

REGIONAL RESOURCE PLAN



Regionally Important Resources for the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region



Heart of Georgia Altamaha
Regional Commission

2012

REGIONAL RESOURCE PLAN

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for the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region

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Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission Regional Resource Plan

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission (HOGARC) is a regional planning agency created under Georgia law, and includes the counties of Appling, Bleckley, Candler, Dodge, Emanuel, Evans, Jeff Davis, Johnson, Laurens, Montgomery, Tattnall, Telfair, Toombs, Treutlen, Wayne, Wheeler, and Wilcox in south Georgia. The HOGARC is preparing this Regional Resource Plan for the protection and management of identified regionally important natural and cultural resources in accordance with the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Rules (Chapter 110-12-4).

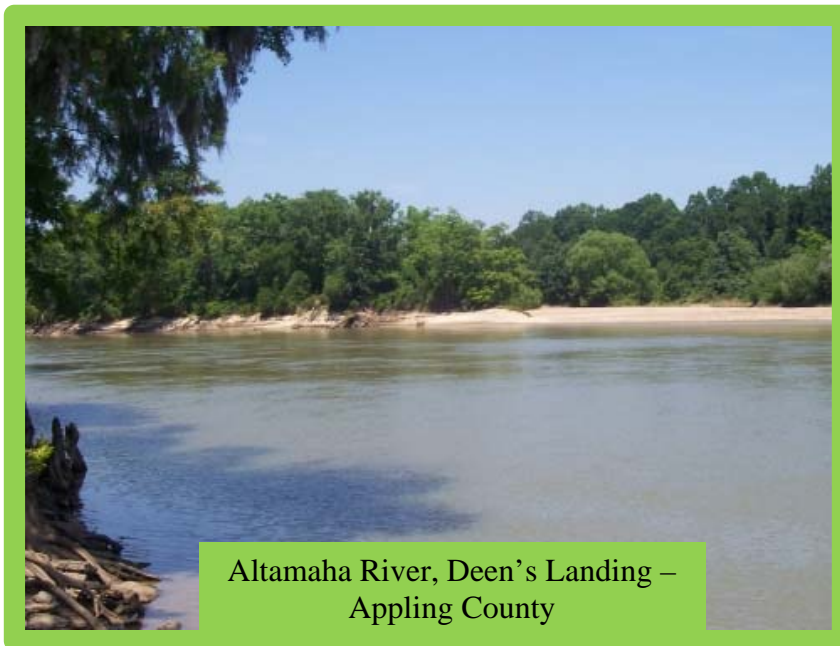
As stated in these Rules, the intent of the Regional Resource Plan is to provide “1) enhanced focus on protection and management of important natural and cultural resources throughout the state; 2) careful consideration of, and planning for, impacts of new development on these important resources; and 3) improved local, regional, and state level coordination in protecting and managing of these important resources.” The Regional Resource Plan must include: 1) a Regionally Important Resources Map which both identifies the regionally determined important natural and cultural resources and seeks to link these resources in a continuous green infrastructure network; 2) Guidance for Appropriate Development Practices for new developments to be located within one mile of designated Regionally Important Resources; and 3) General Policies and Protection Measures to be utilized in decisions affecting the identified resources.

The essential purpose of the Regional Resource Plan is to meet the state mandate, but also to serve as an advocacy guide to inform, educate, and provide a decision framework for all concerned to understand the importance of natural and cultural resources in the Region from environmental, social, economic, historical, and quality of life perspectives. Hopefully this importance and understanding can lead to sustainability and retention of these resources in the real world environment as connected, functioning, quality contributors to environmental and economic well-being for both existing and future generations, and the natural world involved. The natural and cultural resources of any place help define its character, sense of place, quality

of life, intricate ecological functioning, and economic and social well-being both for man and the natural environments' denizens. Once lost, such resources are most likely gone forever.

Background

The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region is a large rural region with a 2010 Census population of just over 303,000, encompassing 17 counties and 63 cities and covering a geographic area of approximately 6,904 square miles. There are no metropolitan statistical areas within the Region, although the Region does contain the Census designated micropolitan statistical areas of Dublin (Laurens and Johnson counties), Vidalia (Toombs and Montgomery counties), and Jesup (Wayne County). The Region lies just inland from the Georgia Coast, spanning both the Upper and Lower Coastal Plains of south central and southeast Georgia. The Region is primarily included in the Altamaha River Basin of Georgia, including surrounding the Altamaha River itself and its main tributaries, the Ocmulgee and Oconee rivers, which join to form the Altamaha near Lumber City, and the Ochopee River. Most of the current municipalities within the Region are railroad towns which were established in the late 19th or early 20th centuries.



Because of the relatively recent history of the Region's municipal development, many are under the assumption that the Region has little important cultural history. Nothing could be further from the truth. A case can be made that the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region is at the epicenter of Georgia's natural and cultural history, extremely important not only to the state, but also to national and world history, and to the world's natural environment.

The Altamaha River and its waterway paths to the Georgia Interior was a prized and desired destination for New World colonization for two centuries before the founding of

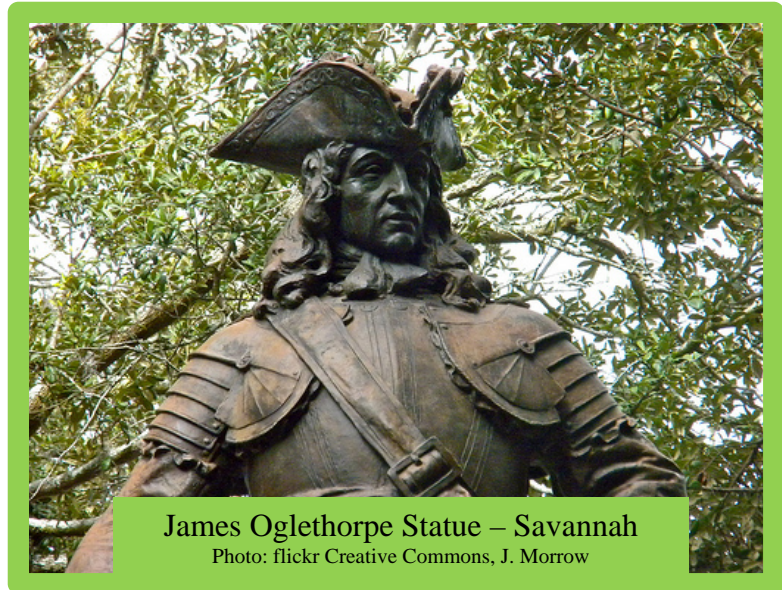
Georgia. Its natural and pastoral beauty today belies a storied past of an often bloodied battleground of European and Native American cultures. The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region is very important to Native American, European, United States, and Georgia history and geography. A major concern is that this history has not been well documented, explored archaeologically, specifically defined, or lastingly preserved.

The Altamaha River appears on the first New World maps in the early 1600s. It was much desired for settlement and colonization by England, France, and Spain. Georgia had been inhabited by Native Americans for about 11,000 years before European contact. These included the Native American mound builders, and later indigenous chiefdoms of Guale (Muskogean) above the Altamaha River and Mocama (Timucuan) below the Altamaha. At the time of Spanish exploration in the early 1500s, it is estimated that more than 100,000 Native American tribal peoples inhabited Georgia. Spanish exploration of Georgia's coast and nearby inland began with Pedro De Quejos in 1521 and Lúcas Vasquez de Aylión in 1526, but Hernando de Soto explored inner sections of Georgia and the Region in 1540. Recent archaeological evidence hints that De Soto may have crossed the Ocmulgee River near Jacksonville in Telfair County. The French explored the Georgia Coast in the 1560s under Jean Ribault and René de Landonniere, but soon after the Spanish established a series of missions along/near the Coast, including the fabled interior Santa Isabel de Utinachia within the Region by 1630, and maybe others in/near Wayne County. This mission period lasted for about a century and brought disease, Native American slave trading, intertribal warfare, and massive depopulation of the indigenous chiefdoms. The depopulation opened the Region to in-migration of other Native American tribes including the Creeks, Westo, Yemassee, Shawnee, Yuchi, and others, to take advantage of the abundant natural resources and prolific hunting grounds. Continued French, Spanish, and English objectives and desires to gain lands and control led to changing alliances with Native Americans, more trade, intercultural marriage and exchange, and more intertribal warfare and war by proxy. The Spanish Missions were extirpated, and the Spanish had to retreat to Florida by the 1680s. The Yemassee and Lower Creek, in particular, sided with the English, including Yemassee Chief Altamaha, namesake of the Altamaha River, who moved his town, Altamaha, from the Region to South Carolina near Bluffton. However, the Yemassees went to war with the South Carolina English in 1715 over mistreatment, illegal settlement, and abusive trade, but had to retreat to Spanish Florida after Cherokee and other tribal support for the English.

