



# Okefenokee Wilderness Canoe Trails Hidden Gem 2020 Information Packet

Welcome to Georgia River Network’s Okefenokee Wilderness Canoe Trails Hidden Gem 2020. In this packet you’ll find all you need to know to prepare for and participate in this weekend adventure. Please review this information packet carefully. If, after reviewing this packet, you still have some questions...give Georgia River Network’s Director of Water Trails & Outreach Gwyneth Moody a call at 706-338-6613 or send an e-mail to Gwyneth@garivers.org

## Have You Signed Your Waiver???

If you have not signed your waiver already, you can sign the electronic form or access printable forms that can be signed and mailed to Georgia River Network by using the following link (**Don’t forget to sign the confirmation email that is sent to your inbox after signing waiver!**):

<https://waiver.smartwaiver.com/e/i8eTrgTiDkpUc5vBzi5njT>

## Packet Contents

### SECTION I: OUR POLICIES AND HOW TO COME PREPARED

- Page 2.....Mission Statement & General Policies
- Page 3.....Safety
- Page 5.....What to Pack

### SECTION II: REGISTRATION DETAILS

- Page 7 .....Check-In (**Mandatory**)
- Page 7.....Boat Drop-Off
- Page 8.....Campsite
- Page 9.....Meals

### SECTION IV: ITINERARY & ACTIVITIES

- Page 10 .....Daily Itinerary
- Page 11.....Special Programs & Paddling Details
- Page 13.....Huge Thanks to Our Sponsors & Partners

## SECTION I: POLICIES AND PREPARATION

# MISSION AND GENERAL POLICIES

### About Georgia River Network

The Okefenokee Wilderness Canoe Trails Hidden Gem 2020 is organized by Georgia River Network, a non-profit organization that serves as the voice for Georgia's rivers, helping everyone enjoy, connect with and advocate for the protection of our rivers. Huge thanks to our event partners and friends Okefenokee Adventures, Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, Okefenokee Swamp Park, Okefenokee Pastimes, and St. Marys Riverkeeper.

### About this Okefenokee Wilderness Canoe Trails Event

Georgia River Network has a series of events every year which highlight rivers to the general public and those rivers with established water trails or in the process of developing a water trail. GRN partners with supporting community organizations ranging from watershed groups to county/city governments, state and federal agencies, local businesses, to colleges and universities.

These events include various educational presentations ranging from flora/fauna and history to Adopt-a-Stream, River Restoration and visual and performing arts. Partnering organizations assist with planning the paddle and also have the opportunity to give a presentation about their respective organizations and ways for people to get involved. Our events ultimately fulfill GRN's mission to engage people to get out and explore Georgia's beautiful resources and empower them to become involved in river protection and restoration. Along the way we will also have a great time.

Georgia River Network paddling events *are not* commercial, for-profit trips for individuals. *They are* an educational community adventure led by volunteers and staff of non-profit organizations and depend on well-prepared and self-sufficient individuals and the pooled efforts of the entire team. As such, participants should come prepared to take care of all their own needs and to volunteer their services during the course of the journey. These services include assisting themselves and others at launch sites/take outs, serving dinners, breakfasts and lunches, or lending a hand to your paddling friend when one is needed. If you wish to be pampered by professional guides, this isn't the trip for you. But, if you want to experience a real community, brought together under a common goal and by the thrill of adventure, this is it.

You are expected to adhere to the "leave no trace" ethic. This means that you leave the area where you travel and camp in such a manner that the next person to pass the path would never know that another human had passed before them. Pack out and dispose of all trash properly. This applies on the river, launches, take-outs, and campsites. To learn more about the "leave no trace" ethic visit: <http://www.lnt.org/programs/principles.php>

### "Rogue" Paddlers:

The guided paddle, campsites, and all other services are for registered participants only.

### Early Departures:

In the event that you decide to leave the trip for any reason, you must make your own arrangements for yourself and your boat(s). Georgia River Network staff will not be able to provide these services.

**Baggage: Please place a label on your luggage, and all other personal belongings, that includes your name and contact information.** This is a precaution just in case your equipment accidentally gets misplaced or lost.

**Personal Property:** Georgia River Network cannot be responsible for securing your personal property. Please leave valuables at home or secure these items in a safe place throughout the weekend. Georgia River Network is not responsible for lost, damaged or stolen items.

