



COOSA
RIVERKEEPER®
KEEPING WATCH OVER
OUR WATERS SINCE 2010

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COOSA
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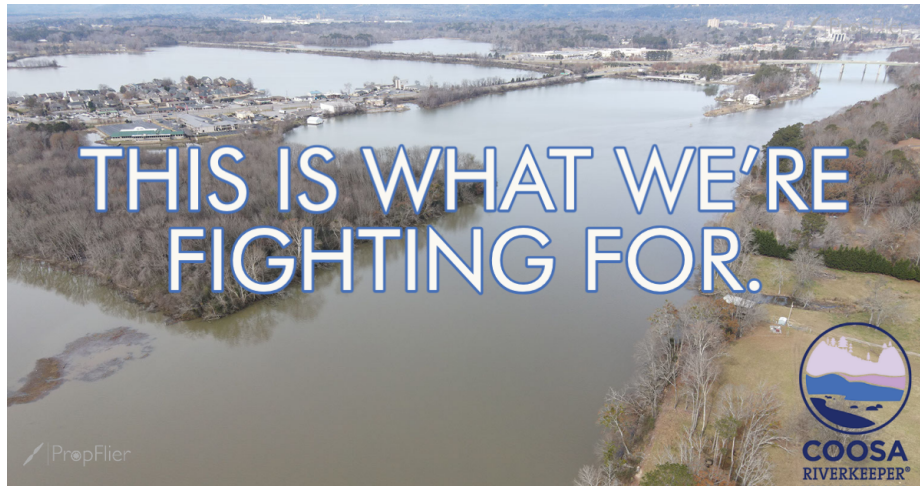
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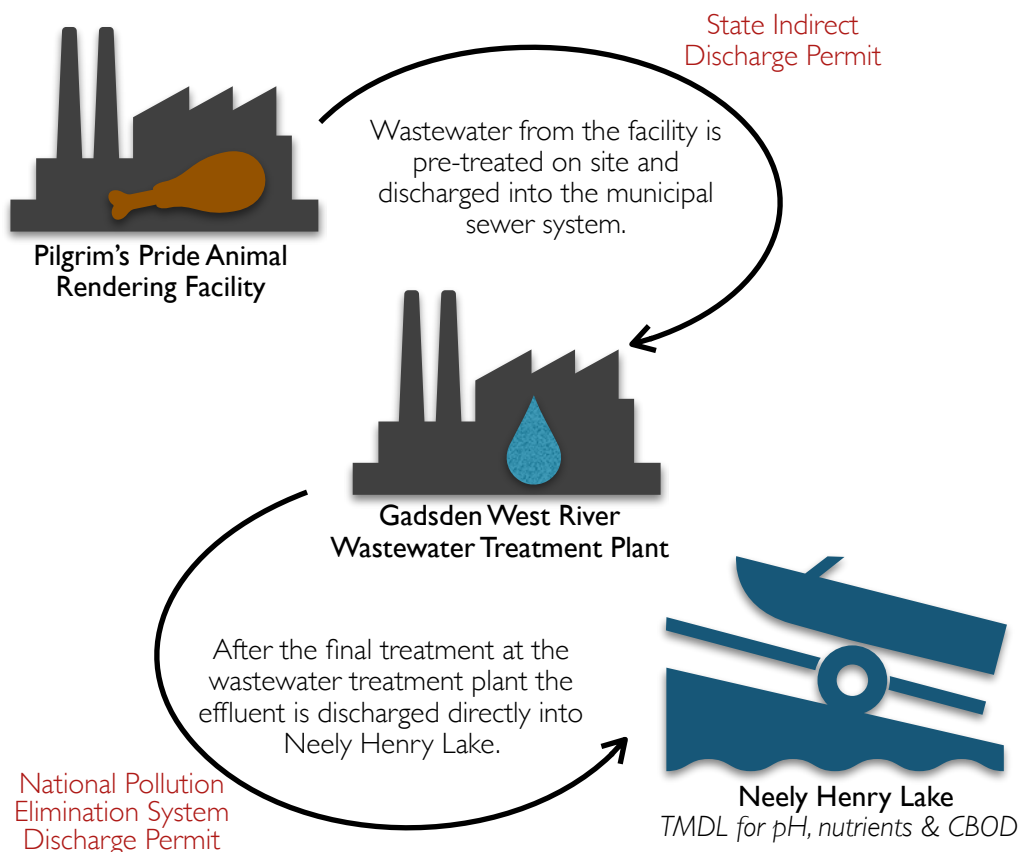
Issue 21: Early 2021

