FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
11/19/2026
Ogeechee Riverkeeper
Contact: Meaghan Gerard, Communications Director
meaghan@ogeecheeriverkeeper.org

OGEECHEE RIVERKEEPER LEADS AQUIFER PROTECTION IN DIRTY DOZEN REPORT

Annual Georgia Water Coalition report highlights 12 of the worst offenses to Georgia's water

Each year, the Georgia Water Coalition (GWC) releases a Dirty Dozen report, which highlights 12 of the worst offenses to Georgia's water–offenses that are the consequences of an under-funded state environmental agency and a lack of political will to aggressively enforce laws that protect our water, land, air, and people. Ogeechee Riverkeeper (ORK) serves as one of GWC's leadership organizations.

In the report, ORK is named a lead on the issues regarding the protection of the Floridan Aquifer groundwater. ORK has long insisted on reserving aquifer water supply for living things–people, produce, and livestock. Damon Mullis, riverkeeper and executive director of ORK, is a member of the Coastal Permitting Advisory Committee for Coastal Georgia Regional Water Planning Council, and he is working to implement regional policy that will reduce cones of depression and encourage a rebound of aquifer pressure. Georgians should not give up access to pristine water to industrial processes, including data center use.

Georgia currently has a reported 43 operating data centers with 100 more proposed. There are dozens of issues and concerns with the proliferation of data centers, but in the realm of water usage two are both critical and hidden. Without upfront disclosure of water usage, local and state reviews cannot sufficiently plan for meeting existing and future water needs. Furthermore, municipal wastewater utilities need to know what's coming through their pipes if they're expected to treat it properly, but data centers won't disclose that information.

Local officials cannot make informed decisions without reliable information. Water and wastewater utilities cannot responsibly plan infrastructure around undisclosed demands. Residents cannot weigh the benefits of development against its potential costs if the most important details are hidden behind a non-disclosure agreement.

"Distrust from community members is an understandable response to the lack of any real and specific information about these water-intensive projects," says Ben Kirsch, legal director for ORK. "For data centers to be good neighbors, there needs to be full and proactive transparency about how a community's water resources will be protected before any final decisions are made."

GWC is calling lawmakers to pass legislation in 2027 that prohibits non-disclosure agreements covering water use and wastewater information, and requires full public disclosure of resource demands before local governments vote on rezoning or projects of regional impact.

The 2026 Dirty Dozen report includes multiple issues with statewide impacts as well as those impacting the Altamaha, Chattahoochee, Conasauga, Flint, Ocmulgee, and Savannah rivers. It is not a

list of the state's most polluted water bodies. Instead, the report highlights the politics, policies, and issues that threaten the health of Georgia's water and the well being of 11 million Georgians.

Read the full report: https://www.gawater.org/resources/dirty-dozen

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.*

About Georgia Water Coalition: *The Georgia Water Coalition is a consortium of more than 260 conservation and environmental organizations, hunting and fishing groups, businesses and faith-based organizations that have been working to protect Georgia's water since 2002. Collectively, these organizations represent thousands of Georgians. More at www.gawater.org.*

***