

# This is a leaking coal ash pond.



Plant Gaston on Lay Lake



## *Issue 26: Summer 2023*

- Nutrient & Algae Sampling
- Victory for Chandler Mountain
- Legal & Advocacy Updates
- Staff Update & AmeriCorps
- Fall Events

# Coal Ash Hearings

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is holding public hearings on Alabama Power's coal ash program, and we need you there to show your support for our beautiful rivers and lakes and holding Alabama Power accountable for their unlined leaking coal ash ponds.

The EPA has proposed denying Alabama Power's unsafe coal ash program, opening the door for public comments and your chance to make a difference. This is a landmark moment - the first proposed denial of a state coal ash permit program. It's our chance to stand up for our waterways, our health, and our communities.

## Here's How You Can Help:

- Join us on September 20th in Montgomery for the in-person public hearing
- You can also join the virtual public hearing on September 27th.
- Whether or not you can make it to either hearing, you can send written comments to the EPA supporting this proposed denial.

**Help us send a powerful message that Alabamians care about their water and demand stronger protections against coal ash pollution.**

This is a leaking coal ash pond that was the first in Alabama to be closed in place. It has been leaking toxic substances and is upstream from the Gadsden drinking water intake.



Gadsden Coal Ash Pond

# *Welcome Quinn!*



We are super fortunate to welcome Quinn Herring to our team! Quinn is our Community Engagement Coordinator. Her role is vital to our continued goal to develop sincere relationships in the communities that flow through the Coosa!

Quinn is an Americorps NCCC alumni with a history of spending incredulous amounts of time at Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve. When not there she can usually be found painting landscapes of ethereal realms, hanging out with her cat, Mr. Sir, or catching brim and crowning herself a “fisher woman.”

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## *Fall Events*

-  October 6-8: Southern One Fly Fishing Tournament (Wetumpka-area/Lake Mitchell & Jordan/Tailwaters)
-  October 28: Kellypalooza Music Festival (Ohatchee/Logan Martin)
-  November 12: Lovelight Farm's Chili Cook Off (Wilsonville/Lay Lake)

Learn more at [CoosaRiver.org/Events](https://CoosaRiver.org/Events)

# *Victory at Chandler Mountain*

We recently had a significant victory for the people of Chandler Mountain, for the Big Canoe Creek watershed, and for all the living things that call this special area home, including the Canoe Creek clubshell and trispot darter, both of which are federally protected under the Endangered Species Act. Alabama Power has officially abandoned its land and water grab: the proposed pumped storage project that would drastically change the character of Chandler Mountain and the nearby communities of Steele, Gallant, Rainbow City and more.

Dedicated community members worked together for months holding meetings and comment writing workshops to organize against this ill-conceived plan. Groups like Alabama Rivers Alliance, Coosa Riverkeeper, Energy Alabama, The Friends of Big Canoe Creek, the Center for Biological Diversity and Southern Environmental Law Center collaborated to support the community, and we are grateful for their tireless efforts to stop this project. By standing together and speaking up for the irreplaceable treasures of Chandler Mountain, we have proven that community members and conservation groups working together can triumph over corporate interests.



We are thrilled that this vital part of the Coosa River watershed and the folks that love the area will be spared from this project. We are honored to be a part of a coalition that works to protect both the Coosa and Alabamians. The Coosa River has been a sacrifice zone for far too long, so we will continue to stand up for what is right for our waterways and our people."

— Justinn Overton, Executive Director & Staff Riverkeeper

# *Legal & Advocacy Update*

## Gadsden Water & Sewer Board Lawsuits

Gadsden Water & Sewer Board Lawsuit: Coosa Riverkeeper continues to address ongoing issues with sanitary sewer overflows through state and federal Clean Water Act lawsuits. Our staff continues to map self-reported issues, sanitary sewer overflows, and conduct random compliance checks on the facilities. Our partners and attorneys continue to press Gadsden for more transparency and best practices in each case. It is vital to understand the issues that the system faces with inflow and infiltration so the responsible party can make an informed decision on when and where to apply their resources.

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Learn more at [AlabamaCoalAsh.org](http://AlabamaCoalAsh.org)



# *Nutrient Sampling is a Wrap*

With Swim Guide coming to a close, fall rapidly approaching, and sun-kissed skin, we are officially beginning to wrap up our nutrient and algae monitoring program.

In total, we grabbed and analyzed a total of 346 algae samples this summer and were able to positively identify 1 harmful algae bloom on Lay Lake! This was split between 16 regular samples per week and 7 full sample days on each reservoir dam to dam.



Lucas, our Field Manager, collecting nutrient samples in the rain on Lake Jordan.



Picture of a coiled variant of *Dolichospermum* from a water quality sample.

## *Testing for Forever Chemicals*



PFAS sampling kit from Cyclopure upstream from a drinking water intake.

Our team spent three intensely hot days on the water collecting PFAS samples by boat and by truck along Neely Henry Lake, Logan Martin Lake, Lay Lake, and their major tributaries this summer.

This sampling effort is in partnership with our upstream partners at Upper Coosa Riverkeeper.

Stay tuned for a full report of our findings and what you can do to advocate for your health and the river.

# Updates From our Staff

Read a bit below about what we've been up to...



*Abby*

has spent a lot of time training her new staff, planning wildly successful events, and helping us educate and build influence in new communities



*Chad*

continues to take amazing pictures of our work, run a smooth Swim Guide program, and plan our fly fishing tournament for October



*Quinn*

joined our team as our Community Engagement Coordinator and immediately helped us with 4 events her first week



*Jake*

has confirmed he'll be done with his AT hike in October and is excited to come back to the office and eat Huddle House



*Justinn*

now serves as the North American Representative for Waterkeeper Alliance and has enjoyed many days on the river



*Lucas*

has become the GIS guru of our office, building maps for our advocacy and sampling efforts



*Tyler*

secured \$41,474 dollars in funding and wrote 23 grants since he started in May; he's also pitched in and run some Swim Guide routes

Read more about our staff by visiting  
[CoosaRiver.org/About/OurTeam!](https://CoosaRiver.org/About/OurTeam!)

# COOSA

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