

Georgia River Network

3 Year Strategic Plan

October 2015 – September 2018

Mission

As the voice of Georgia's rivers, we help everyone enjoy, connect with, and advocate for economically vital and clean flowing rivers.

Vision

We are creating a future where our healthy, free flowing rivers provide sustenance and enjoyment for all, economic vitality for Georgia's communities, and a clean water legacy for generations to come.

Goals

1. Be the hub that connects people to rivers, watershed groups, related resources and other members of the network so they can be effective advocates.
2. As a statewide watchdog on water policy, continue advocacy efforts to ensure strong protections for Georgia's rivers.
3. Own our recognition as successful, relevant, respected, organized, well-funded, a leader in river protection efforts, and a model for other groups. Promote awareness of GRN resources, roles and impact.
4. Have meaningful metrics that measure mission/goal success along with sufficient funds to meet budget and carry out our work.

Objective 1

Be the hub that connects people to rivers, watershed groups, related resources and others members of the network so they can be effective advocates.

1A. Support and Encourage the Development of Community Water Trails in Georgia

Maintain an internal list of water trails under development and remain informed about their progress. Actively maintain relationships with trail leaders, stay current on trail developments and activities. **Measure:** The number of water trails increases 25% over the next 3 years, and the trails are considered to be valuable assets by their communities.

Provide direct one-on-one assistance through an assistance program and toolkit.

Measure: Assist one group per year.

Research other water trail programs in the US (River Network and American Rivers), and develop benchmarks and measures of success for the water trail program.

Measure: Research and benchmarks completed by spring of 2016.

Plan for less time consuming ways to provide support to water trail groups. Utilize an intern to assist with the program. **Measure:** Program is refined by spring of 2016, and an intern is always assigned to this program area.

Support and encourage development of both State and Federal Water Trails programs. Promote state support of a water trail designation program. **Measure:** State incorporates water trails into their work with dedicated funding by 2017.

Add resources to the Water Trail Toolkit and market its availability. **Measure:** The toolkit is reported as being useful and is utilized by groups. The toolkit is marketed in two new places each year.

Provide information and resources through workshops, a quarterly newsletter and the GA Water Trails website. **Measure:** Open rates, view rates and users indicate that these resources are utilized and useful. Provide one workshop per year with at least 50 people in attendance.

Promote benefits of trails. Make more connections between health and water trails as well as economic benefits of water trails to communities. Compile resources on the topic and publicize in our communication vehicles. Use our partnerships with UGA, National Park Service, DNR, and others to highlight the benefits of river recreation and improving access/building water trails. **Measure:** Benefits highlighted prove useful in promoting the development of, conservation around and funding of trails.

Make GA's rivers a travel destination. Research strategies/tactics/methods used by other places to make rivers/waterways travel destinations. **Measure:** At least three trails are featured in statewide and national publications by 2018.

Provide Trail Maps by creating Interactive Water Trail Maps and Illustrative Maps.

Measure: Maps are available by 2016.

1B. Introduce people to rivers and inspire them to get involved with river protection efforts.

Provide 1-2 Hidden Gems Events per Year

Use event to reach more groups, interact with communities, and support water trail groups and watershed groups. Explore a hidden gem hike and a pontoon boat gem to see if it's a better use of time/reach new audience. **Measure:** Events are sold out and profitable and participants express interest in donating or becoming more involved with river protection through GRN or their local river group.

Connect with recreationists through Fall and Spring Floats.

Measure: Events are sold out and profitable and participants express interest in donating and becoming more involved with river protection through GRN or their local river group.

Coordinate Paddle Georgia on a different river each year. Event involves the people in the communities that we paddle through. **Measure:** Events are sold out and profitable and participants express interest in becoming more involved with river protection through GRN or their local river group. Track community efforts to improve access to rivers/ create water trails/ protect restore rivers. Increase participation of participants in their local watershed group. 50% can state that they participate with their group or will get involved by 2018. Identify 10 major gift prospects and secure \$5k gift from them each year. \$50K is raised in canoeathon funds each year by 2018. \$50 in corporate sponsorship secured each year by 2018. Increase youth participation by 20%. Increase diversity by 10%. Increase engagement before or after the event as measured by participation in future events and donations. Successes can be reported by groups supported by Paddle Georgia proceeds.

Motivate and recognize river advocates with the River Celebration Awards
Communicate the awards and the successes of those achieving them in communication listed vehicles. **Measure:** Awards given annually and generate positive feedback for winners.

Involve a greater diversity of people in Georgia River Network and the river protection movement. Make space for a broader array of groups and people in what we do. Create a menu of entry points to bring in new people based on what people are interested in and what makes them feel confident that they have a place with GRN. **Measure:** New audiences participate in our events.

Get involved in what a broader array of groups are doing such as Rivers Alive and GA Trail Summit. Bring GRN to the table as a resource and leader. Promote these programs as entry points for citizen involvement. Identify ways this work crosses over with our program work to maximize benefits to us and to them. **Measure:** GRN is involved at a leadership level with groups.

1C. Serve as the contact for people and watershed groups seeking information on Georgia's rivers and help to protect and restore their rivers

Direct phone calls to appropriate resources. **Measure:** Number of calls and emails requesting information increases over three years.

Publish one Georgia River Network User Guide per year. **Measure:** The book sells copies and is reported to be a useful and unique resource.

Provide relevant resources, information, and tools that are useful to Georgia's watershed groups. **Measure:** Maintain an informative website that receives a growing

number of hits each year and is reported to be useful. Increase website content and use of content for river groups for organizational development.

Highlight resources and information in electronic communications including NewsStream E-Newsletter. **Measure:** Track number of users and users report that resource is useful.