**Boats:** ALL PARTICIPANTS SHOULD PUT THEIR NAME ON THE LEFT BOW OF THEIR BOAT (FRONT, LEFT IF YOU ARE SITTING IN IT) – YOU CAN USE A PIECE OF WATERPROOF TAPE AND PRINT THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ON IT: YOUR NAME & CELL PHONE #

## SAFETY

All Okefenokee Wilderness Canoe Trails Hidden Gem participants should be aware that this trip is not a commercially-guided trip. While there will be local guides leading paddlers on the waterway during each day's paddle, we cannot personally ensure the safety of all participants. **All participants are assuming risks (some of which are outlined below) while participating in this Okefenokee Wilderness Canoe Trails Hidden Gem event.**

The following guidelines should be understood before disembarking and followed during the entirety of the Okefenokee Wilderness Canoe Trails Hidden Gem event.

### **Okefenokee Wilderness Canoe Trails Hidden Gem Event Safety Policies**

1. All paddlers must attend the pre-launch safety briefing. Participants must adhere to the safety guidelines presented.
2. Participants must wear a properly fitted U.S. Coast Guard approved personal floatation device at all times on the waterway.
3. Participants under age 18 are the responsibility of, and must be accompanied by, a parent or guardian.
4. Sorry, no pets allowed.
5. All participants must sign a Medical and Emergency Contact Information sheet and a Waiver of Claims and Release of Liability form. Parents must sign for children under the age of 18.
6. Person-powered watercraft only.
7. All participants must respect private property along the waterway.
8. All participants must possess basic paddling skills and be capable of self-rescue in the water.
9. All children must have a designated seat in the vessel in which they are traveling. (no children on decks of kayaks or as "passengers" in cockpits of solo kayaks)
10. Georgia River Network is not responsible for any personal property that may be lost, damaged, or stolen during the trip.
11. No alcoholic beverages will be allowed on the waterway.

Violations of these policies can result in the participant being removed from the event without refund.

## COVID-19 CONSIDERATIONS

The primary goal of this event is to give us the opportunity to paddle as a group while minimizing opportunities to spread the COVID-19 virus.

- If you are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 or have been in contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19, please stay home. We will issue you a full refund.
- Before embarking on a trip, please consider being tested for COVID-19 to ensure that you are not carrying the virus
- During the event, please remember to practice the following protective measures: wear a facemask during periods where you may be in close proximity to other participants (launch/take out sites/meals/restroom)
- Do not share equipment, food, water and other supplies
- Maintain social distancing of 6 feet at all times
- Maintain strict hygiene by washing hands frequently; do not touch eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- In route to the event site, when visiting local businesses, wear a facemask and/or other personal protection equipment. Please limit your contact with other individuals when in route to and from the paddle trip.

**If we adhere to these practices, we can safely enjoy our rivers and we can beat this pandemic.**

**Weather:**

Average High Temperature: **72°F**; Average Low Temperature: **Lo 52°F**. Average November Rainfall: **1.1 in**

**Hazards:**

*Weather*—Strong thunderstorms and high winds are not uncommon. In the event of inclement weather, we will have a safety vessel as a sweep for the group of paddlers.

*Sun*—Hats and appropriate sunscreen are recommended. You should carry at least three quarts of water each day to avoid *dehydration*. Sports drinks with electrolytes are also recommended.

*Water Temperature*—The combination of cold water and a cold afternoon thunderstorm raises the risk of dangerous changes in body temperature. Be prepared with rain gear and layered clothing that stays warm even when wet (avoid cotton).

*Water Quality* – Due to a variety of conditions, water quality can vary. Swimming and submersion in the water increase the risk of contracting water-borne illnesses. Ingesting river/ocean water should be avoided and cuts and sores should be kept out of the water and treated if exposed.

**“Buddy System”**

Georgia River Network will rely on the “Buddy System” to ensure that all participants arrive safely at the day’s take-out point. Before each day’s paddle, identify your “buddy boat or boats.” This will be the boat or group of boats with whom you will paddle for the day. The group is responsible for ensuring that if someone needs help on the waterway that someone is nearby to provide help and that no one is left behind. Do not lose sight of your buddy boat or members of your buddy boat group. Participants who have not identified a buddy boat for the day’s paddle will not be permitted to launch from the day’s put-in point. A sweep boat will bring up the rear of the day’s paddle to further ensure that no one is left behind.

