

08/28/25

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Meaghan Gerard

Communications and Administrative Director

[meaghan@ogeecheeriverkeeper.org](mailto:meaghan@ogeecheeriverkeeper.org)



## **OGEECHEE RIVERKEEPER WINS SMITH W. BAGLEY AWARD**

*The Sapelo Foundation chooses a recipient annually*

Ogeechee Riverkeeper (ORK) has been named the 2025 recipient of the Smith W. Bagley Advocacy Award. The Sapelo Foundation Board of Trustees annually selects an outstanding nonprofit organization or network to receive the honor. The award is a special grant to memorialize The Sapelo Foundation's late President and Trustee and his vision for a more just and equitable society. The Sapelo Foundation presented the award on August 28, 2025, at a reception in Savannah.

ORK was chosen for, "Work defending the Ogeechee watershed against harm in a critical year, and securing essential concessions and remediations" related to development and industry in Bryan County.

Bill Broker, Sapelo Foundation Trustee, added, "The Ogeechee Riverkeeper is the quintessential 'David' taking on 'Goliath.' In the rush to turn a blind eye to the challenges being faced by our water resources, the Riverkeeper has stood up for the preservation of this precious resource. Its effective advocacy cannot be ignored."

"We are truly honored to receive this award," said Damon Mullis, riverkeeper and executive director. "The Sapelo Foundation has long supported ORK's efforts, and we are grateful for all that they have done to protect our state's water resources. This recognition is particularly meaningful to us and ORK looks forward to continuing our collaboration to safeguard the waters of our basin for all its inhabitants."

During his more than 30 years as a leader of The Sapelo Foundation, Bagley worked to advance the civil and human rights of Georgia's disenfranchised populations. Each year, he visited small nonprofit organizations in rural Georgia communities, supporting their work to advance social justice and progressive change. His focus inspired the grantmaking decisions of The Sapelo Foundation.

"My father, Smith Bagley, believed deeply in the power of people to drive change—especially those who challenged injustice head-on. He admired organizations that weren't afraid to speak hard truths or take bold risks in pursuit of a more just world," noted Nicole Bagley, Immediate Past President of The Sapelo Foundation. "Ogeechee Riverkeeper reflects the courage, creativity, and conviction that defined his life's work. I know he would be proud to see this award go to a group so deeply rooted in protecting people and a place they love—with unwavering integrity and fearlessness."

**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 The Sapelo Foundation:** *The Sapelo Foundation strives for a just Georgia, through partnerships and solutions that increase environmental protection, social prosperity, and civic power. With their grants, they support grantee partners that pursue power-building strategies, such as policy advocacy, civic engagement, and grassroots community organizing. More at [sapelofoundation.org](http://sapelofoundation.org).*

\*\*\*