State of Georgia’s Water Trails

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Clearinghouse Launch

- We have the Clearinghouse up and running!!!

http://garivers.org/gwtc/
Plan Your Own Adventure

If you are feeling adventurous, and the river you want to explore does not have a designated water trail, we hope to provide you with some resources to plan your own adventure. Resources include links to find access to the river, outfitters that can help you with a boat and basic information about what the different rivers in Georgia have to offer.

Trips and Events

Looking for a short, guided afternoon paddle with the kids on your local river or maybe you want to test your speed? This listing provides links and information on trips and events in Georgia. And of course we recommend you join us for Paddle Georgia, the last week of June each year.
Georgia Water Trails Toolkit

Under Construction. However we have compiled some recommendations/resources for you to get started. Also feel free to contact us with questions concerning any of these topics.

This toolkit is designed to give you a step-by-step guide to developing a water trail. So no matter whether you have an established trail or a water trail on your local waterway is just a dream or a concept, this toolkit should provide you with some guidance.

1. Planning
2. Funding
3. Launch Design and Construction
4. Marketing Your Trail
5. Stream Protection for Your Water Trail

Apply for your established trail to be featured on the clearinghouse
Georgia Water Trails

**Established**
- Altamaha Canoe Trail
- Augusta Canal Trail
- Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area
- Okefenokee Wildlife Refuge
- Ocmulgee Heritage Trail
- Toccoa River Canoe Trail
- The SE Coast Saltwater Paddling Trail-GA Section

**Developing**
- Etowah Canoe Trail
- Ocmulgee Blueway
- Coosawattee Trail
- Conasauga Canoe Trail
What makes a trail established?

- **Public access points** where paddlers can park and unload boats
- Boat launches are appropriately spaced to provide **sections reasonably paddled in a day**
- Depending on the length of the trail, water access to overnight camping sites
- Information about trail provided to paddlers through a **website and maps** created by the sponsoring entity
- **Trail is sponsored**, maintained and promoted by a local entity or partnership
Altamaha Canoe Trail

- Distance: 138 miles
- Access Points: 29
- Sponsoring Organization
  - Altamaha River Partnership
Altamaha Canoe Trail

The Altamaha Canoe Trail is a 138-mile canoeing route along the Altamaha River, starting near Lumber City at the confluence of the Oconee and Ocmulgee Rivers and emptying into the Atlantic Ocean.

Help Us Preserve & Protect The Altamaha River
- Obey fishing regulations
- Report fish and wildlife violations and pollution
- Keep only the fish you can use and release all others.
- Don’t collect wild plants or animals.
- Don’t collect or feed wildlife.
- Don’t litter.
- Don’t release any more plants or animals.

Key to Numbered Landings
- Unpaved Road
- U.S. Highway
- GA Highway
- Public Land

Altamaha River State Canoe Guide

Trails & Map Information
Websites of Interest
- Altamaha River Canoe Trail
- www.altamahacanoetrail.com
- Georgia Department of Natural Resources
- www.gadjrcl.gov
- Georgia Forest Service
- www.gafire.org
- The Nature Conservancy
- www.tnc.org
- The Altamaha Riverkeeper
- www.altamahariverkeeper.org

Help us preserve and protect the Altamaha River. By following these guidelines, we can ensure that future generations can enjoy this beautiful waterway as much as we do.
Augusta Canal Trail

- Distance: 7.5 miles
- Access Points: 4
- Sponsoring Organization
  - Augusta Canal National Heritage Area
Chattahoochee National Recreation Area

• Distance: 38 miles
• Access Points:
• Sponsoring Organization – Chattahoochee National Recreation Area
Toccoa Canoe Trail

• Distance: 13.8 miles
• Access Points: 4
• Sponsoring Organization
  – USDA Forest Service, Blue Ridge Ranger District
• Nearest Population Center
  – Blue Ridge
Ocmulgee Heritage Trail

- Distance: 14 miles
- Access Points: 2-4
- Sponsoring Organization
  - NewTown Macon
- Partners
  - NewTown Macon, Macon-Bibb County Parks & Recreation department, GADNR, GADOT, Macon Water Authority, Ocmulgee National Monument
Okefenokee Canoe Trail

- Distance: 400,000 acres
- Access Points: 12 overnight campsites
- Sponsoring Organization
  - US Fish and Wildlife Service

Georgia Tourism
The SE Coast Saltwater Paddling Trail—GA Section

• Distance: 200 River Miles, 100 Coastal miles
• Access Points: Lots
• Sponsoring Organization
  – Coastal Georgia CRC
• Partners
  – CRC, DNR, NPS

Savannah Canoe and Kayak
The Georgia Coast Saltwater Paddle Trail
Etowah Canoe Trail