This war, continued agitation by the French from the west, who established a nearby fort in Upper Creek Territory in 1718, and the Spanish/Yemassee threat from the south led the need for the English to establish a settled buffer in Georgia. Georgia almost became the "Margravate

of Azilla” in 1717, and Fort King George was established in Darien along the Altamaha River in 1721. It was in this environment, that James Oglethorpe established the Colony in 1733 at Savannah, through the blessing and friendliness of the Yamacraw and Lower Creeks, and near the trading post of John Musgrove and his Creek wife, Mary Musgrove.

Mary Musgrove, hired as an interpreter by Oglethorpe and being a true Creek Indian Princess with an English trader father, proved pivotal in the success of the Georgia colony and ultimate English success in the U.S. territory. The Altamaha River was the southern boundary of the Georgia Colony, and Mary Musgrove established a second trading post, Mount Venture, believed to be on the Sansavilla Bluffs along the Altamaha River in Wayne County near the Indian Trail/Kings Highway across from the site where Fort Barrington would be constructed in 1751.



Musgrove was instrumental in rallying the Creeks to fight the Spanish in the War of Jenkins’ Ear. She paid a high personal price in doing so, losing a brother in Oglethorpe’s foray into Spanish Florida in 1740, and having her trading post on the Altamaha burned by the Spanish/Yemassee allies in 1742, which came to be known as the Fort Mount Venture Massacre.

Captain Alleck, a Lower Creek Cusseta Chief living and farming on the Sansavilla Bluffs, also played important roles in Colonial Georgia, assuring that Georgia and the English retained the Lower Creeks as allies in the French and Indian Wars. He was also instrumental in the Augusta Congress and Treaty of 1763 and a settlement with Georgia Governor Wright in 1768 in which the Creek Nation ceded the Sansavilla Bluffs to Georgia and the English and moved the Creek Nation boundary to Penholloway Creek. Captain Alleck then moved, it is believed to Doctortown. Aleck is said to translate to “doctor” in the Muscogee Creek language. The Altamaha boundary was later moved north from Penholloway to Goose Creek in the Treaty of Fort Wilkinson. The King’s Road Crossing on the Altamaha River at Sansavilla became the Post Road with the first mail service south of Savannah in 1763.

Fort Barrington, across from the Sansavilla Bluffs, was established in 1751 because of the French and Indian War threat. It became Fort Howe during the Revolution, and played a vital

role during the War of Independence, as the Sansavilla Bluff crossing was considered the most dangerous land pass on the Southern Frontier of Georgia. The British in East Florida and their Indian allies could use the Kings Road/Post Road for easy access to the colonies. There were a number of skirmishes around the Fort, and it was the staging point for East Florida Campaigns of the Americans. When overran by the British in 1778, the Sansavilla crossing and the Kings Road/Post Road allowed many Loyalists to escape to Florida. General Anthony Wayne played an important role in subduing the British and Creeks in Georgia after assisting with Cornwallis' surrender at Yorktown. Georgia was so grateful that it granted Wayne a plantation near Savannah. Wayne County, the location of the Sansavilla Bluffs, is named after him.



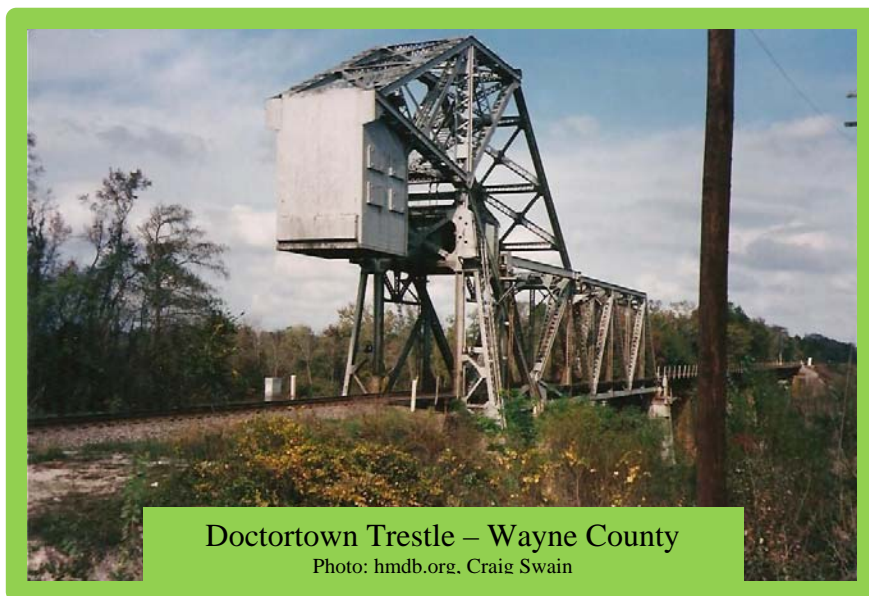
Georgia's border along the Altamaha, Ocmulgee, and Oconee rivers was much disputed after the Revolution and continued to be an important and disputed frontier. Two military outposts were established at Sansavilla and Beard's Bluffs to protect settlers from Indian attacks. Georgia's "Indian Problems," primarily instigated by continuing desires for additional Creek lands, led to problems both from settlers and the federal government.

Georgia executed tenuous treaties with a few Creek chiefs at Augusta in 1783, Galphinton in 1785, and Shoulderbone in 1786 which took additional Creek lands. This was the cause of much consternation by early U.S. Presidents and many Creek leaders, and threatened war both from within and without. Georgia also caused additional federalism issues by refusing to cede claims to Mississippi western lands and then creating the Yazoo companies land fraud. These actions caused Indian Chief Alexander McGillivray to sign a compact with Spain and Spain to acquire Yazoo interests as well. Georgia claims and Creek complaints led to the Treaty of New York in 1790 and the Treaty of Coleraine in 1796. Relative peace with the Creeks ensued, but Georgia's continuing aspirations for Creek lands lead to President Jefferson agreeing to the Georgia Compact in 1802 in which Georgia agreed to cede western lands to the United States in return for the U.S. extirpating Indian title to Georgia lands. This led to the 1805 Treaty which extinguished Creek Indian rights in the forks of the Oconee and Ocmulgee rivers.

The War of 1812 led to the Creek War, also known as the Red Stick War, which pitted Lower Creeks and the Americans against the Upper Creeks. This war led to the establishment of many forts along the Ocmulgee River, notable efforts by General Andrew Jackson in Georgia, and the Treaty of Fort Jackson, which ceded additional Creek lands in South Georgia from allies and enemies. It also led to Jackson becoming nationally prominent, President, the Indian Removal Act of 1830, and the Trail of Tears, which removed both Creeks as well as the more notable Cherokees.

Georgia Governor Troup had obtained more Creek lands in the Treaties of Indian Springs of 1821 and 1825, which ceded all Creek lands east of the Chattahoochee, including the sacred Ocmulgee Old Fields. The Lower Creek Chief William McIntosh, who signed the treaty, was killed by incensed Upper Creeks. The Second Treaty of Indian Springs was ratified by the U.S. Congress by one vote, but Creek representatives traveled to Washington and petitioned President John Quincy Adams to revoke it. The result was a negotiated 1826 Treaty of Washington, which modified the terms for the Creeks, allowing retention of the Ocmulgee Old Fields and not requiring a move west by the Creek people. This Treaty became another test of federalism as it was not recognized by Governor Troup. Although President Adams threatened military intervention, he backed down after Troup mobilized the Georgia militia. Troup's tomb is located in Treutlen County.

The Altamaha River and environs were also minor players in the Civil War. The River was obstructed in the autumn of 1862 by Confederate forces to prevent nautical passage in either direction at Lake Bluff. Georgia militia also repulsed a side party at the Doctortown Trestle during Sherman's March to the Sea. The Region and the Altamaha River also were important and central to lumber commerce in Georgia in the late 19th century and turpentine production in the 20th century. The City of Darien, at the mouth of the Altamaha River, became an international port and one of the most influential financial centers of the South because of this trade.



