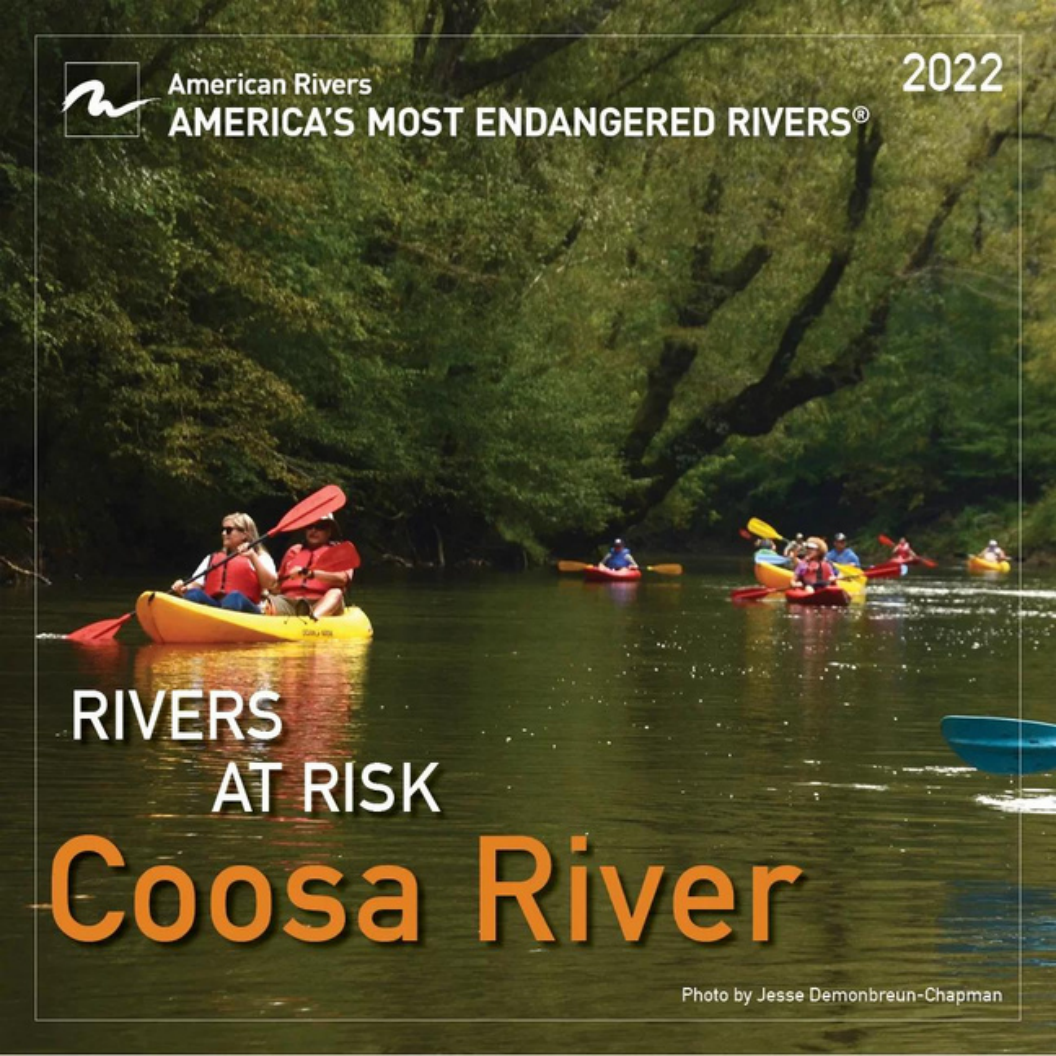


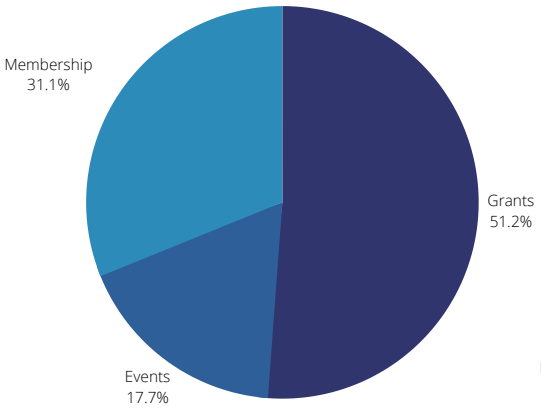
While heavily impacted by dams, the Coosa River remains one of the South's most important rivers for its rich biodiversity. However, the Coosa River and its tributaries are being choked by waste and pollution from massive industrial poultry farms. The pollution is a significant threat to drinking water and the health and wellbeing of the river's communities. The Environmental Protection Agency must demand that state agencies enforce existing Clean Water Act safeguards to protect clean water, fish and wildlife and public health

