

# COOSA



## RIVERKEEPER®



Coosa Riverkeeper's new boat, the "Laura Moore II" at the Alabama Rivers Alliance Defend Rivers float in Montgomery!

Newsletter  
Issue 7: Summer 2014

## White Rock Quarry

On April 21st, we delivered comments to the Alabama Department of Environmental Management regarding a flawed draft permit for a limestone quarry in Vincent that would discharge to the Coosa River and Spring Creek. The comments, written by Southern Environmental Law Center, show how the Draft Permit violates the Clean Water Act.

The Department proposed to allow the quarry to discharge 3 million gallons of water per day into a tributary of Spring Creek, approximately ten times the average natural flow of the stream. The permit would allow 625 pounds of sediment to be dumped into the Coosa each day, or 228,125 pounds per year. **Sediment in Lay Lake will have economic impacts** in terms of reduced hydropower generation capacity, reduced flood control capacity, and reduced recreational opportunities.

The permit also failed to consider the presence of **three federally protected threatened & endangered species** located near the quarry that could be impacted, as well as a major drinking water supply for Shelby County. As of early August, we are still awaiting a response.

Read more at [coosariver.org/whiterock!](http://coosariver.org/whiterock!)



Riverkeeper Frank Chitwood points to the quarry on a map of the North Shelby County water distribution map while holding the comment letter.

# “Laura Moore II” joins Coosa Riverkeeper fleet!

*Laura Moore II* is the newest member of the Coosa Riverkeeper team! She was christened at Back Forty Beer Co. in Gadsden on June 6th, 2014 then taken on her maiden voyage on Lake Neely Henry at Coosa Landing. The *Laura Moore II* will be used to conduct research, investigate pollution and water quality issues, collect samples, document river conditions, and take members and community leaders, like you, on educational trips.

The *Laura Moore II* was donated by Board member **Chef Chris Harrigan of Stones Throw Bar & Grill**. A generous grant from the **Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham** allowed us to repair the boat and purchase a truck to tow it with. **Academy Sports & Outdoors** at Lee Branch donated some equipment for the boat. Our great members **Lee Varner** and **David Smith** have put in countless hours as mechanics for our boats. Thanks to these great local businesses who donated towards the new rig: **Alden Systems, Area 41 Pizza Co., Back Forty Beer Co., Greater Gadsden Area Tourism, Super Slam-Orvis, Tiger Rock Martial Arts, & Whole Foods Market.**

*Laura Moore II* is named after the greatest legend of the Coosa River (see “A River Legend.”) She takes the place of *The Olive*, our old 17’ jon boat which was named after Popeye the Sailor’s boat. Popeye’s author grew up on the Coosa near Ohatchee and based the story of his life on the river. *The Olive* was leased to us by conservation photographer **Beth Maynor Young**.

At 24 feet and holding up to ten passengers, the *Laura Moore II* is well suited for the large lakes of the Coosa and our ever-expanding work. Of course, we already miss *The Olive*!

After her maiden voyage in Gadsden and a few patrols, *Laura Moore II* made a presence at the **Alabama Rivers Alliance Defend Rivers flotilla** with over 100 participants in Montgomery on the Alabama River!

So here’s to the **Laura Moore II** and the many accomplishments she will achieve in pursuit of a healthier, happier Coosa River!



The crew for the maiden voyage (L-to-R): Jessica White (Back Forty), Lee Varner, Brad and Jason Wilson (Back Forty), David Smith, Josh Tidwell (Board member), Justin Overton (Executive Director), Frank Chitwood (Riverkeeper), Timothy Blevins (Back Forty) and Doug Morrison (Board President).

# Fishing For An Answer

Fishing is one of the Coosa River's greatest pastimes. Hailed across the nation for its exceptional bass fishing, the Coosa holds not just excellent largemouth bass but also the great Coosa spotted bass (or Alabama Bass) and the smaller yet admirable redeye bass.

However, when it comes to taking dinner home, **it's not always clear when it's safe to eat the fish you catch.** With 26 fish consumption advisories on the river, a hungry angler should study up before heating the frying oil.

Weiss Lake, Logan Martin Lake, Lay Lake and Choccolocco Creek all have fish consumption advisories. These advisories, issued by the

Alabama Department of Public Health, recommend a **reduced consumption of certain species of fish due to a small risk of cancer or other serious chronic illness** if consumed over a long period of time.

In a survey conducted by Coosa Riverkeeper in the Fall of 2013, we found 91% of anglers at Logan Martin and Neely Henry dams said they would heed advisories if they were aware of them. Heeding an advisory means changing fishing locations or targeting only clean fish.