- ★ Animal Rendering Plant Threatens Neely Henry Lake
- ★ Fish Guide Earns Respect on Ramps & Nationwide
- ★ Riverkeeper Field Notes & Update

Proposed Animal Rendering Plant threatens Neely Henry Lake



The Wastewater Process



What is an animal rendering facility?

Animal rendering facilities accept byproducts of dead animals, raw meat, waste tissue, and blood to be rendered into animal food & other food products.

How will the wastewater be treated?

- The proposed rendering facility includes a 4,800 square foot wastewater treatment plan and surface lagoons.
- Pilgrim's Pride applied for a State Indirect Discharge (SID) Permit where they anticipate to discharge up to 621,000 gallons per day (7 days a week) of pretreated wastewater into the sewer system.
- Gadsden West River Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) will receive Pilgrim's Pride wastewater for final treatment.
- Gadsden West River WWTP has a poor record of compliance over the past decade. When there are moderate rains there have been repeated "bypasses," discharging untreated wastewater into Neely Henry Lake on the Coosa River.
- Without upgrades to the WWTP (or other actions to avert the impacts to the Coosa from untreated sewage), the plant cannot manage its current wastewater flows, let alone expanded wastewater loads from a significant new industrial source.

How would this facility impact water quality?

- Since 2008, Neely Henry Lake has had a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for nutrients, pH, and oxygen demand.
- A TMDL is a tool for reducing water pollution in impaired waters by calculating the amount of a pollutant that the waterbody can receive and still meet applicable water quality standards.
- TMDL means the waterway does not meet applicable water quality standards and is an impaired waterway. The implementation of technology-based effluent limitations alone does not ensure the attainment of applicable water quality standards.
- The Gadsden West WWTP will be adding a substantial amount of nutrient pollution to the already-impaired Neely Henry Lake if ADEM were to grant the SID Permit to Pilgrim's Pride.

Fish Guide earns respect on the dock and notoriety

Update on EPA Contaminated Sediment Meeting for Choccolocco & Logan Martin Lake

In September, we were invited to speak at the EPA's Contaminated Sediments Technical Advisory Group (CSTAG) concerning the Anniston PCB site. We presented at this meeting to speak for the affected waterways: Snow Creek, Choccolocco Creek, and Logan Martin Lake. We addressed the need to improve institutional controls. We recently received comments back from the CSTAG and were quite pleased with the result.

From the CSTAG report -- "The Coosa Riverkeeper, a local non-profit group, reported that 21.5% of fishers on the Coosa River and its tributaries participating in a recent creel survey for subsistence and less than half of the participants reported knowing specifics about fish consumption advisories. The Riverkeeper believes that the effectiveness of the current fish consumption advisory program is limited by insufficient and poorly maintained signage, inadequate public education efforts, and advisories available only in English. . . . CSTAG sees potential benefits of supporting and using the Riverkeeper's local resources and expertise to implement future efforts."

Coosa Riverkeeper will continue to stay engaged in the Anniston PCB site, CSTAG, and Superfund process. We want to ensure public health is protected, proper institutional controls are present, and the integrity of the waterway is maintained and improved.

Our Creel Survey Data is Reel-y Interesting

Our Fish Guide Coordinator is grinding away at the 2020 Creel Survey Report of Coosa River Community Anglers! We are learning so much about YOU. We can't wait to share the full report with y'all! Thanks again to all 250 folks that took time to fill out the survey last summer!