Doctortown Trestle – Wayne County
Photo: hmdb.org, Craig Swain

As important as the Altamaha River and Region have been to the history, geography, and commerce of both Georgia and the United States, it is also the center of very important natural resources. The Altamaha River and its basin drains one-fourth of the State of Georgia, and provides nearly one-fifth of all freshwater inputs to the Atlantic Continental Shelf, thereby nurturing the productive marshes of the Georgia Coast, which constitute nearly one-third of all salt marshes of the U.S. Atlantic Coast.

The Altamaha River has been declared one of the 75 last great places on Earth and a global bioserve by The Nature Conservancy which is actively working and partnering to preserve the corridor and its ecosystems. The Altamaha is home to more imperiled species than any river system in Georgia, and contains more than 125 rare or endangered plants and animals. It is a wetland wilderness home to more than 85 species of fish and a number of mussels and plants endemic (found only in) the Altamaha. One of Georgia's newest listed endangered species is the Altamaha Spiny mussel listed federally in November, 2011. The Robust Redhorse fish was rediscovered in 1991 near Ball's Ferry on the Oconee after having not been collected in 100 years. It is now the object of a multi-state reproduction and reintroduction conservation effort. Radford's balm (Radford dicerandra), a member of the tea family, has been identified and is known to exist only in two locations along the Altamaha.



Altamaha Spiny mussel

Photo: Wikimedia Commons, USFWS, J. Rickard



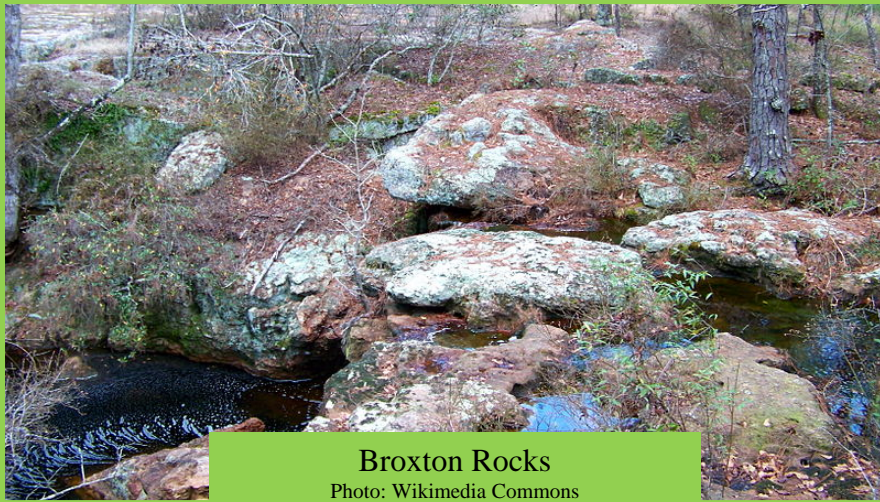
Robust Redhorse fish

Photo: flickr Creative Commons, B. Gratwick



Radford's Balm

Photo: flickr Creative Commons, Ga. DNR, L. Kruse



Broxton Rocks
Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Other important natural areas in the Region include the Ohoopsee Dunes, a xeric riverine sandhill ecosystem; the Broxton Rocks, a sandstone outcropping; and the Moody Forest, an outstanding example of old growth cypress, longleaf and slash pines

more than three centuries old. The Region contains two of the 10 National Natural Landmarks in Georgia. These are the Big Hammock Natural Area, a sandy broadleaf evergreen hammock forest, and the Camp E.F. Boyd Natural Area (earlier name of Ohoopsee Dunes). The Charles Harrold Nature Preserve in Candler County, home to the rare Georgia Plume (*Elliottia racemosa*), was the first ecological preserve in Georgia, having been first set aside in the 1930s. The Moody Forest was the first public/private partnership in conservation land management in Georgia.

John and William Bartram first scientifically explored the Altamaha River region in 1765, documenting its plant, animal, and Native American inhabitants. Along the Altamaha River near the Sansavilla Bluffs, they documented and collected the Franklin Tree (*Franklinia alatamaha*). The Franklin Tree is likely America's first rare plant as it is now believed extinct in the wild, and only is propagated in cultivation from the Bartrams' original collected specimens.



Franklinia alatamaha
Photo: flickr Creative Commons, T. Rodd

William Bartram also helped survey ceded Creek lands in 1773. The Altamaha River and its tributaries and the surrounding lands are truly national historic and natural treasures deserving of significant protection, and better understanding and definition. The Region was pivotal in the determination of American boundaries and its course of history, and most definitely has significant cultural and natural history, almost without compare.

Methodology

While it is without question that the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region has a number of very significant natural and cultural resources, the question for this study becomes what are the resources to be designated as “regionally important resources (RIRs)” in accordance with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) rules. It is incumbent upon the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission (HOGARC) to determine regional importance considering value, vulnerability, green infrastructure connection, and the bureaucratic implications and responsibilities of RIR listing. The clear intent and purpose of the DCA rules is to create a listing of regionally significant natural and cultural resources which educates and informs all concerned, which encourages future coordinated protection, and which also facilitates creation of linked landscapes and corridors important for wildlife, the environment, and human interaction/utilization.



Oconee River – Treutlen County



Altamaha River, Town's Bluff –
Jeff Davis County

Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission Planning Staff knowledge and preliminary research immediately focused on its important river and stream corridors. These rivers and stream corridors are obviously central focus points of both natural and human history, as well as current environmental, conservation and recreational use efforts. In analyzing many existing conservation documents; the location of existing conservation lands; the location of important known historic, archaeological, and cultural resources; and outlined strategies/focus efforts of both online and printed materials, of many public and private agencies and organizations, the priority focus on regional river and stream corridors was confirmed multiple times over. It was also clear from this analysis that preservation of the river and stream corridors in a natural state would provide multiple benefits and protection for a large percentage of natural, cultural, and archaeological resources in the Region, and also afford compatible economic development, tourism, and recreational uses of these resources. The natural linear nature of these corridors also provides obvious opportunities for green infrastructure connection. The tributaries

of major corridors are natural connectors to surrounding natural landscapes and bridges to and between corridors.

Based on this preliminary research and analysis, HOGARC Planning Staff developed a “Preliminary Green Infrastructure Network Regionally Important Resource Map” to be used as part of the required stakeholder involvement and nomination process for Regionally Important Resources. Staff developed a list of more than 200 public and private organizations, agencies, and local governments as potentially interested parties and stakeholders which may have interest in the protection or listing of significant natural, cultural, historic, or archaeological resources in the Region.

Nominations from these many stakeholders were sought in a November, 2011 mailing in an attempt to obtain a comprehensive listing of all significant natural and cultural resources with as much outside input as possible. The mailing included a “RIR Nomination Invitation,” which detailed the purpose and requirements of regionally important resources and the request for nominations, a specially adapted nomination form for response/resource nomination, and a copy of the “Preliminary Green Infrastructure Network Map” with explanation. The nomination invitation, nomination form, and “Preliminary Green Infrastructure Map” were also specially posted on the front page of the Regional Commission website, www.hogarc.org to invite other nominations. A deadline for receipt of nominations was set for December 31, 2011, but interested parties were given leeway for responses, if requested. The nomination process was also vetted through both formal and informal staff meetings with local governments and the Regional Council. Nomination materials are included in Appendix A.

Formal Regionally Important Resources nominations were received from three local governments, the U.S. Army Fort Stewart Fish and Wildlife Branch, and the Society for Georgia Archaeology/Georgia Council of Professional Archaeologists. Comments and suggestions were made by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Wildlife Resources Division (Nongame Conservation Section), the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Division, and The Nature Conservancy. The comments were generally supportive, especially of the green infrastructure network delineation. HOGARC Planning Staff gave careful, in-depth consideration and analysis to received nominations and comments, both for direct inclusion and implications for other identified regionally important resources listings. Directly, only the Fort Stewart staff nomination and the DNR Wildlife Resources Division comment led to included resources in the final “Proposed Regionally Important Resources Map.” However, other nominations did lead to some important tweaking of the proposed RIR map.

