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## **OGEECHEE RIVERKEEPER OFFERS GEORGIA MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM**

*Courses are in partnership with Chatham County UGA Extension Office*

Ogeechee Riverkeeper (ORK) and the Chatham County UGA Extension Office (UGA Ext.) are partnering to offer a Georgia Master Naturalist program. The ten weekly classes will include engaging field trips and hands-on activities with topic experts, including Damon Mullis, ORK's riverkeeper and executive director. Successful participation in the required 48 hours of coursework will earn participants an official certification from UGA.

Planned locations include Oatland Island Wildlife Center, Savannah-Ogeechee Canal, Tybee Island Marine Science Center, George L. Smith State Park, Canoochee Sandhills WMA, Skio UGA Marine Science Research Center, and more. Planned topics include dendrology, macroinvertebrates, medicinal herbs, aquaculture, and more. There will also be an optional session that will train participants to become certified Adopt-A-Stream volunteers. Field trips will generally take place at locations no more than about an hour away from the Savannah area.

"This extended program will allow the participants to gain hands-on learning experiences in multiple ecosystems," said Damon Mullis, executive director and riverkeeper. "I hope it will allow people to see just how interconnected everything is and why it's so important we protect the systems that sustain healthy environments."

Registration fee includes all entry costs to locations, all instruction, and a notebook for the program. The fee also includes one ticket to ORK's annual oyster roast, which will also serve at the graduation celebration, with certificate, for all participants who successfully complete the course.

The program begins September 3, with the certificate ceremony taking place at ORK's annual oyster roast on November 12. Group transportation may be available for certain outings. Classes will be held on Wednesdays, usually 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. The fee is \$425 per person, or \$395 for ORK members.

The minimum age is 14; the class is limited to 20 participants. Application and additional information is available at: <https://www.ogeecheeriverkeeper.org/naturalist/>

**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 20 counties in Georgia. More at [ogeecheeriverkeeper.org](http://ogeecheeriverkeeper.org).*

**About Georgia Master Naturalist program:** *The Georgia Master Naturalist program is an adult environmental education course developed by the UGA Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources and UGA Cooperative Extension for people who wish to be more informed about habitats, natural resources and the natural environments of our state.*