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OUR WATERS SINCE 2010



## Issue 22: Summer 2021

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# Here's the Skinny on Swim Guide 2021

Surviving summer in the South requires swimming for many families! Our Swim Guide program answers the question of swim safety by focusing on water quality monitoring that's easy to understand at highly popular public parks, boat ramps, sloughs, and outfitters in the Coosa Valley.

**We added 14 new monitoring sites to our route this year which means we are expanding our Swim Guide program by 46%!**

Last year, there was a 26% increase in access to our Swim Guide data and many folks wanted to us to start monitoring new places... we put our heads together to plan to expand this program. We added a new water quality sampling route to Swim Guide, and focused on monitoring more places on the Shelby and Talladega County side of Lay Lake. This growth allowed us to sample more locations on Lake Mitchell, Lake Jordan, and the Coosa River in Wetumpka.

**Wanna get our text alerts?**  
Text SWIMGUIDE to 205-526-4819

See the 2021 site list below:



## A HUGE THANK YOU TO OUR SWIM GUIDE SPONSORS:



## 2021 Swim Guide Goals

**44** Swim Guide sites

**795** water quality samples collected

**15** weeks of monitoring

**44** site sponsors

**9** interns from **4** universities

**46%** growth in the program

# Dirt Does Hurt: Coosa files Notice of Intent to Sue

On June 16, Coosa Riverkeeper, represented by the Southern Environmental Law Center, notified Glenn Siddle of Newcastle Homes of their intention to file a lawsuit for Clean Water Act violations at the Melrose Landing Development on Highway 41 in Shelby County.

Coosa Riverkeeper received a citizen complaint in December from a trail runner who was running along the Shelby County Greenway Trail and was concerned about the construction site. The trail spans over a mile along the North Fork of Yellowleaf Creek, a tributary to Lay Lake. Coosa Riverkeeper and Shelby County filed complaints with the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) in December, resulting in a slap on the wrist from the state agency.

“Newcastle Homes knows better. Over the years, they have received a number of Warning Letters and Notice of Violations from ADEM,” says Justinn Overton, Staff Riverkeeper. “These letters and notices have done nothing to spur the company to follow the law. Coosa Riverkeeper is proud to hold them accountable. This private company is impacting a public greenway, habitat, and wildlife.”

Since then Coosa Riverkeeper’s turbidity samples during rain events from December to June documents over 26 violations through pictures, videos, and turbidity measurements, catching Newcastle Homes in a myriad of violations of the Clean Water Act, the Alabama Water Control Pollution Act, and their own permit.

Under stormwater permit requirements, developers must utilize Best Management Practices to prevent uncontrolled volumes of sediment from being washed away and to reduce the turbidity in downstream waterways. Sediment is one of the leading causes of water pollution in Alabama, and developers have a responsibility to ensure that their operations do not harm water quality for downstream communities who rely on these waters for fishing, swimming, navigation, and drinking water supplies. Coosa Riverkeeper has documented that those measures continue to be woefully inadequate, and have filed a Notice of Intent to Sue to give the developers 60 days to comply with the requirements of their permits.



During rain, sediment and dirt from construction sites may find its way into waterways. As the stormwater moves over time and distance, the sediment will settle out and cover the bottom of the waterway. Although dirt is natural, the rate in which dirt from construction sites enter our waterways, is incredibly detrimental to wildlife. Sediment not only covers the bottom where animals and plants live and reproduce, but it reduces visibility, causing animals to have a harder time finding sustenance, as well as clogging fishes gills and can cause suffocation.

In addition to the ecological effects, the increase of dirt and mud negatively affects recreational and aesthetic qualities of the receiving waterway. In addition to sediment, the sheer volume of water that crashes into streams from uncontrolled construction sites causes erosion and flooding, sometimes overtopping roads, filling private and public lakes, and damaging private property.

**Report anything that “looks fishy” to us!**  
**You can report pollution at [CoosaRiver.org/Report-Pollution](https://CoosaRiver.org/Report-Pollution)**  
**or by calling our office at 205-981-6565.**



## Fish Consumption Advisory Signs on Choccolocco Creek

For the first time in over 25 years, there are legible signs about fish consumption advisories along Choccolocco Creek, a major tributary to Logan Martin Lake. Shoutout to our Fish Guide Coordinator, Victoria, who worked tirelessly to make this long time dream of Coosa Riverkeeper come true!

We constantly see subsistence fishers out on Choccolocco Creek, who are unknowingly consuming fish from this creek that is a “Do Not Eat Any” waterbody since Monsanto stopped producing PCBs, a known carcinogen, in 1971. To learn about how to reduce your exposure when eating fish from the creek, visit [CoosaRiver.org/FishGuide](http://CoosaRiver.org/FishGuide).

So far, our team has installed signs at the following locations:

- Choccolocco Creek at Curry Station Road
- Highway 77 Boat Ramp
- Choccolocco Creek at Priebe's Mill Road
- Brickstore Road
- Jackson Trace Road
- 5 more signs are currently being installed in Calhoun County!



*Thank you to Choccolocco Watershed, Talladega Cooperative Extension System, Calhoun County NRCS, and our interns for making this possible!*

## Meet our Program Director



We are excited to introduce you to Chad Hoffman, our Program Director!

Chad spent his childhood playing in the woods of Pine Mountain, Ga., not far from Callaway Gardens. Through various experiences as he got older he learned firsthand the challenges that major waterways face, along their skinny water. The middle section of the Chattahoochee River is where he learned to whitewater kayak, and where his passion for fly fishing and conservation evolved.

While pursuing a degree in Environmental Science at Auburn University he spent time working in a paleo limnology lab. He also served as facilitator at the Auburn University Challenge Course, as well as the Field Coordinator for the Chattahoochee River Conservancy. He also spent a summer in Central Montana, interning for the Friend of the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument. After graduating in 2018, he moved to Birmingham in 2019 where he worked as an Environmental Specialist at an environmental engineering firm.

As Program Director, he ensures that our Swim Guide and Fish Guide programs are operating smoothly and successfully to protect, restore, and promote the Coosa. He collaborates with our Riverkeeper to manage the lab and investigate pollution. Chad oversees our field technicians, data collection and analyzation, as well as manages our AmeriCorps members.

Chad is happiest spending time with his friends and family. He loves wading a skinny water stream with a fly rod in his hand and his camera ready to capture special moments on the water.