COOSA RIVERKEEPER®

Issue 25: Spring 2022

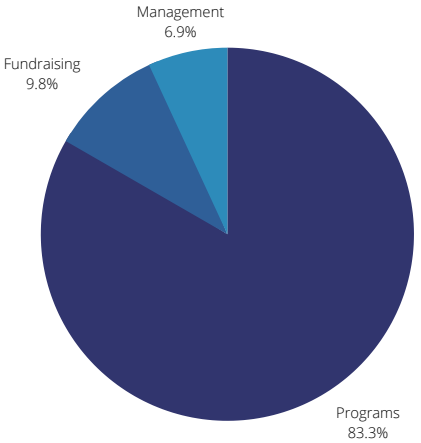
- Financial Report
- Nutrients on the Coosa
- Meet our New Team Members
- Coosa River named 5th Most Endangered River in the US
- Swim Guide 2022

2021 Financials



How We're Funded

Our organization relies on folks like you to ensure we have the resources we need to defend the Coosa, monitor water quality, and advocate for the families who rely on the river!



Our Accreditations

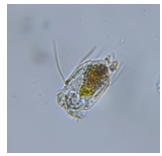
At every level of our organization we strive to use our donors investment in our work wisely... but we don't stop there! Our organization is accredited by the national Standards for Excellence for transparency in our finances, programs, and operations as well as Guidestar Platinum!

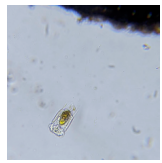
Our New AmeriCorps Members

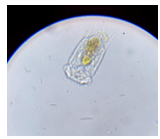
We're so excited to expand our education efforts and field investigations over the next year!
Stay tuned for new volunteer opportunities.

Nutrients on the Coosa

Just like you and me, nutrients are essential for waterbodies to be healthy and sustain life. Nutrients are simply the substances that help organisms grow and thrive. Nutrient and minerals entering a waterbody is natural and expected in moderation. However, when too many nutrients are added to a waterbody, it can become an issue impacting water quality as algae and aquatic weeds grow too excessively. In freshwater systems such as the Coosa, the primary nutrients to keep an eye on are phosphorus and nitrogen. Nutrients can enter our waterways from point sources, like wastewater discharges from industry, concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), and wastewater treatment plants. It can also come from non-point sources like stormwater runoff.







Algal blooms are an overgrowth of algae and associated organisms caused by excess nutrients in a waterway. Effects from algal blooms can include creating oxygen-poor dead zones, producing extremely dangerous toxins that can be deadly, raising treatment costs of drinking water, and impacting the economy through loss of business and diminishing property values. Some blooms can produce dangerous toxins, but even nontoxic algal blooms can be detrimental to fishery health, water quality, and the local tourism economy.

When an algal bloom grows out of control and produces toxic or harmful effects on people, fish, shellfish, marine mammals and birds, it is a Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB). In freshwater ecosystems like the Coosa, cyanobacteria, or blue-green algae, are the organisms of concern sometimes produced by HABs that can produce extremely dangerous cyanotoxins. While algal blooms can often be seen by the naked eye, further testing is required to confirm if it is a HAB by testing for cyanobacteria and cyanotoxins.

What You're Lookin' At:
Polyarthra vulgaris, is a species of rotifers in the family Synchaetidae.

How Coosa Riverkeeper Monitors Nutrients

As HABs and eutrophication become emerging issues within the Coosa River watershed, Coosa Riverkeeper has added algae and nutrient monitoring to our arsenal of water quality monitoring weapons. To monitor for HABs and cyanotoxins, algae sampling and identification will be conducted at locations with high potential for harmful algae growth weekly on the Coosa River lakes. To track nutrient issues, dead zones, and potential fish kills, water chemistry testing will be conducted through normal Swim Guide sampling. These in-house efforts will be supplemented as needed by sending samples to the Wilson Lab at Auburn University or the NOAA Phytoplankton Monitoring Network for advanced testing.

Our Monitoring Plan:

- Cyanobacteria monitoring and identification through NOAA's volunteer Phytoplankton Monitoring Network, which anyone can participate in. Sign up if you are interested in identifying cyanobacteria, you just need a cheap ($50-100) microscope and lake access!
- Swim Guide water chemistry testing to give us additional parameters to track nutrient growth with, such as dissolved oxygen, water temperature, and pH.
- Supplemental advanced testing with the Wilson Lab at Auburn University or NOAA to gather expanded technical nutrient data.