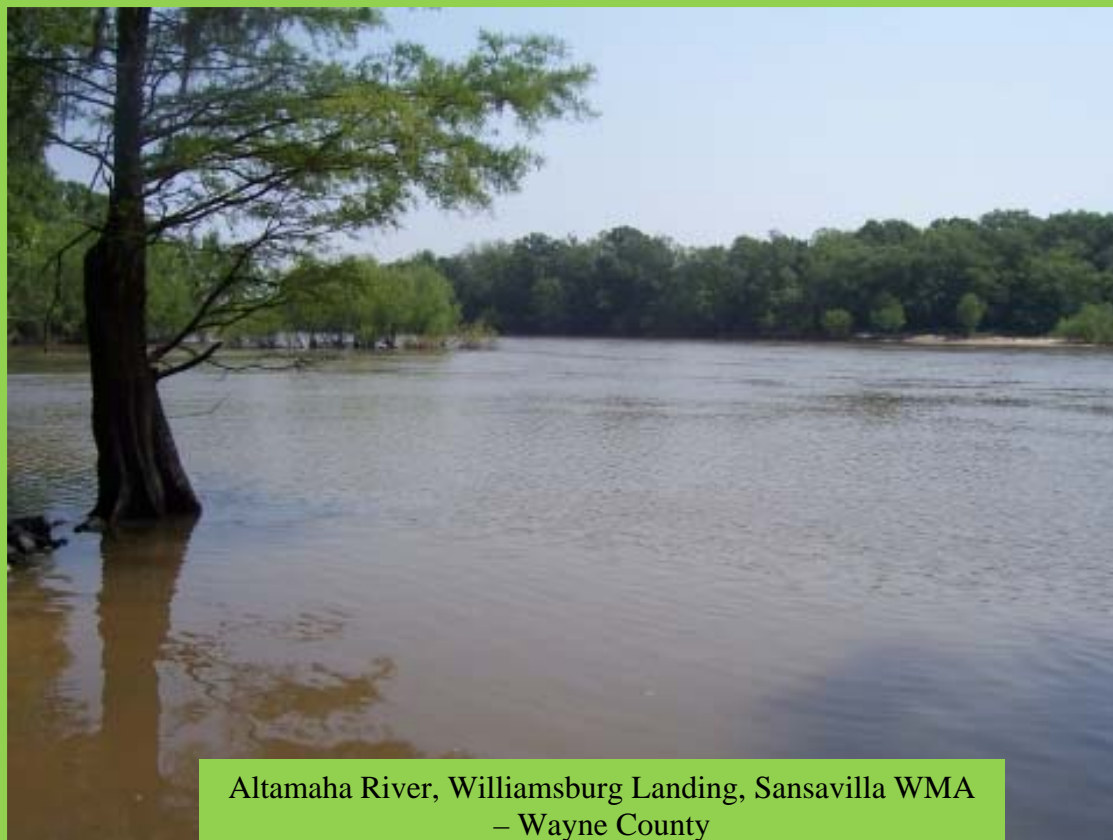
While the nominations received are discussed as appropriate in the background introduction of the listed resource map layers, a full listing of nominations received and reasons for inclusion or not of these nominations is contained in Appendix B.

To finalize the HOGARC “Proposed Regionally Important Resources Map,” HOGARC Planning Staff considered how to modify the “Preliminary Green Infrastructure Network Map” first developed as an initial effort, envisioned basic framework, and nominations stimulus for Regionally Important Resources in the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region. As mandated by the governing DCA rules, it was known that the delineated state vital areas had to be included. Within the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region, the delineated state vital areas include protected river corridors, jurisdictional wetlands, and significant groundwater recharge areas. Analysis of these state vital areas in mapped form proved these areas as support/buffers for the already proposed “Preliminary Green Infrastructure Network Map.”

The Fort Stewart nomination of the “Army Conservation Use Buffer (ACUB),” and the DNR Wildlife Resources Division (Nongame Conservation Section) comments led to use of state identified “Potential Conservation Opportunity Areas.” These areas are identified in the State Wildlife Action Plan, and also are predominantly located in the Region’s river corridors. These potential conservation opportunity areas mirror existing conservation lands already identified in the “Preliminary Green Infrastructure Map,” whether they belong to DNR, other state agencies, or private conservation organizations or land trusts. They are already identified conservation targets of high priority both by the state plan, the Southeastern Ecologic Framework, and others, and are located primarily along the river corridors and tributaries of the Region.

Cultural resources, including historic, archaeological, or other important human resources were also strongly considered and examined for specific inclusion. While there was intense debate generated by DNR’s Historic Preservation Division’s suggestion that all National Register of Historic Places listed properties be considered regionally important resources, this argument was ultimately rejected because many such listings are only “locally” significant, and many more similar extant resources are located within the Region, but have not yet been listed, or even nominated to the National Register. DCA planning rules for special consideration and paperwork for projects within one mile of a designated RIR also was a factor in the rejection. Similarly, the Society of Georgia Archaeology nomination proposed listing of National Register listed or determined eligible archaeological sites. For the same reasons the historic sites National Register listing argument was rejected, and to maintain logical continuity in the final RIR map, the archaeological nomination was not accepted in its entirety. However, staff analysis of known

and documented archaeologically important sites, and professional literature indicated preservation of Regional river corridors and adjacent lands would by implication also preserve many regionally important historic and archaeological sites, both known and unknown.



REGIONALLY IMPORTANT RESOURCES MAP

The result of the staff analysis, nomination process, staff review, and final staff determinations resulted in a “Proposed Regionally Important Resources Map” for the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region. This RIR map is a layered map consisting of four layers. While the proposed RIR map is presented herein as a printed map with all four layers shown, the map is presented as a layered PDF map on the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission’s website, www.hogarc.org. The Regional Commission also has the accompanying GIS data available through its GIS staff.

The four layers of the HOGARC Regionally Important Resources Map are: “Green Infrastructure Network;” “State Vital Areas;” “Potential Conservation Opportunity Areas;” and “Cultural Resources.” The four layers of the map will be more completely detailed in the narrative text of this document, along with discussion of value, vulnerability, general protection policies and measures, and guidance for appropriate development practices as specified in the DCA planning rules. The central focus of the Proposed RIR map is the protection of principal river and stream corridors and secondary drainage systems within the Region which form a green infrastructure network important for many reasons. It is expected that protection of these natural features and adjacent buffers will also protect significant archaeological, historic, social, tourism, recreational, and other resources, and provide much economic development, ecological, and other benefit to the Region and state.

The “Proposed Regionally Important Resources Map,” as principal component of the Regional Resource Plan draft, was included in a “RIR Regional Hearing Notice” (See Appendix A) sent to all stakeholders and interested parties afforded the opportunity to nominate RIRs for the Region, whether they nominated a RIR or not. As required by the DCA Planning Rules, a regional public hearing on the draft Regional Resource Plan was held on June 20, 2012. Three state agencies (the Georgia Forestry Commission, and the Game Management and Nongame Conservation sections of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Resources Division), The Nature Conservancy, and several local governments were represented. All attending were complimentary of the results, effort and thought behind the Region’s Proposed RIR Map, and the public and private agencies indicated the map would be helpful and supportive of future conservation efforts. This is confirmation of the intent of this Regional Resource Plan to not only meet the state mandate, but also to provide the framework for a continuous green

infrastructure network, and as an advocacy guide to inform, educate, and provide understanding and priority for important natural and cultural resources conservation and protection in the Region from a variety of perspectives.

