

# Donation boosts water trail

BY TOM LAW  
THE TOCCOA RECORD

The Stephens County Foundation on Monday received a financial boost from the Georgia Power Company Foundation for its Tugaloo River Water Trail official inclusion in the statewide network of water trails supported by the Georgia River Network.

Water trails are the water equivalent of a hiking trail. It has access points along the river, lie trailheads for putting boats in the water or taking them out. Water trails are suitable for day trips in canoes, kayaks and other water craft.

They can be of various lengths and are used by paddlers, anglers, hikers and pic-



Participating in Monday's donation to the Tugaloo Water Trail were (from left) Dave Jalovick, Kelly Vickers, Angie Ramage, Anne Shurley, Jeremy Spradlin, Joe Ferguson, Brent Edwards and Cheryl Parker.

nickers of all ages and ability.

The Tugaloo River Water Trail extends 10 miles from the mouth of Panther Creek near Yonah Dam south to Stephens County Park at Broken Bridges near Highway 123.

In the 18th century, the river and its tributaries were home

to a number of Cherokee towns and villages. In addition to the historic nature of the river trail, the river corridor boasts a river island, timber sluice, the remains of Prather Bridge and the remains of a grist mill.

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The river corridor also boasts a twisted rock escarpment evidencing the Brevard Fault zone, the Tugaloo Indian Mound and the Southern Railway viaduct.

The Georgia Power foundation, the charitable arm of Georgia Power Company, donated \$10,000 to the water trail development as part of the Citizens of Georgia Power Legacy program. Citizens of Georgia Power is a statewide service organization consisting of Georgia Power employees who employ their time and talents to various civic projects. There are 40 Citizens chapters in Georgia.

Each year, the Citizens group designates one proj-

ect statewide as its Legacy Project. In 2019, the Tugaloo River Water Trail was designated as the Legacy recipient.

"This donation really makes the water trail official," Angie Ramage, a member of the Stephens County Foundation board of directors said. "I thought I would never see this happen to the top part of the river. Without this designation, the development of the trail would really be lagging behind. We are certainly very thankful to Georgia Power Company."

The donation will be used to pay for signs and the creation of an area where kayaks and canoes can be launched into the river.

Toccoa local manager

Jeremy Spradlin said that members of the Georgia Power Citizens volunteer group will undertake the work of making those improvements.

"The Georgia Power Foundation will provide the money and the Citizens will do the work," he said. "The legacy project is where Citizens pick one project a year to back, something that will last."

Spradlin also credited the assistance of county commissioners and county administrator Phyllis Ayers in helping create the water trail.

Early in the water trail process, both city and county commissioners had expressed official forms of support for creation of the trail.

"This is going to be

big not only for Stephens County but the state," Ramage said. "This will really boost tourism in the county."

Among those participating in Monday's check presentation ceremony were Ramage, Kelly Vickers, Joe Ferguson, Dave Jalovick and Anne Shurley of the Stephens County Foundation and Spradlin, Brent Edwards and Cheryl Parker of Georgia Power.

In 2018, the Georgia Power Foundation provided some \$22 million for civic, community and educational projects. Also last year, Citizens of Georgia Power undertook 143,000 volunteer hours in those same three areas, providing work that was valued at \$3.5 million.