Unfortunately, only 40% of those we surveyed had heard that there are advisories on

the Coosa and only 8% said they actually knew what the advisories said! **Efforts to inform the public about contaminated fish are lacking.**

Our fish are so contaminated with industrial pollutants like PCBs and mercury in some locations that we cannot eat some of them. Yet, the same agencies and regulators who should have been there to stop this pollution in the first place do little to inform the public of their risk of cancer with high exposure to contaminated fish.

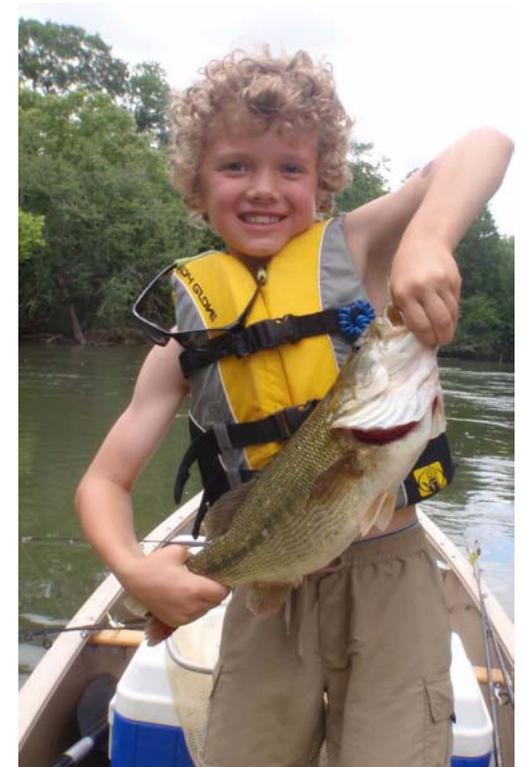
Is it an embarrassing secret they are trying to sweep under the rug? Or, more likely, a reflection upon **the State's inability to care for its environment and public health?** If we cannot even inform our neighbors that some fish are unfit for consumption, how will we ever end pollution that contaminates fish? If we continue down this path where our politicians and regulators do nothing while more fisheries become contaminated, **where will go to fish for supper with our families?**

**These important questions need answers.** Through our Clean Fish, Healthy Communities program we hope to increase awareness of advisories amongst fishermen.

Get brushed up on the Coosa River fish consumption advisories and learn more at [coosariver.org/issues/fish](http://coosariver.org/issues/fish).



Tolton holding a striped bass he caught at Neely Henry Dam.



This large bass from Choccolocco Creek is unsafe for Jack to eat.

# A RIVER LEGEND

*Laura Moore II* is named after the greatest legend of the Coosa River: the *Laura Moore* steamer with Captain Cummins Lay at the wheel.

Captain Lay, in the midst of the Civil War, **did what no other man has ever done**. He successfully navigated a powered boat the entire length of the Coosa from Rome to Wetumpka. The feat has been described by local historians as one that will “doubtless stand as **the most daring exploit ever attempted on any river in Alabama.**”

The journey began when Captain Lay snuck the *Laura Moore* out of Union-captured Rome, Georgia and steamed to Greensport (on modern day Neely Henry). Then, riding large floods he navigated to Wilsonville before embarking on the most challenging part of his trip.

The rapids just north of Wetumpka along the fall line were notoriously treacherous with names like Devil's Staircase, Hell's Gap and Butting Ram Shoals. The volume of water crashing over Devil's Staircase during the *Laura Moore's* famous descent “must have drowned out every sound made on board by either engines or men,” according to historian Harvey Jackson in *Rivers of History*, a fine history book which recounts the story of the *Laura Moore*.



The *Laura Moore II* is a big boat! So we also had to upgrade our towing vehicle. Thanks to Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham for helping us purchase the truck!

## Become a member of COOSA RIVERKEEPER today!

using this form or online at [coosariver.org](http://coosariver.org)

Select a level of membership that matches your commitment:  
*Your membership is 100% tax-deductible*

- \$10-Coldwater Darter: a vulnerable fish that is found only in the Coosa.
- \$25-Blue Shiner: a threatened fish found on the Little River, Choccolocco and Weogufka Creeks of the Coosa.
- \$50-Pygmy Sculpin: a threatened fish found only in Coldwater Spring.
- \$100: Lacy Elimia: a threatened snail found only in the Cheaha, Emauhee and Wewoka Creeks of the Coosa.
- \$250: Southern Clubshell: an endangered mussel found in the Coosa, Cahaba and Tallapoosa Rivers.
- \$500: Green Pitcher Plant: a critically endangered, carnivorous plant found mostly in Alabama near the Coosa.
- \$1,000: Coosa River Spotted Bass: hands down the meanest fighting bass in the nation.
- Other Amount: \$\_\_\_\_\_
- I Can Contribute Goods or Services: \_\_\_\_\_
- I'd Like to Volunteer

### Tell Us About Yourself:

Your name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Your e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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