Regionally Important Resources

Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission

Reference Map

- County Boundaries
- Fort Stewart
- Federal/State Roads**
- Interstate Hwy
- State Hwy
- Railroad

Green Infrastructure Network

Corridor Types

- Primary Corridor
- Secondary Connector

Conservation Lands

- Georgia Department of Natural Resources
- Land Trust and Other Private Lands
- Other State Lands
- Protected Rivers

State Vital Areas

- Protected Rivers
- Jurisdictional Wetlands
- Recharge Areas**
- Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas
- High Pollution Susceptibility Recharge Areas

Potential Conservation Opportunity Areas

- >100
- PTVSC, >100
- Fort Stewart Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB)
- PTVSC+SCDO, <100
- SCDO, <100
- DNR Leased Lands
- PTVSC+SCDO, >100
- SCDO, >100

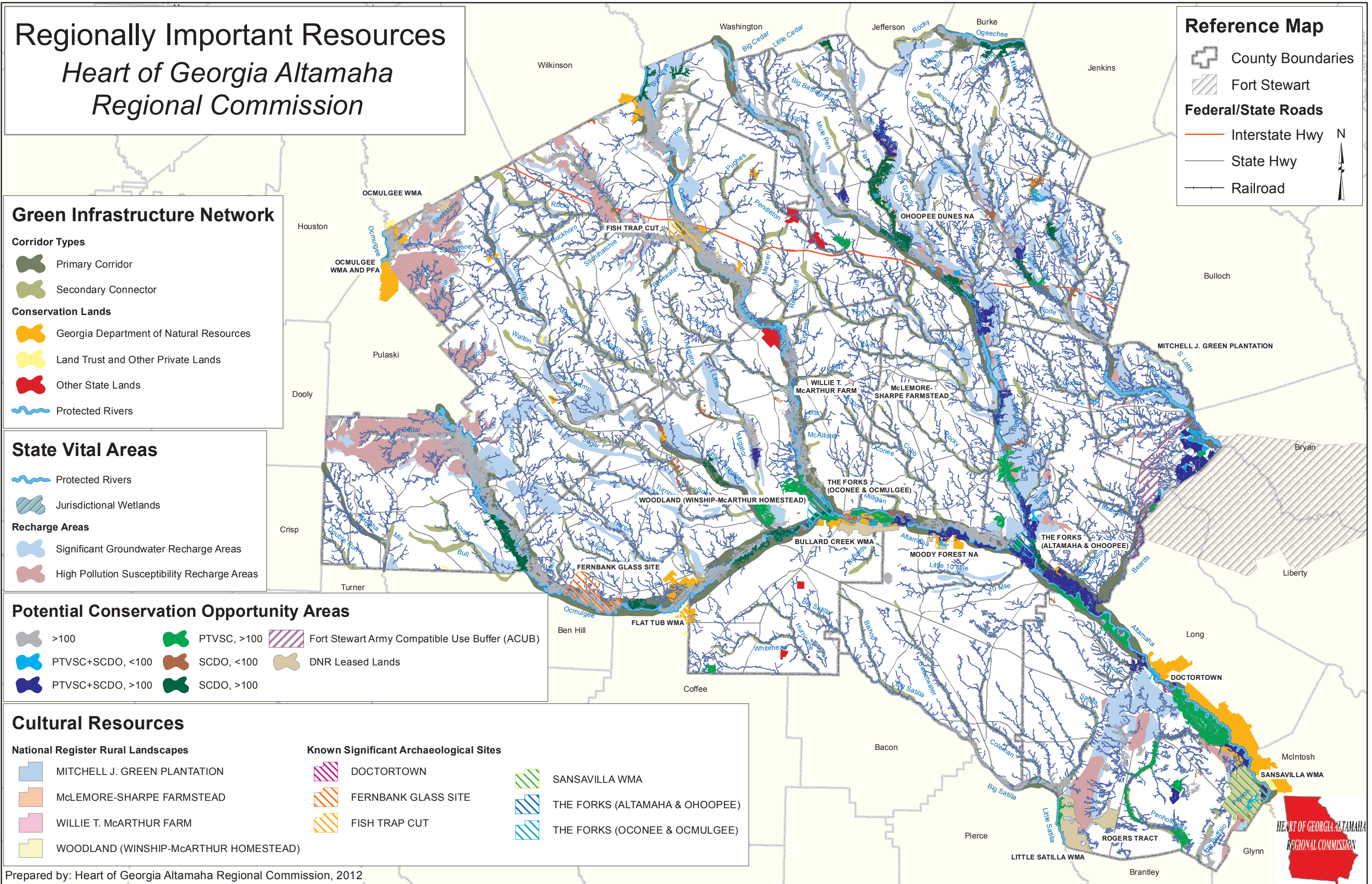
Cultural Resources

National Register Rural Landscapes

- MITCHELL J. GREEN PLANTATION
- McLEMORE-SHARPE FARMSTEAD
- WILLIE T. McARTHUR FARM
- WOODLAND (WINSHIP-McARTHUR HOMESTEAD)

Known Significant Archaeological Sites

- DOCTORTOWN
- FERNBANK GLASS SITE
- FISH TRAP CUT
- SANSAVILLA WMA
- THE FORKS (ALTAMAHA & OHOOPEE)
- THE FORKS (OCONEE & OCMULGEE)

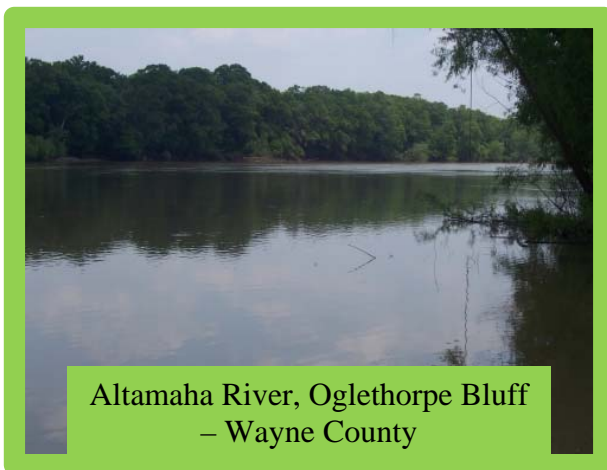


GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK

Overview

An essential objective of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs planning rules for Regionally Important Resources is identification of a continuous green infrastructure network which links as many of a region's important natural and cultural resources as possible. This is especially important in the development of a Regional Resource Plan intending to be a guide for the understanding, protection, and management of significant natural and cultural resources in a coordinated manner.

Natural resource science and management has increasingly identified landscape level management and protection as necessary to preserve connected and related natural habitats and ecosystems, particularly proper natural functioning and the full cross section of ecological health and services benefit. No analysis of significant natural and cultural resources in the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region could begin without principal acknowledgement of the Altamaha River Watershed.



The Altamaha River and its principal tributaries, the Oconee, Ocmulgee, and Ohoopsee rivers, drain almost one-quarter of the state of Georgia, including half of Atlanta and all of Athens and Macon, almost 14,500 square miles in total. It is the largest watershed in Georgia and the third largest on the East Coast of the United States. Located entirely within Georgia, the Altamaha River length, including the Ocmulgee River reach, is the seventh longest

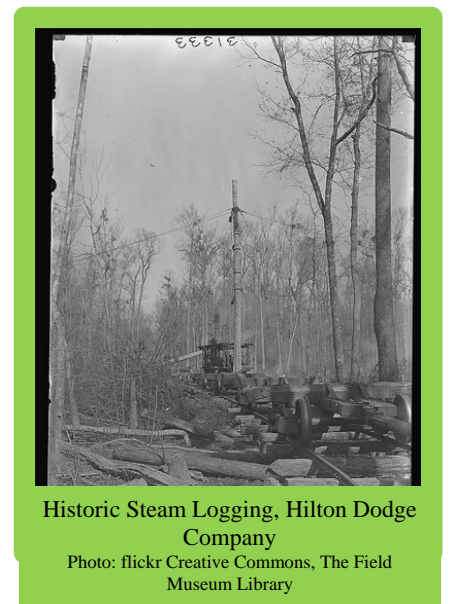
river in the United States located within one state. The Altamaha Watershed Ecosystem is one of the U.S.'s 53 distinct ecosystems as designated by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

Without a doubt, the Altamaha River has played a significant role in the history, culture, commerce, and development of Georgia and the English settlement of the U.S. The Altamaha is

more than 20 million years old. The Altamaha and its surrounding forests were heavily relied on by Native Americans for food, water, shelter, and transportation. The watershed was visited and written about by Hernando de Soto in 1539, which led to the reputed first Christian baptism in the United States along the Ocmulgee River within the Region. It also led to Spanish mission development along the Region's rivers, and to struggles between England, France, and Spain for territory and colonization. The Altamaha River was the western border of the Colony of Georgia upon its founding, and therefore of U.S. English settlement. The Region and the Altamaha, particularly the Fort Barrington/Sansavilla area, has been the scene of much bloodshed and war. The Altamaha Watershed has witnessed skirmishes and battles from every major conflict endured on U.S. soil from intertribal Native American warfare, the extirpation of Spanish missions, the Yemassee War of 1715, the War of Jenkins' Ear, the French and Indian War, the American Revolution, the War of 1812, the Red Stick War and Creek Indian unrest, and even, to the Civil War to some extent. The watershed frontier was the source of conflict between English settlers, Native Americans, the State of Georgia, and of federalism limit issues between Georgia and the federal government until the 1830s.