Georgia River Network will make every effort to ensure that each day’s paddle is completed in full. However, if all-day dangerous weather is predicted, we may need to cancel the day’s paddle. *Rain alone does not constitute dangerous weather. All participants are expected to paddle rain or shine.*

*Swimming*...No Swimming allowed in the Okefenokee Swamp. There are lots of alligators.

*Communication in the Event of Emergency*...There will be cellular phones on the waterway at all times (one with each guide). In the event of an emergency, attempt to signal or locate a boat with a cellular phone. If cellular service is available, the participants in these boats can communicate with land-based emergency personnel and on-the-water motorized boats where available. The phone numbers for key staff will be distributed during our safety briefing on Saturday, Nov 7.

*Universal River Signals*...Participants are expected to use universal river signals to communicate with other boats. They are as follows:

- Stop: Potential Danger Ahead—Form a horizontal bar with your paddle and outstretched arms above your head. Those seeing this signal should pass it back to others in the party. Participants should wait for the “all clear signal” before proceeding.
- All Clear—Form a vertical bar with your paddle, raising your arm and paddle above your head. The paddle blade should be turned flat for maximum visibility. This means the trip can proceed. To signal direction or preferred course through an obstacle, lower the all clear to a 45 degree angle toward the side of the river with the preferred route.
- Help/Emergency—Wave paddle over your head and give three long blasts on your whistle. Whistles are best carried attached to your life vest. This means other paddlers should assist the signaler as quickly as possible.
- I’m OK—Holding your elbow out to the side, repeatedly pat the top of your head with your hand. This signals that you are not hurt and do not need assistance.

## WHAT TO PACK

### All Participants:

All participants camping must bring standard camping gear including a tent and personal items. In our efforts to make this an environmentally conscientious/friendly event, we ask that you bring your own water bottle.

**Weather:** Average High Temperature: **72°F**; Average Low Temperature: **Lo 52°F**. Average November Rainfall: **1.1 in**

**What Do I Pack?** (here's a checklist of suggested items!)

### **PLEASE BRING A CAMPING CHAIR: There is VERY limited seating in the campsites!!!**

PFD—every participant must wear a Coast Guard approved personal flotation device at all times while on the river (no ifs, ands, buts or “gee, it’s really hot!” – this policy is STRICTLY enforced).

Labels with your name for your boat, luggage, and other personal belongings

Every boat should have grab loops at both bow and stern.

Extra throw rope in case of emergencies should be stored safely in each boat.

Attach a whistle to your life vest or body to signal for help in case of emergency.

Knife

Tent or Mosquito Netting

Ground Cloth

Sleeping Bag or Sleep Sack

Sleeping Pad

Clothing for 2 nights/ 3 days

Waterproof Stuff Sacks for Camp gear, lunch and other items (like dry clothing).

Rain gear

Footwear

Clothes/Swimsuit (If you're brave enough)

First Aid Kit

Sunscreen

Necessary Medication

Money to tip the caterers/ purchase merchandise

Insect Repellent

Towel/Wash Cloth

Soap, Toothpaste, Toiletries

Flashlight/Head Lamp

Book

Camera

Whistle

Watertight cases for Boat

Fishing Gear/License

Duct Tape

Sponge (if paddling)

Bailer (if paddling)

Water Bottles (at least 3 quart bottles for each person)

Snacks for waterway and camp

Hat or Cap

Bug netting

Extra Length of Rope

Ear Plugs (Some participants snore!)

Sleep Shades (Lights out at 10 p.m.)

At least two paddles for each boat

Lightweight pants and long sleeved shirts for bug protection in the evening

Fleece jacket and layered non-cotton clothing (lows can be in the 50s)

## SECTION II: REGISTRATION DETAILS

### CHECK-IN

\*\*\*There are no shuttles during this event. If you are bringing your own boat you will transport your boat to the launch locations each day. If you are renting a boat, Okefenokee Adventures (on Saturday) and Stephen C. Foster State Park (on Sunday) will have your boat ready each day at the respective launch locations.\*\*\*\*

We will hold a **mandatory check-in between 3:00PM and 6:00PM** on Friday Nov 6 at Okefenokee Pastimes where we will reside for the weekend. Plan on setting up camp in the dark if you arrive after 5:30PM.