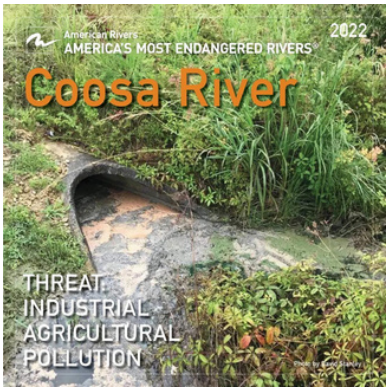
Coosa River named the 5th

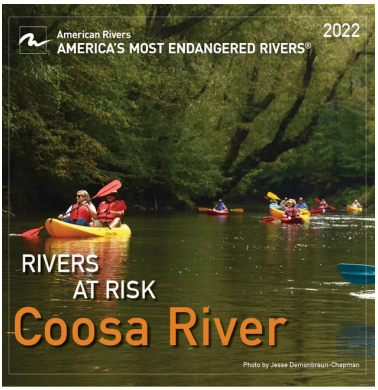
The national group, American Rivers, named the Coosa River among America's Most Endangered Rivers® of 2022, highlighting the threat that industrial agricultural pollution poses to clean water, communities and local economies.

Millions of tons of chicken feces from billions of chickens is a major threat to the Coosa River's drinking water supply and overall ecosystem health. The waste is spread on fields, and massive industrial poultry farms discharge their wastewater into municipal sewer systems that are crumbling, where permits are inadequate to protect water quality if they are even enforced at all. Local governments favor industrial operators over the health of Black and low-income communities, forcing them to suffer the consequences of inadequate enforcement.

"America's Most Endangered Rivers is an urgent call to action. This pollution threatens people and nature and could lead to more dangerous toxic algae outbreaks. Now is the time for everyone who cares about public health and a clean Coosa River to speak up," – Ben Emanuel with American Rivers.

American Rivers and its partners called on the Environmental Protection Agency to demand that state agencies enforce existing Clean Water Act safeguards to protect clean water, fish and wildlife and public health.





"The unfortunate intersection of heavy nutrient pollution and frequent sanitary sewer overflows leaves the communities and families who live, work and play along the Coosa River vulnerable to the potential of harmful algal outbreaks and a variety of water-borne illnesses, Alabamians deserve to have state regulatory agencies who protect water quality, enforce permit limitations and issue heavy fines."

– Justinn Overton, Staff Riverkeeper
& Executive Director of Coosa Riverkeeper

Most Endangered River in U.S.

The annual America's Most Endangered Rivers report is a list of rivers at a crossroads, where key decisions in the coming months will determine the rivers' fates. Over the years, the report has helped spur many successes including the removal of outdated dams, the protection of rivers with Wild and Scenic designations and the prevention of harmful development and pollution.

The Coosa River previously appeared on this list in 1999 and 2010*. The Mobile River is also listed as endangered this year due to toxic coal ash pollution. Other rivers in the region listed as most endangered in recent years include the South River and Turkey Creek (2021), Big Sunflower River (2020 and 2018), Okefenokee Swamp and St. Marys River (2020) and Apalachicola, Chattahoochee and Flint rivers (2016).

*NOTE: Our organization was founded in 2010 as a result of the Most Endangered River Status!

What Must Be Done

A number of steps must be taken on all levels of government to address this ongoing problem in the Coosa River. First, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 4 Administrator must acknowledge the severity of this problem and immediately work with Alabama and Georgia to address the regulatory gaps surrounding the transport, land application, enforcement and environmentally responsible handling of feces of billions of chickens. EPA must also demand that Alabama Department of Environmental Management adopt and enforce permits that abide by the established "pollution budgets" and update existing permits to comply with these limits. State agencies are ignoring Clean Water Act safeguards and lack the political will to create meaningful change through enforcement actions, substantial fines and protective permit limitations. Alabama and Georgia must take steps to enforce the 2008 "pollution budget" at Neely Henry Lake and require sewer systems to resolve their repeated sewer overflow issues before allowing new industry to contribute to the existing impairment issues. Lastly, county officials must safeguard public health from industrial agricultural operations.

We must demand that the state protect the health and safety of communities and the Coosa River.

ACT 50
A WATERKEEPER® ALLIANCE INITIATIVE

Jump in to

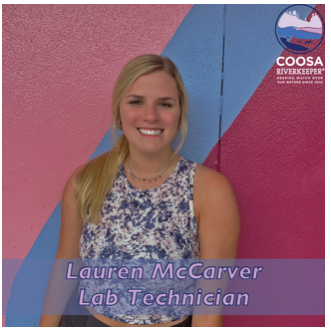
Swim Guide is back! And bigger than ever to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Clean Water Act! Coosa Riverkeeper is expanding their summer water quality monitoring program, Swim Guide. Every week from Memorial Day to mid-September, Coosa Riverkeeper will be testing popular recreation sites across the Coosa River, its lakes, and creeks for harmful pathogens like E.coli and other water quality parameters. This year in honor of the 50th Anniversary of the Clean Water Act, Coosa Riverkeeper is expanding its free water quality monitoring program to 50 sites in 12 counties!

Learn more at CoosaRiver.org/SwimGuide

Where We're Testing this Summer

Swim Guide 2022

Meet our Swim Guide Interns



• KEEPING WATCH OVER OUR WATERS SINCE 2010 •

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WATERKEEPER® ALLIANCE MEMBER