Did Y'all Know?

84%

of survey respondents love to eat crappie from the Coosa?

90%

of survey respondents share their catch with family & friends?

Film about Fish Consumption Advisories on the Coosa screening nationwide!

The film, "A Fisher's Right to Know," was created by Southern Exposure Film Fellowship this past summer on the banks of the Coosa. We're excited that it was accepted into the national Wild & Scenic Film Festival. This film starred our staff, local anglers, and our board president, Chuck & his son!

Watch the 16 minute documentary anytime at [SouthernExposureFilms.org!](http://SouthernExposureFilms.org)



Fish Guide Coordinator Meets with Commissioner of Dept. of Conservation

Towards the end of January, we had the opportunity to meet with Commissioner Blankenship of the Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources, Senator Andrew Jones, and Alabama Rivers Alliance to talk shop about fish consumption advisories and how we can better serve Alabama's anglers. Legislation does not currently exist in our state that protects fishers and their families. We are working to elevate that issue on a state level through advocacy and legislation!

As a result of this meeting, we secured permission to begin posting fish consumption advisory signs across the state at DCNR ramps! This win will go far to educate anglers where they need the advisories most — at the boat ramps.

Field Work Highlights

Our staff endures patrols in the winter winds, weather, and rains to investigate pollution. We're conducting winter general inspections on the entire river before the end of March, wave if you see us! Report pollution to us at CoosaRiver.org/Report-Pollution or dial 205-981-6565.



We planted rocky shoal spider lilies with a small group in November on Hatchet Creek. We are excited to announce a partnership with Kaul Wildflower Garden at Birmingham Botanical Gardens. These seeds were collected from the creek, propagated at the Gardens, and returned to the creek thanks to volunteers to restore their habitat. Stay tuned!



During the wet winter months, we spend time focusing on construction stormwater violations. Pictured above shows failures in best management practices and violations of sediment leaving the site after a rain event. We collected turbidity samples and are monitoring the situation.

In case you missed it...

Last year was a hard year for us all, but as the world turned upside down, many folks turned to the river:

Here is what you helped us accomplish:

2020 HIGHLIGHTS

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OPERATIONS

- Celebrated our 10th anniversary with new logos & merchandise
- Earned the Standards for Excellence accreditation for the second time for our excellence and transparency in our governance, financials, & programs
- Hired our first Development Coordinator to support our membership services & lead outreach efforts in our watershed
- Led the Waterkeepers Alabama Strategic Planning committee to plan future advocacy work for our statewide coalition to defend rivers

SWIM GUIDE

- Monitored water quality at 30 sites for 16 weeks and issued 120 water quality alerts thanks to 7 interns from 5 different universities in Alabama
- Grew our outreach for Swim Guide by 26%, far exceeding our goal
- Created numerous COVID-19 operational plans to make protecting our interns & staff a top priority
- Partnered with Bama Budweiser of Shelby County to post 565 signs at local grocery stores and gas stations to educate the public about water quality

RIVERKEEPER PATROL

- Conducted 55+ patrols & responded to over 91 citizen complaints
- Successfully defeated an unnecessary Coosa River Toll Bridge, a proposed privately owned toll bridge that would have disturbed PCBs in Lay Lake
- Advocated for the passing of Talladega County Local Amendment #2 to stop septage application near Logan Martin Lake
- Wrote technical comment letters on coal ash closure permits, NPDES permits for chicken processing facilities, & EPA remediation plans for Choccolocco Creek

FISH GUIDE

- Hired the first ever Fish Guide Coordinator to manage and grow this popular program
- Fish Guide was the star of A Fisher's Right to Know, a short documentary film from Southern Exposure Film Fellowship
- Surveyed 250+ fishers to better understand their fishing habits & fish consumption advisory knowledge
- Presented at the EPA Region 4 Contaminated Sediment Technical Advisory Group about remediating Choccolocco Creek & fish consumption advisories