Okefenokee Pastimes Cabins & Campground  
28244 Hwy 121  
Folkston, GA 31537  
(912) 496-4472

Upon check-in, you will receive your shirt, map, and receive instructions on where to set up camp.

**Note: Participants arriving earlier than 3:00PM on Nov 6 WILL NOT be allowed to register early.**

### BOAT DROP-OFF

#### Saturday

On Saturday we will pack lunch, paddling gear and boats\*, eat breakfast and caravan to the Suwannee Canal East Entrance - *Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge (Okefenokee Adventures is located at the same address).*

*\*Those renting boats will have boats waiting for them at our launch sites each day.*

Okefenokee Adventures:  
4159 Suwannee Canal Rd  
Folkston, GA 31537  
(912) 496-7156 or 866-THE-SWAMP (843-7926)  
<https://okefenokeeadventures.com>

#### Sunday

On Sunday morning we will pack up camp early, pack lunch, paddling gear and boats\*, eat breakfast and caravan (1hr 15 min to the West Entrance at Stephen C. Foster State Park). We hope to maximize the day and end the paddle around 5-6pm in the magical hour of dusk.

*\*Those renting boats will have boats waiting for them at our launch sites each day.*

Stephen C. Foster State Park  
17515 Highway 177  
Fargo, GA 31631

**IMPORTANT: If you are not bringing your own boat and need to rent one PLEASE call and secure your boat at the following 2 locations (please tell them you are with Georgia River Network).**

Saturday Nov 7 Paddle: Suwannee Canal Entrance (Okefenokee Adventures)

*Okefenokee Adventures*

866-THE-SWAMP (843-7926)

Canoe/kayak rentals \$25 per person

Sunday Nov 8 Paddle: Stephen C. Foster State Park Entrance

*Stephens C. Foster State Park*

[912\) 637-5274](tel:9126375274)

Canoe/kayak rentals \$30 per person

## **CAMPSITE**

During the Okefenokee Wilderness Canoe Trails Hidden Gem we will tent camp\* for 2 nights at Okefenokee Pastimes. We have reserved the large group tent camping area with shade trees, picnic tables, community fire pit and close to a large new dual bowl outdoor campers sink and short distance to shower/bath house. The group tent camping area is in a separate, natural section next to their Nature Trails and Wildlife Habitat. There is no electric provided in this area. All tent sites should receive free high speed Internet WI-FI.

*\*Those who rented cabins will check in at Okefenokee Pastimes office for lodging details.*

### **Okefenokee Pastimes Cabins & Campground**

28244 Hwy 121

Folkston, GA 31537

(912) 496-4472

<https://www.okefenokee.com>

## MEAL INFORMATION

**Dine in-style while social distancing** with a catered low country boil dinner on Friday evening by Okefenokee Adventures and a farm to table dinner grown locally and served up by Grassroots Farm on Saturday evening. Local brew provided each evening by Greg Sheppard of [Crooked Rooster Brewery](#). We will enjoy hot breakfast each morning when sack lunches will be distributed.

### WHAT'S ON THE MENU?

#### Friday

Dinner 6:30pm provided by and served at Okefenokee Adventures

- Tossed green salad
- Low Country Boil with shrimp, sausage, potatoes and corn. Cocktail and tartar sauce available.
- Texas toast (buttered w/garlic)
- Sorbet with ginger snaps
- Swamp Mud Brownies with vanilla ice cream and chocolate syrup
- Sweet and unsweet tea, lemonade, water

#### Saturday

Breakfast - 8-9am provided by Okefenokee Adventures and served at Okefenokee Pastimes

- Breakfast casseroles (1 meat, 1 veggie)
- Roasted red potatoes with onions and peppers
- Monkey Bread
- Fresh fruit tray
- Coffee, OJ, assorted teas

Dinner - 6:30pm - provided by Grassroots Farm and served at Okefenokee Pastimes

- Heritage locally grown pork BBQ & Sauce
- Coleslaw
- Baked beans
- Savory Green Beans
- Bread
- Sweet tea, Unsweet tea, & Lemonade
- Pound cake

#### Sunday

Breakfast - 8-9am - provided by Okefenokee Adventures and served at Okefenokee Pastimes

- Assorted breakfast biscuits (egg, sausage, ham, cheese)
- Fruit cups with yogurt and granola
- Assorted mini muffins
- Coffee, OJ, assorted teas

