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OGEECHEE RIVERKEEPER ANNOUNCES UPDATED VERNON WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN

ORK, City of Savannah led multiple stakeholders in the official process

Ogeechee Riverkeeper (ORK) and stakeholders from the City of Savannah Water Resources, Chatham County and area residents adopted an updated watershed management plan (WMP) for the Vernon River. It includes new data and recommendations to achieve the goals to: restore the waterways in the Vernon River basin to the point that it can be delisted as an impaired waterbody by GA EPD; and to reduce the amount of litter and plastic pollution entering the waterways.

Work on Vernon River started in 2001 when a group of citizens came together to focus on protecting the Vernon River from urban pollution when it was listed as 'impaired' by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GA EPD). The 2023 updates are made to the WMP adopted in 2013. The updates will act as a guide for next steps in improving the water quality.

The Vernon River receives a significant amount of the stormwater leaving the City of Savannah, via Wilshire Canal, Harmon Canal, Casey Canal, and Hayners Creek, all part of the Ogeechee River watershed. The goal is to improve water quality, restore ecological habitat, and "Protect The Vernon River" from current and future threats.

The stakeholder committee includes representatives from: The City of Savannah, Chatham County, Cuddybum Hydrology, Ogeechee Riverkeeper, Savannah State University, Skidaway Institute of Oceanography (UGA), Georgia Southern University, Town of Vernonburg, and concerned residents from neighborhoods throughout the Vernon River basin.

In addition to the WMP, ORK has made a number of steps to improve the water quality in the Vernon River basin. ORK and the City of Savannah have installed four litter booms which trap trash before it makes its way into the wider river. So far, more than 3,600 pounds of litter has been removed. ORK is also monitoring 61 sites for bacteria levels and mapping the results.

View data and read the 2023 WMP at: <https://www.ogeecheeriverkeeper.org/vernon>

About Ogeechee Riverkeeper: *Ogeechee Riverkeeper 501(c)(3) works to protect, preserve, and improve the water quality of the Ogeechee River basin, which includes all of the streams flowing out to Ossabaw Sound and St. Catherine's Sound. The Canoochee River is about 108 miles long and the Ogeechee River itself is approximately 245 miles long. The Ogeechee River system drains more than 5,500 square miles across 21 counties in Georgia. More at ogeecheeriverkeeper.org.*