Provide individualized training, consulting and/or direct assistance to Georgia's river groups or connect groups with appropriate resources and resource providers. **Measure:** The needs of watershed groups are addressed with the resources available.

Provide re-grants for river groups. Implement a results-based approach for re-granting, measure the impact of the re-grants. **Measure:** Regrant funds are available annually and fund impactful work.

1D. Provide networking opportunities for advocates.

Bring organizations together regionally to facilitate peer to peer learning and collaboration through Weekend for Rivers, Paddle GA Pro Day, Georgia Water Coalition and regional conferences as needed. **Measure:** New advocates and experienced advocates have opportunities to interact three times a year.

Convene an informative, popular Weekend for Rivers annual conference as a forum where clean water advocates and staff, boards, and members of river groups from across Georgia can network, receive skills and issues training from experts, and provide a place where they can meet with one another and strengthen their connection to others working to protect rivers. **Measure:** Track number of attendees. Evaluations and follow up with attendees/participants indicates impact and inspiration for their work.

Have some contact with all water stakeholder groups, annually, either by direct contact, phone check in or electronic communication.

Objective 2

As a statewide watchdog on water policy continue advocacy efforts to ensure strong protections for Georgia's rivers.

2A. Connect to state, regional, and federal policy making, and advocate for strong protections for Georgia's rivers

Follow state, regional, and federal policy making. Determine needed policy. Oppose policy rollbacks. Attend public hearings, state water planning meetings and agency meetings. Submit verbal and written comments. Participate on stakeholder committees, when appropriate. Lobby the Georgia Legislature and Federal, State, and Regional agencies/bodies. Develop alliances to carry out campaigns to get desired results. Serve as plaintiffs when relevant and key litigation needs arise. **Measure:** Track number of issues followed, comment letters submitted, campaigns created, outcomes, share stories. We can report that our work is making a difference for strong protections for our

rivers.

2B. Connect river groups and people to opportunities to advocate for strong river protections at local, state and federal levels

Send action alerts. Send issue updates via our communication vehicles. Offer opportunities to sign-on to comment letters. Publish the Water Wire Blog. Identify and share best practices, resources, information, and success stories. Facilitate local action on watershed protection. Identify and monitor issues in watersheds lacking established river groups or advocates. Work to identify advocates who can mobilize around the issue. **Measure:** Groups and advocates are informed on the issues and have a way to take action. Track number of issues followed, comment letters submitted, campaigns created, outcomes, share stories.

2C. Actively participate in the Georgia Water Coalition (GWC),

Serve on the Leadership Team. Serve on other GWC working groups as needed. Lead the GWC's communications efforts and coordinate communications to support the GWC's strategic issue campaigns and priorities. **Measure:** The GWC leadership team and partners are supported in their collective effort to achieve GWC goals and priorities. GRN is an active member of the team.

Objective 3

Own our recognition as successful, relevant, respected, organized, well-funded, a leader in river protection efforts, and a model for other groups. Promote awareness of GRN resources, roles and impact.

3A. Communicate successes and inspirational information to the public and our members including top water news, opportunities to volunteer/take action, grants, earned media, sponsors, wins, photos, events, attendance at conferences/meetings and river stories.

Utilize the website, newsletters, earned media, annual report and social media. Be consistent with communicating GRNs successes and mission in communications.

Measure: Our members and the public are shown the full array and impact of our work.

Highlight a positive and proactive message and/or theme throughout all of our outreach/communications. Maintain a story bank of proactive messages that is contributed to on a regular basis by all staff. Use of stories is coordinated and utilized across all communication channels. **Measure:** Number of stories used.

Collect and share river stories. Broadcast testimonials from PG, HG, W4Rs, FFF and our partners. **Measure:** We use stories in our appeals and communications.

Create mobile website/update website platform. **Measure:** Funding secured for this and project completed by Dec. 2017.

Provide personalized and focused communications to our members and major donors by collecting information about their interests and providing them with information focused on their interests. **Measure:** Three major donor communications are sent per year. General members are segmented by email lists for targeted communication.

Utilize Social Media. Increase number of followers. Build an active online community with regular staff interaction. Utilize an intern to assist with social media. Research new trends in social media and determine communication plan. **Measure:** Social media platforms are utilized and active.

Be consistent and uniform in the use of our branding. Staff and board have full awareness of our branding convention and how to use it. **Measure:** All communications use branding.

GRN is in the media. **Measure:** Track by # of media hits.

We promote GRN at selected community events.

Make sure GRN is credited for resources we create.

Donate records to the UGA Library System. **Measure:** Items for donation are identified and donated by the end of 2016.

3B. We effectively and efficiently perform the administrative functions of our organization and utilize internal systems and plans.

Effective and efficient management and supervision of all program areas, employees, interns, and adherence to our strategic plans and work plans, annual evaluations of all staff.

Objective 4

Have meaningful metrics that measure mission/goal success along with sufficient funds to meet budget and carry out our work.

4A. We develop meaningful metrics for our work by 2016.

4B. Our organization has sufficient funds to meet budget and carry out our work.

Maintain membership renewals at current level and grow GRN memberships by 10% year. Increase contributions from previous year donor base by 10%. On projects, have fundraising activity expenses at least 15% above costs. We raise funds through foundations, corporations, organizations and individuals (special appeals, annual major donor campaign). Current donors give at higher giving levels. Use water trails as major donor campaign and link to GRN River Guides. Raise \$10,000 dollars in Weekend for Rivers Sponsorship. Raise \$6000 dollars in the online auction and at WFR party. Raise \$50,000 dollars in PG sponsorship. Raise \$50,000 dollars from canoeathon. Conduct an

annual membership drive. **Measure** - # of new and renewed members and dollars raised.