## Saturday and Sunday

### Lunches

Sack lunches will be distributed each morning during breakfast. When registering, please select one of the following wrap or sandwich options for each day. A whole fruit, bag of chips and cookie will accompany each of the items below:

- Veggie Wrap (spinach, hummus, shredded carrots, bell pepper)
- Veggie Wrap (spicy black bean & cheese, fresh salsa)
- Turkey/cheese wrap or on honey wheat sub roll (with tomato and lettuce and will include mayo, mustard and italian dressing packets)
- Ham/cheese wrap or on honey wheat sub roll (with tomato and lettuce and will include mayo, mustard and italian dressing packets)
- Grilled chicken wrap (with tomato and lettuce and will include mayo, mustard and italian dressing packets)
- Peanut Butter and Jelly

## SECTION III: ITINERARY &amp; ACTIVITIES

## Okefenokee Wilderness Canoe Trails Hidden Gem Daily Itinerary

### Friday, Nov. 6

Twin Pines Mine Site Visit	12:00	See below for details
Registration and Set-Up Camp	3:00-6:00	Okefenokee Pastimes
Dinner	6:30-7:30	Low County Boil @ Okefenokee Adventures
Evening Entertainment	6:45-9:30	"Turtleman" Chris Adams, Hupp & Ray Live Band, GA Water Trails, Kim Bednarek - Okefenokee Swamp Park
Lights Out	10:00	

### Saturday, Nov. 7

Breakfast	8:00-9:00	Okefenokee Pastimes
Caravan to Suwannee Canal East Entrance	9:00- 9:15	4 miles/ 5 min @ Okefenokee Adventures
Unload Boats	9:15-9:30	
Mandatory Safety Briefing	9:30	
Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge Talk	9:45	Susan Heisey, Okefenokee Nat. Wildlife Ref. Sup. Ranger
Suwannee Canal East Entrance Paddle	10:00 - 4:00	7-8 miles round trip
Dinner	6:30-7:30	Grassroots Farm to Table BBQ @ Okefenokee Pastimes
Evening Entertainment	7:00-9:30	Cherokee of Georgia, Brandon Chonko - Grassroots Farm
Lights Out	10:00	

### Sunday, Nov. 8

Pack up Camp	Dawn-8:00	
Breakfast	8:00-9:00	Okefenokee Pastimes
Caravan to Stephen C. Foster State Park	9:15	67 miles / 1hr 15min - Stephen C. Foster State Park
Unload Boats	10:30-10:45	
Stephen C. Foster Ranger Talk & Launch	10:45	
Stephen C. Foster West Entrance Paddle	11:00 - 5:30	9-10 mile round trip



## SPECIAL PROGRAMS & PADDLING DETAILS

Friday, Nov 6

### **Lunch & Driveby Twin Pines Mine Site near Okefenokee Swamp - 12:00pm**

Meet for lunch at: Lacy's Kountry Store, 389 GA-94, St George, GA 31562  
[30.518918, -82.224829](tel:30.518918,-82.224829)

Participants have an opportunity to join us for lunch and drive by the [proposed Twin Pines Titanium mine site southeast of the Swamp](#). Kim Bednarek, Executive Director of Okefenokee Swamp Park, and Rena Peck, Executive Director of Georgia River Network, will say a few words. Also saying a few words will be either Suwannee Riverkeeper John S. Quarterman or WWALS Executive Director Gretchen Quarterman.

Learn more about our #Save the Swamp Campaign on our website:  
<https://garivers.org/priority-issues>

#### **More Event Details:**

- <https://www.facebook.com/events/687540145227805>
- <http://wwals.net/2020/10/22/lunch-and-drive-by-mine-site-near-okefenokee-swamp-2020-11-06/>

#### **Book Recommendation:**

[Pinhook: Finding Wholeness in a Fragmented Land, by Janisse Ray](#)

### **"Turtleman" Chris Adams - Naturalist & Historian - Evening Entertainment**

Enjoy the aesthetic of "Ol' Okfenok" with local swamper "Turtleman" Chris Adams. Chris embodies the culture and traditions of his ancestors as he spins yarns of exciting happenings and tall tales of the old timers. Chris is a guide for Okefenokee Adventures and a licensed wildlife presenter.