- Distance: 44 miles (upper), 160 connected
- Access Points: 2 current, 5-7 proposed
- Sponsoring Organization/Partners
  - Forsyth County,
  - Cherokee County,
  - Dawson County, City of Canton
Ocmulgee Blueway

- **Distance:** 54 miles
- **Access Points:** 7
- **Sponsoring Organization**
  - Pulaski County
- **Partners**
  - Pulaski County, City of Hawkinsville/Better Hometown, Riverfront Park Citizen Advisory Council, Rivers Alive, Rotary, Pulaski County Middle School, Hawkinsville High School Volunteers
Ocmulgee River Blueway

54 River miles from Bullard Landing to Sandy Hammock Landing
Coosawattee Trail

• Distance: 57.5 miles
• Access Points: 12
• Sponsoring Organization
  – Coosawattee Watershed Alliance
• Partners
  – CWA, Gilmer County, DNR, Mountain Stewards, Carter's Lake COE
• Approximately 57.5 miles of Blue Trail

• From headwaters to Gulf of Mexico - approx. 800 miles
Conasauga Canoe Trail

• Distance: 6-7 miles
• Access points: 2 currently underway
• Sponsoring Organization
  – Conasauga River Alliance
• Partners
  – Conasauga River Alliance, the City of Dalton and Dalton Utilities.
Why Water Trails?

• Economic Benefits

• Potential for more river conservation

• Healthy Lifestyle Opportunities
Value of Rivers

- **Ecosystem Services**
  - Water supply
    - Drinking water
    - Transportation
    - Water for irrigation
  - Supply of goods
  - Non-extractive or in-stream benefits
    - Biodiversity
    - Water Filtration
    - River Recreation

- **Recreation**
  - Creates existence and bequest values
  - Paddlers invested in and value the protection of the river
River Recreation Growth

• Paddling is a growing sport
  – Projections on outdoor recreation use in 2050 predict significant increase of canoeing, rafting, fishing, and non-pool swimming (Bowker et al. 1999)
  – Approx 72 million Americans participated in recreational boating in 2003 (Nadel 2005)
  – $200 million spent on purchasing canoes and kayaks
River Recreation and Rural Areas

• Problems
  – Income gap between rural and urban areas

• Solutions
  – Marcouiller et al. 2005 determined areas with natural amenities experienced a decrease in income inequality
    • Especially river and lake related natural amenities
  – Conclusion- increasing access to rivers could help diversify rural economies and bridge the economic gap

Here is a great case for water trails!
Granola Myth

• Perception
  – Investing in infrastructure for access to natural amenities provides the community with little in return
  – Hikers & paddlers bring water bottle and granola bar
  – Leading communities to promote motorized recreation

• Facts
  – Outdoor Industry Association estimated $11.3 billion non-motorized product sales by 2001
  – Ohio found registered canoe and kayakers spent $55 on food and lodging per trip
  – Over a 2-year period individual paddlesport participants spent
    • $409 on apparel
    • $780 on equipment
Impacts of River Recreation in Georgia

• Outdoor Industry Association-state by state participation in outdoor rec activities
  – 37th overall 67% participating in some activity
  – 25th in canoeing: 656,324 participants
  – 13th in recreational kayaking: 206,273 participants
  – 11th in whitewater kayaking: 125,014 participants

• Priority on river recreation in Georgia
NORTH FOREST CANOE TRAIL
ECONOMIC IMPACT

• One of the most well known water trails in the United States
• 740 mile water trail that travels through 4 U.S. states, and 1 Canadian province
• Graduate student completed an extensive economic impact study on 6 regions
NFCT Results

• Paddlers infused local communities with $12 million and supported 280 jobs.
• Local paddlers spent an average of $5/day
• Non-local paddlers spent an average of $46/day
• 12% paddlers used a guide service
• Found that this trail benefited existing businesses
  – Outfitters, restaurants, hotels, etc.
• Rather than creating new markets
What can we learn from this study?

• Length of river, even a short river can draw paddlers and local paddlers spend money too!
• Economic benefits can be seen quickly due to the relatively low overhead compared to other recreational attractions
• Can attract more users by promoting a designated water trail with signs, website, and maps
Why Water Trails can encourage conservation

- River Clean-ups
- Volunteer Trail Keepers and Water Monitors
- Land Protection
- Dam Removal
- Improved Planning Efforts

- More Permanent Protection
  - Federal Protections
    - Wild and Scenic
    - Outstanding Natural Resource Water
    - National Recreational Trail
  - State Protection
    - State Scenic
    - Designated uses-recreation
• “There is no substitute for experience.” Sylvia Earle

Paddling and Conserving
Healthy Lifestyle

- Great Outdoors Initiative

“It is easy for kids to go days without stepping on a single blade of grass.” Barack Obama

References