The watershed's yellow pine forests, and access to surrounding productive farmlands and cotton fields, led to much economic development and success in Georgia from waterborne commerce of poleboats, flatboat cotton boxes, timber rafts and steamboats during the 18th and early 19th centuries. In 1819, the Bank of Darien at the mouth of the Altamaha was the largest bank in Georgia, and the second largest in the U.S., second only to the Bank of Philadelphia, primarily because of the value of timber resources logged and floated down the Altamaha.

The natural beauty and biological diversity of the Altamaha was first described by John and William Bartram in the mid and late 1700s. It was also described by other early botanists, including the LeContes and Stephen Elliot. The distinctive beauty and incredible biological diversity of the Altamaha is still recognized today as a great natural treasure not only important to the economic and ecological health of the Region, but also to the state, nation, and world. The Altamaha is currently described as the longest free-flowing system on the U.S. East Coast, and the East Coast's third largest watershed. On average, the Altamaha River provides over 100,000 gallons of nutrient laden freshwater to the Georgia marshes every second. The Georgia marshes themselves are one of the most valuable coastal resources in the nation, representing almost one-third of all the Atlantic Coast's tidal salt marshes. It is said that salt



marshes are among the world’s most productive existing producers of biomass at over 20 tons/acre. This is much more productive than even the best of Midwestern farmland. Fully 75 percent of commercial fish and shellfish species depend on estuaries like the Altamaha as primary habitat, spawning grounds, and nursery areas. The flow of sediment and nutrients from the Altamaha are very important to beach creation and replenishment and underwater ocean ecology. It is believed there would be no Saint Simons or Little Saint Simons islands without the Altamaha. It has recently been demonstrated that nutrients and flows from the Altamaha affect the Gray’s Reef National Marine Sanctuary, a 22 square-mile carbonate-cemented sandstone live bottom reef located off the coast of Georgia in the Atlantic Ocean beyond the Altamaha, the only such natural reef in Georgia.

The unique richness, ecologic value, and incredible array of biologically diverse natural communities located in and supported by the Altamaha River Watershed continues to be documented and recognized. Its extensive bottomland hardwoods, riverine wetlands, sand ridge forests, oak hammocks, cypress-tupelo swamps, river islands, sandbars, oxbow lakes, and pine-wiregrass uplands form a unique natural system and ecoregion very important and rare. One of the Ocmulgee River oxbows, Montgomery Lake in Telfair County, produced the still standing (though tied in Japan in 2009) world’s record largemouth bass in 1932. The Altamaha River is said to contain more than 130 species of rare and endangered plants



Montgomery Lake, Ocmulgee River – Telfair County
 Photo: www.telfairco.org

and animals, the largest such concentration of any river in Georgia. These include seven species of freshwater mussels and a rare mint, Radford dicerandra, found nowhere else in the world. Maybe the first rare plant in the U.S., the Franklinia alatamaha, was collected in the wild by Bartram near Fort Barrington and Sansavilla in the late 1700s, and has not been found since. The natural beauty and the ecological importance of the Altamaha River has been recognized by The Nature Conservancy since the 1960s. In recognition of the Altamaha’s ecological importance, which The Nature Conservancy describes as “one of America’s most notable resources” and “one of the 75 last great places on earth,” the agency has established the Altamaha River Bioreserve. This Bioreserve formally recognizes the interrelatedness and value of natural system processes and functioning of the entire lower Altamaha River watershed and seeks to establish a contiguous corridor of conserved lands and green infrastructure along the entire length of the river to the coastal barrier islands. Much of the published scientific data recognizing important

natural ecosystems within the Region, such as the Southeast Ecological Framework, the State Wildlife Action Plan, the Southeast Aquatic Network and others, identify the entire Altamaha watershed, including its tributaries, as significant and seminarily important ecologic and natural resources and habitat. The designation of the Altamaha Watershed Ecosystem as one of 53 distinct ecosystems in the entire United States also speaks to immeasurable ecological importance of the Altamaha watershed and its national, not just Regional or state, value.



Elliotia Racemosa
Photo: Wikimedia Commons, Forestry Images, The Bug Network

The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region not only has an unparalleled richness of outstanding and important natural communities and ecosystems, but also has an important history and legacy of conservation. The Charles Harrold Nature Preserve, a 73 acre nature preserve in Candler County now operated by The Nature Conservancy, was the first ecological sanctuary in Georgia, having been established by a Georgia Southern professor in the 1930s. The preserve includes two distinct habitats, and protects both the state-threatened Georgia Plume (*Elliotia racemosa*) and the gopher tortoise, among others.



Gopher Tortoise
Photo: flickr, GA DNR Wildlife Resources Division

Two of the 10 Georgia listed National Natural Landmarks are located in the Region. The Big Hammock Natural Area, located in Tattnall County, was so designated in 1976 after state purchase with assistance from The Nature Conservancy in 1973. Underlying the natural area is an ancient sand dune of the Altamaha River, and is an example of a xeric evergreen hardwood forest. It is now surrounded by a Georgia DNR wildlife management area over 6,000 acres in size. The other National Natural Landmark is the Camp E. F. Boyd Natural Area, originally a Boy Scout camp and now owned by The Nature Conservancy. It is one of five tracts of the Ochoopee Dunes Preserve jointly managed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and The Nature Conservancy. This xeric sand ridge ecosystem was designated by the state as a natural area in 1972 and a National Natural Landmark in 1976. It was purchased by The Nature Conservancy in 1991.

Other important natural areas in the Region owned by The Nature Conservancy include Broxton Rocks, partially located in Jeff Davis County, but principally in neighboring Coffee County. It is a rare sandstone outcrop of the Altamaha Grit underlying Georgia's Coastal Plain,



Moody Forest – Appling County

Photo: www.baxley.org

containing a variety of rare and unique plant species, including the grit portulaca, a Cuban species new to North America, the state endangered silky creeping morning glories known only in three Georgia counties, and the Georgia plume. The over 4,400 acre Moody Forest Natural Area in Appling County is almost a national park caliber area containing the only known example of an old-growth longleaf pine-

blackjack forest. The site contains 200 to 300 year old longleaf and slash pines, and over 600 year old trees in cypress-tupelo sloughs. Moody Forest was preserved by a joint effort of management by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and The Nature Conservancy in 2001. This preservation effort is touted as the first public-private land management effort in Georgia. Another important early public/private conservation partnership along the Altamaha was the 1979 donation by the private forest corporation, Rayonier Forest Resources, to the State of Georgia of a 300 foot wide corridor along both sides of the Altamaha River. This donation, sometimes called the Altamaha Narrows, is located from one mile east of the Sansavilla Powerline Crossing (River Mile 36) west to River Mile 61 (Doe Eddy) west of Paradise Park Landing. The Nature Conservancy also aided this donation.

This legacy of Regional conservation, public-private partnership, and the interrelation of historic and natural area protection is also seen in the state parks of the Region. There are three Regional state parks. The Little Ocmulgee State Park and Lodge contains over 1,300 acres along the Gum Swamp/Little Ocmulgee River near McRae. It was originally called Shamrock Springs, and was established through a 1935 effort by merchants in McRae to provide a local recreation area. It was an early Georgia state park, and was assisted in its development by the federal Civilian Conservation Corps. The Gordonia-Altamaha State Park in Reidsville includes over 660 acres along Brazell’s Creek and was established by the state legislature in 1956 as Reidsville State Park, spurred on by strong efforts of the local Lions Club



Little Ocmulgee State Park

and other citizens. It was renamed after the lost Franklin tree in 1960. The George L. Smith II State Park in Emanuel County near Twin City is located on Fifteen Mile Creek containing over 1,600 acres and the 412 acre Parrish Pond Lake. This park was actually purchased by the state in 1975 as a historic area to preserve the 1880 Parrish grist mill located on the lake. It became a state park in 1980 through the efforts of George L. Smith, a former Georgia Speaker of the House and Emanuel County native, urged on by local citizenry. All three state parks have nature trails and important natural area preservation components.

The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region is home to a variety of conserved lands, much of it included in state-owned wildlife management areas. These WMAs provide public outdoor recreation opportunities, such as hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, bird watching, photography and hiking, while also preserving critical habitat, natural beauty, and scenic landscape aesthetics. There are also four state-owned public fishing areas located in the Region, three stand-alone and one located within the Ocmulgee WMA in Bleckley County. Table 1 below provides a listing of the wildlife management areas and public fishing areas owned and operated by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, as well as four current state wholly leased WMAs. A few of the state-owned WMAs also lease some additional fringe lands. These leased WMAs and lands are particularly vulnerable to loss due to private ownership, and the vagaries of public lease budgeting and funding.