### **Hupp & Ray Live Band - Evening Entertainment**

A Maryland native, Hupp grew up on 70's AM & 80's FM radio while performing in show choirs and garage bands. Self taught on guitar, he learned to copy a diverse range of players from James Taylor to Eric Clapton. He was competing in Battle of the Bands before he could drive a car and has crafted his live performance skills for over three decades.

Ray Hetchka was made in New Jersey"... Passaic to be precise. It was the 60's: The Beatles, The British Invasion, James Brown, R&B, Soul. Ray put down the Trumpet and never looked back. Growing up in a diverse urban environment he was exposed to many musical styles and ethnic traditions. Being musically fluent in funk, jazz, rock, blues, folk, weddings, polka, Latin, Italian & Greek - if you wanted the gigs - you have to be ready when called!

Since settling in Fernandina Beach, Florida they have established full-time careers in music. With thousands of gigs to their credit, an "all request" format and near non-stop nights of music have earned them a reputation as the area's top live performers be it solo, duo or with their classic rock cover band The Honey Badgers. Learn more here:

<https://www.facebook.com/Huppsmusic/>

## Saturday Nov, 7

### **Suwannee Canal East Entrance - Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge Paddle - Day 1**

We will first explore the east entrance of the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge paddling 7-8 miles (round trip ~ 5-6 hours) down the historic Suwannee Canal lined with wildlife (tons of Alligators) into Chesser prairie and Tater Rake Run.

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge Supervisory Refuge Ranger, Susan Heisey will serve as one of our guides on our day journey sharing her wealth of knowledge about the Refuge.

### **Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge - Suwannee Canal East Entrance - Pre-launch Program**

Susie Heisey, Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge Supervisory Refuge Ranger will give a talk before we launch Saturday morning.

### **Cherokee of Georgia: Historical Reenactment - Evening Entertainment**

We will hear enchanting storytelling and flute music from Cherokee of Georgia Chief and Vice Chief. Cherokee of Georgia is a State Recognized Indian Tribe with nonprofit status. Their mission is to maintain their Indian Community in St George, GA, and to preserve and share their culture and history.

### **Farming and Rivers - Evening Entertainment**

Grassroots Farm, Brandon Chonko tells his story, the hurdles facing small farmers and importance of rivers to farming.

## Sunday, Nov 8

### **Stephen C. Foster State Park - Pre-launch Program**

Stephen C. Foster State Park Interpretation Ranger will give a talk before we launch Sunday morning.

### **Stephen C. Foster State Park Entrance - Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge Paddle - Day 2**

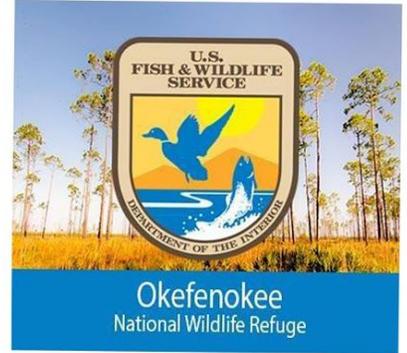
Enjoy a 9-10 mile (round trip ~ 6-7 hours) paddling trip exploring the west entrance of the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. Launching from Stephen C. Foster State Park we will paddle to Minnies Lake taking a detour along the way to [historic Billys Island](#) where we will take a short walking tour that leads to the Lee Cemetery. This paddling route will cover some of the most beautiful territory in all of the Okefenokee swamp. There is an outhouse and covered picnic day use area 5 miles into the paddle for those who need to stretch and use the lou.

# HUGE THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS & PARTNERS!

**Stephen C. Foster  
State Park**

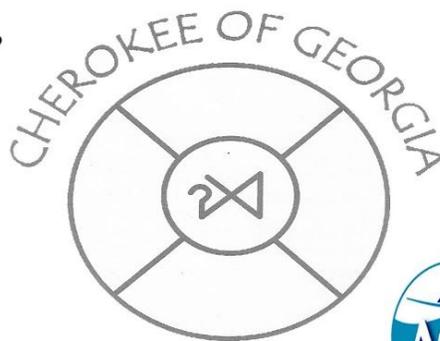


**HUPP & RAY  
LIVE BAND**



**Okefenokee  
Swamp  
Park**

**"TURTLEMAN" CHRIS ADAMS  
NATURALIST & HISTORIAN**



**THE FISH DOCK**  
• BAR & GRILL •  
*On the Sapelo River*

