

Atlanta Allemande— Paddle Georgia 2014

June 24—Chattahoochee River

Distance: 11 miles

Starting Elevation: 760 feet Lat: 33.8015°N Lon: -84.5014°W

Ending Elevation: 735 feet Lat: 33.6935°N Lon: -84.6303°W

Restroom Facilities: **Mile 0** Riverview Landing
 Mile 5.6 Utoy Creek WRF
 Mile 11 Campbellton Road Boat Ramp

Points of Interest:

Mile 0—Riverview Landing & Chattahoochee NOW—In 2005 during the first Paddle Georgia, the 17-mile stretch from Peachtree Creek to Campbellton Road was most notable for its abundance of sewer plants, industrial parks and junkyards. At that time, the idea of putting homes on the banks of this stretch of river might have been laughable. But, a lot has changed in 10 years. Riverview Landing partners, Jamestown Properties (a Paddle Georgia sponsor), Green Street Properties and Marthasville Development aim to turn this former junkyard into a mixed-use development featuring single-family homes, apartments, townhomes, retail space and common-use outdoor facilities centered around an impressive deck overlooking the river. The developers expect to break ground within the year. This sea change in attitudes about this stretch of Chattahoochee is largely due to improvements in the health of the river. Within the last year, Chattahoochee NOW, a consortium of individuals, business leaders, non-profit organizations and local governments has formed to create a plan to preserve and develop the river's unique resources along a 53-mile corridor extending from Peachtree Creek to Heard County. Chattahoochee NOW is providing our breakfasts during our stay at Riverview. Riverview Landing also hosts many special events, including weddings, bike and road races, festivals and farmer's markets.

Mile 1.4—Nickajack Creek & the River Line—This creek marks the southernmost reaches of Johnston's River Line built to repel the Union Army's advance on Atlanta during the Civil War. Built by more than 1,000 slaves, the River Line extended six miles along the Chattahoochee from Nickajack Creek upstream to a point near Paces Ferry. It consisted of 36 arrowhead-shaped forts connected by a strong wall of log palisades and trenches. It was to be the Confederate's best hope, but it proved mostly useless. Taking one look at the impenetrable structures, Gen. Sherman opted to flank the defenders rather than risk a bloody frontal assault—a mistake he made at Kennesaw Mountain with catastrophic results. Instead, he sent his troops across the Chattahoochee north of the River Line and forced a Confederate retreat barely firing a shot at the fortresses that came to be known as Shoupades in honor of their designer—Gen. Francis Asbury Shoup. Several of these fortresses still exist, including one near Nickajack Creek.

Mile 1.5—Mayor Allison Nelson & Nelson's Ferry—The first Atlanta mayor to be born (1822) in Fulton County, Allison came from inauspicious beginnings along the Chattahoochee. His father who operated a ferry near the mouth of Sandy Creek was murdered when Allison was just three years old. Undaunted, his mother continued to raise Allison and his siblings and operate the ferry. Perhaps this hardscrabble life on the edge of a frontier stirred a pioneer spirit in the young man, for by the time he was 24 he was organizing a band of volunteers to fight in the Mexican-American War. Upon his return from the War, he trained as a lawyer and in 1848 was elected to the Georgia legislature. Seven years later, he won the mayor's seat in the young city. That gig lasted just six months. Enraged when the city council reduced a fine he had levied against two residents for destroying city property, he resigned. Shortly after, he pulled up stakes and moved west to Kansas and then Texas. At the outbreak of the Civil War, he organized a regiment of Texas infantry and was promoted to Brigadier General before dying of typhoid fever in 1862. Atlanta's ninth mayor, raised on the banks of the Chattahoochee, now rests in a cemetery in Austin, Arkansas.

Mile 2.7—South Cobb WRF—This Cobb County facility on river right treats up to 40 million gallons of sewage daily. It is one of a dozen sewage treatment facilities in the 40 miles between Peachtree Creek and Coweta County that discharge directly to the river or one of its tributaries.