Dodge County Public Fishing Area



Horse Creek Wildlife Management Area – Telfair County

TABLE 1
Georgia State Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs)
and Public Fishing Areas (PFAs) located
in the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region

WMA/PFA NAME	COUNTY LOCATION	ACREAGE	RIVER/STREAM CORRIDOR LOCATION
State-Owned			
Beaverdam WMA	Laurens, Wilkinson	5,500	Oconee
Big Hammock Natural Area and WMA	Tattnall	6,900	Altamaha/Ohoopee
Bullard Creek WMA	Appling, Jeff Davis, Montgomery	13,900	Altamaha
Dodge County PFA	Dodge	444	Gum Swamp tributary
Evans County PFA	Evans	400	Canoochee River tributary
Flat Tub WMA	Jeff Davis, Coffee	3,597	Ocmulgee
Horse Creek WMA	Telfair	8,100	Ocmulgee
Hugh M. Gillis PFA	Laurens, Johnson	700	Pughes Creek tributary
Moody Forest Natural Area	Appling	4,500	Altamaha
Ocmulgee WMA & PFA	Bleckley, Pulaski, Twiggs	17,370	Ocmulgee
Ohoopee Dunes Natural Area	Emanuel	3,000	Little Ohoopee
Penholoway Swamp WMA	Wayne	4,269	Altamaha
Rayonier Corridor Lands	Wayne, Long, McIntosh	1,330	Altamaha
River Bend WMA	Laurens	3,500	Oconee
State-Leased			
Little Satilla WMA	Wayne, Brantley, Pierce	18,920	Little Satilla
Ocmulgee WMA-Gum Swamp Tract	Bleckley	475	Gum Swamp
Rogers Tract WMA	Wayne	3,500	Little Penholoway
Sansavilla WMA	Wayne, Glynn	16,867	Altamaha

Source: Georgia Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Resources Division, www.georgiawildlife.com, and 2012-2013 Georgia Hunting Regulations.

It is clear from this WMA/PFA listing that all Georgia WMAs and PFAs located in the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region are located along important river or stream corridors, most along the Altamaha River and its main tributaries, the Ocmulgee and Oconee rivers.

The Georgia Land Conservation Program is a partnership of public and private agencies within Georgia established by the Georgia Land Conservation Act of 2005 working to preserve a statewide network of Georgia's most valued land and water resources; prime agricultural and forest lands; and natural, historic, and recreational areas. The program seeks, primarily through conservation easements and tax credits, and public/private partnership, to permanently protect conservation lands and habitats which provide demonstrable conservation benefits for current and future generations of Georgians. Since the program's establishment in 2005, nearly 18,000 acres of conservation lands have been protected in the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region, as detailed in Table 2. Again, it is noteworthy that almost all of these lands lie directly along either the Altamaha, Oconee, or Ocmulgee rivers.

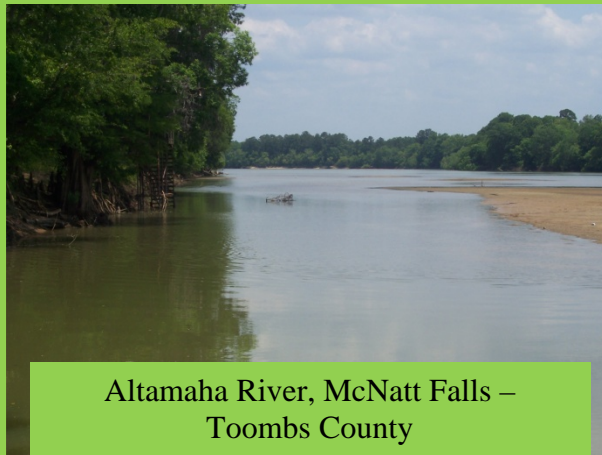


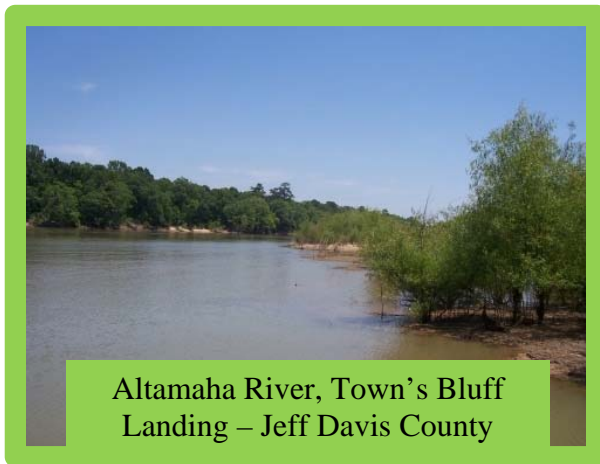
TABLE 2
Georgia Land Conservation Program Projects located
in the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region

PROJECT NAME	TYPE	LOCATION	ACREAGE	RIVER/STREAM CORRIDOR LOCATION
Alligator Creek	Conservation Easement	Wheeler	2,774	Alligator Creek
Eason's Bluff	Fee Title	Appling	4	Altamaha
Flat Tub/Broxton Rocks WMA	Fee Title	Jeff Davis	1,936	Ocmulgee
Gordonia-Alatamaha State Park	Fee Title	Tattnall	202	Brazell's Creek
Hinson's Landing	Fee Title	Jeff Davis	5	Ocmulgee
Horseshoe Bend	Conservation Easement	Wheeler	4,291	Oconee
JG3 Gillis Forest	Conservation Easement	Treutlen, Laurens	1,453	Pendleton Creek
JLG Gillis Forest	Conservation Easement	Treutlen	1,556	Pendleton Creek
Ocmulgee River – Telfair	Conservation Easement	Telfair	4,056	Ocmulgee
Ocmulgee WMA Shawnee	Fee Title	Bleckley, Twiggs	1,683	Ocmulgee

Source: Georgia Land Conservation Program, www.glcp.georgia.gov.

Designation of Regionally Important Resources

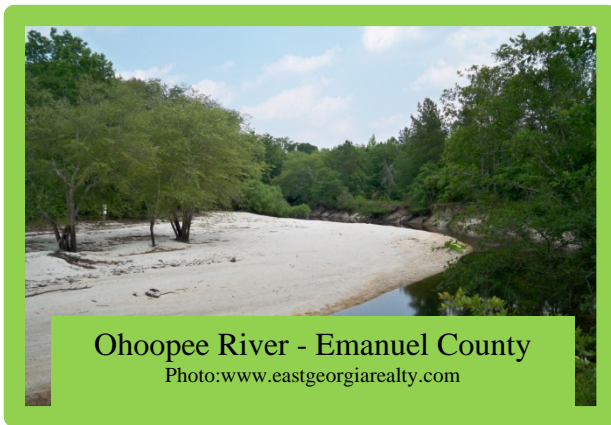
It is clear that the Altamaha River Watershed and its river corridors are special and unique places, relatively unspoiled, extremely important to current and past human, natural, social, and economic history of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region and much farther beyond. Most of the Region’s currently conserved state and private natural, historic, and recreational lands are located within these corridors or related tributaries. Analysis of published future conservation priority areas also shows close connection to the same corridors. Most clearly, The Nature Conservancy has designated the Lower Altamaha as a globally important bioreserve, and has ongoing efforts to establish a continuous natural preserved corridor of contiguous lands along its entire length. The Georgia State Wildlife Action Plan and Southeastern Ecologic Framework depict high priority potential conservation areas along all tributaries of the Altamaha Watershed, as well as other river and stream corridors of the Region. It is also clear that preservation of these corridors will protect and preserve not only incredible natural ecosystems, invaluable wildlife habitat, and natural and scenic beauty, but also much human history and archaeology, both known and unknown or undocumented. This preservation will also provide important protection to critical components of the natural beauty, scenic and aesthetic landscapes, and character of the Region, and allow for future enhanced recreational, tourism, and other economic development opportunities for the Region.



