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05/10/2024

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## **SIGNING OF BILL IS FIRST STEP PROTECTING GEORGIA'S WATERWAYS FROM 'SOIL AMENDMENTS'**

*HB 1223 received overwhelming bipartisan support*

Ogeechee Riverkeeper (ORK), a leading environmental advocacy organization dedicated to the protection and preservation of Georgia's waterways, celebrates the signing of House Bill 1223 into law. This legislation represents a small but crucial step forward in safeguarding the health and vitality of Georgia's rivers, streams, and wetlands.

"We commend the Georgia leadership for recognizing the need for this law," said Damon Mullis, riverkeeper and executive director of ORK. "HB 1223 will not only benefit our farmers by promoting healthier soil practices, but it will also safeguard our waterways from potential harm. However, this is just the first step in regulating so-called 'soil amendments' that pose a threat to clean water."

HB 1223, supported by environmental groups across the state, bolsters protections for Georgia's water resources by strengthening regulations related to companies providing 'soil amendments'. It requires transparency on the contents of the amendments and provides some measures of enforcement. Local county officials recently impacted by the surge of sludge were frustrated by soil improvement practices as they lacked regulatory power to address the issue. Even with the new law, soil amendments will still fall under the jurisdiction of the state agriculture department, however, the department has committed to being more engaged in regulating the practice.

ORK has been a vocal advocate for strong environmental policies and has actively engaged stakeholders in promoting sustainable water management practices. Carly Nielsen, ORK's Upper Watershed Representative, has been tracking affected sites, monitoring nearby waterways, and attending county meetings. "We believe that clean water is essential for the well-being of rural communities, affected wildlife, and healthy ecosystems," said Nielsen. "The signing of this law is a testament to what can be achieved when community members, environmental groups, and policymakers collaborate for the common good."

**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](http://ogeecheeriverkeeper.org).*

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