Mile 3.8—Six Flags Over Georgia—This 238-acre park on river right opened in 1967 and has since been a mainstay of the local tourism economy. Originally planned for a site in Fulton County, Cobb County officials wooed the park developers with cheaper land along the river and I-20. The park features 35 rides, including 11 rollercoasters.

Mile 5.6—Utoy Creek WRF—On river left, just upstream of Utoy Creek is the discharge from the City of Atlanta's Utoy Creek WRF. Our pit stop is up the bank, through a field and across a railroad track. At the mouth of Utoy Creek other discharges issue forth from the Entrenchment Creek and South River WRFs. As much as 78 million gallons of treated sewage are released here daily.

Mile 5.7—Utoy Creek, Chattahoochee Sculpins & Fish Diversity—Ever wonder what happens when the land around a stream becomes urbanized and receives a steady diet of sewage overflows and polluted runoff from city streets and parking lots? Look no further than Utoy Creek. A U.S. Geological Survey study of fish populations on the creek turned up only two native species and only 5 individual fish. By comparison, the study also sampled Snake Creek in Carroll County which drains mostly forested land. There, biologists counted 16 native species and a total of 641 fish. Among the fish not found in Utoy Creek is the recently discovered Chattahoochee sculpin—a creature found only in the Chattahoochee and its tributaries upstream of Columbus. A highly specialized, fish it sports oversized pectoral fins, a flattened body, a narrow tail and a mottled camouflaged back that suits it perfectly for a life on river and stream bottoms in swift-moving water. While dams on Chattahoochee tributaries have greatly reduced its habitat, Buford Dam on the mainstem of the Chattahoochee has created suitable habitat in the river itself because of the cold water issuing forth from Lake Lanier...these sculpins like cool water.

Mile 5.9—Buzzard Roost Island—For at least 12,000 years, humans have used this spot to cross the river. Archaeological evidence dates human habitation around this spot to 10,000 BC. The Sandtown Trail, named for the Indian settlement just east of the river here, served as a trade route for Native Americans and was among the first routes into Georgia's western frontier in the 1800s. Today, humans continue to cross the river here--on Camp Creek Parkway just downstream of the island. Camp Creek is the primary thoroughfare to Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, the busiest in the country, serving 56 million passengers each year.

Mile 8.7—Sweetwater Creek & New Manchester—Upstream on this creek are the remains of New Manchester, a mill village situated along Sweetwater's rocky shoals. Taking advantage of the creek's precipitous fall to power their operations, Charles J. McDonald and James Rogers built a textile mill at the site in 1849. By the advent of the Civil War in 1861, New Manchester was a thriving community, making cloth for use by the Confederate Army—an employ that did not sit well with the invading Union Army. When the town was captured in 1864, the mill was destroyed and the mill workers were marched and railed north to Ohio. Today, the brick ruins of the mill remain, and the land is protected as a state park. The City of East Point uses Sweetwater as its water source, with a pumping station one mile upstream from the mouth of the creek, and the creek is home to what is considered the largest blue heron rookery in Georgia outside of the state's Atlantic coast with some 150 birds during the peak breeding season. Finally, the creek also inspired the name of Atlanta's best-known craft beer—SweetWater--after one of the brewery's founders took a kayak trip through the rapids that once powered New Manchester.

Mile 10.5—Douglasville-Douglas Co. Water & Sewer WRF—At river right is this 3 million gallon a day sewage treatment plant. With a population of 133,000 Douglas is typical of many of metro's suburban counties where many residences use septic systems rather than public sewer systems. In Douglas, more than 50 percent of residents use septic tanks. Improperly maintained septic systems can cause water pollution problems; and as population growth demands more withdrawals from the Chattahoochee, septic systems have come under increasing fire because they discharge to the ground rather than directly into the river resulting in a reduction in river flow for wildlife and for downstream water users.