3.2 and Appendix A of the *2024 Nonpoint Source Program and Grants Guidelines for States and Territories*, GAEPD has identified new priority watersheds. Priority Watersheds represent watersheds where state partners intend to focus limited resources to improve water quality. Priority Watersheds receive greater consideration for funding and technical support in state agency programs, including Section 319(h) Grant funding.

GAEPD analyzed impaired and healthy watersheds using USEPA's Recovery Potential Screening Tool and state-developed data. Draft priority maps were shared with multiple audiences during the plan update process to ensure a data- and stakeholder-driven prioritization effort.

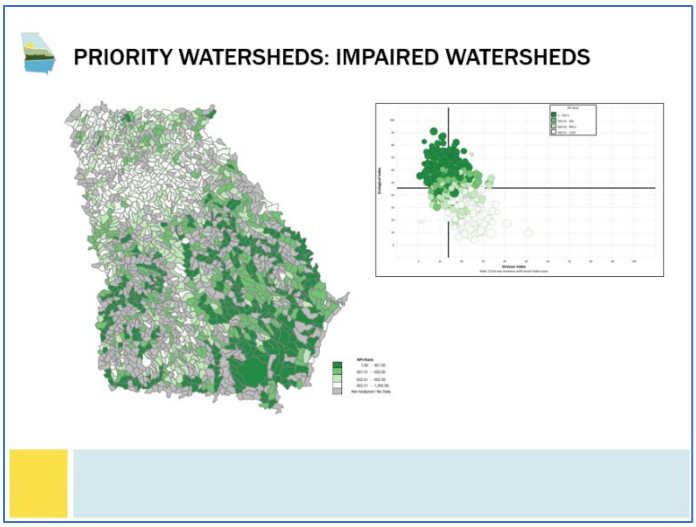


Figure 12 RPS Tool output shared at public meetings for public comment and feedback

Figure 13: Game camera capture of Great Blue Heron on rock weir (streambank stabilization BMP) - FY2021 Phase 2 Biota Improvement in an Urban Stream through Aquatic Habitat Restoration