Given this background with obvious multiple benefits from many perspectives, and given the intent of the DCA rules for Regionally Important Resources both to encourage protection and management of important natural and cultural resources of a Region and to link them in a continuous regional green infrastructure network, it is almost patently obvious, the important river and stream corridors of the Altamaha River Watershed be designated as priority regionally important

resources. These corridors, as well as similar corridors in other watersheds on the edge of the large Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region, already form a naturally linked green infrastructure network. Thus the “green infrastructure network” of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region and its rivers and stream corridors becomes the Region’s principal “Regionally Important Resource.”

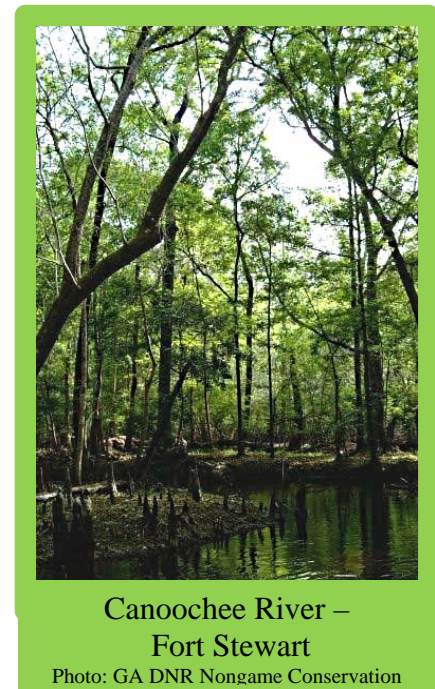
The “Green Infrastructure Network” as a designated “Regionally Important Resource” for the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region becomes the “Primary Corridors” and “Secondary Connectors” as shown on the principal layer on the Heart of Georgia Altamaha RC Regionally Important Resources Map. This layer and designation also includes the existing conservation lands within the Region, whether state parks, wildlife management areas, public fishing areas and other lands of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources; other state owned lands; or land trust or other privately protected lands.



Ohoopsee River - Emanuel County
Photo: www.eastgeorgiarealty.com

Designated “Primary Corridors” of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region include the Altamaha, Ocmulgee, Oconee, Ohoopsee, Canoochee, Ogeechee, Alapaha, and Little Satilla rivers within or touching its borders, as well as Gum Swamp/Little

Ocmulgee River and Beard’s Creek. The geographic extent of boundaries of this designation include the floodplain of the creek or river and/or a 1,000 foot buffer area, or the actual boundaries of any publicly or privately conserved lands (now or in the future) along the corridor, if greater in width.

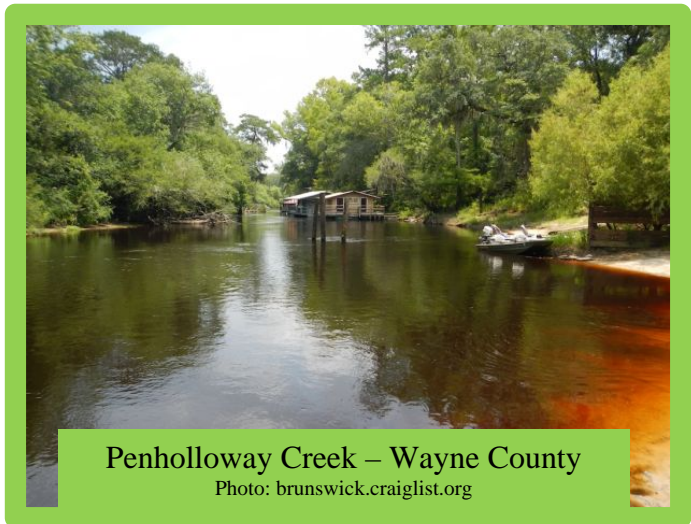


Canoochee River – Fort Stewart

Photo: GA DNR Nongame Conservation

Designation of the “Secondary Connectors” for the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region and its “Green Infrastructure Network” of Regionally Important Resources are the creeks and streams shown on the HOGARC RIR map and its green infrastructure network layer. These included creeks and streams are also shown in Table 3 below which details the included “Secondary Connectors” by county. These secondary connectors were selected by Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission staff based on analysis of soil survey maps in each county and other published data to determine importance and reach. These “Secondary Connectors” are important tributaries of “Primary Corridors,” and allow for additional and related plant and animal habitat protection, connection, and dispersal within and among corridors, and even to adjacent rivers/watersheds. These “Secondary Connectors” further enhance and define the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region’s “Green Infrastructure Network,” as well as facilitate green network connection adjoining and outside the Region. It is not without

some possibility that the Heart of Georgia Altamaha’s “Green Infrastructure Network” as outlined allows for connection to the rivers and streams in adjacent Southern Georgia, and then by context to the planned Florida Wildlife Corridor. The Florida Wildlife Corridor seeks to connect natural lands from the Everglades to the Okefenokee Swamp in Southern Georgia.



**Table 3
Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission
Green Infrastructure Network Secondary Connectors by County**

COUNTY	SECONDARY CONNECTORS (CREEKS/STREAMS)
Appling	Big Satilla, Bishop, Coleman, Little Ten Mile, Sweetwater, Ten Mile
Bleckley	Buckhorn, Jordan, Limestone, Rocky, Shellstone, S. Shellstone
Candler	Lotts, 10 Mile, 15 Mile, Wolfe
Dodge	Alligator, Crooked, Horse, Mosquito, Sugar, Turnpike, Walton
Emanuel	Big Long, Daniels Mill, Flat, Hughes, Jacks, Little Canoochee, Little Long, Little Ohoopce, McCollough, Mule Pen, N. Canoochee, Rocky, S. Canoochee, Yam Grandy
Evans	Bull, Cedar, S. Lotts
Jeff Davis	Big Satilla, Bishop, Bullards, Hurricane, Whitehead
Johnson	Big Battleground, Big Cedar, Buckeye, Little Cedar, Little Ohoopce, Mule Pen
Laurens	Alligator, Big, Bluewater, Buckeye, Buckhorn, Lime Sink, Mercer, Ochwalkee, Pendleton, Pughes, Rocky, Stichihatchie, Turkey
Montgomery	Buckhorn, Cypress, Flat, McAllister, Milligan, Oconee, Swift, Tiger
Tattnall	Battle, Beards, Beaver, Brazells, Cedar, Thomas, Watermelon
Telfair	Alligator, Horse, Little Ocmulgee/Gum Swamp, Mill, Sugar, Turnpike
Toombs	Buckhorn, Cobb, Milligan, Oconee, Pendleton, Rocky, Swift, Tiger
Treutlen	Cypress, Mercer, Red Bluff, Tiger
Wayne	Big Satilla, Coleman, Goose, Little Buffalo, Penholloway, Pigeon
Wheeler	Alligator, Little Alligator, Ochwalkee
Wilcox	Bull, Cedar, Double Run, House, Mill

Source: Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission staff analysis.

The geographic extent of these “secondary connector” regionally important resource designations are the actual creeks/streams and their surrounding floodplain as defined by soil type association, or a buffer of 500 feet on each side, whichever is greater. These “secondary connector” boundaries would also be expanded to include the actual boundaries of any publicly or privately conserved lands (now or in the future) along the connector, if greater in width.



Big Hammock Natural Area Sandhill –
Tattnall County

Photo: flickr Creative Commons, GA DNR, L. Kruse

The existing conservation lands owned by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, other state agencies, land trusts, or other private agencies or owners with protective conservation easements are also designated as regionally important resources on the HOGARC “Green Infrastructure Network” layer of its Regionally Important Resources Map. These are obviously core holdings with predetermined and proven quality and value for ecological conservation, wildlife habitat,

recreation, and cultural resource protection and benefits. There are critical reasons why they were chosen for protection in the first place. They are outstanding examples of core habitat, species protection, or otherwise important contributors to natural functioning and interrelationships of critical ecosystems. Not only do they provide critical natural area protection and functioning, they also are important to cultural, scenic and aesthetic values, regional character and quality of life, and outdoor recreation, education, and research opportunities, as well as important economic development and tourism avenues and potential.



George L. Smith State Park Lake –
Emanuel County

Photo: flickr Creative Commons, J. Wilburn

Value and Vulnerability

The critical importance and value of the Altamaha River Watershed, including its tributaries, to the natural, cultural, economic, and social health of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region, and much further beyond, is well documented. Many of the outstanding values and benefits of conservation and protection have been outlined earlier in this document. The Altamaha River Watershed ecosystem, and other similar blackwater river and streams within the Region, have been well documented to be of global importance, and are considered critical

components for many elements of natural system functioning in Georgia. Not only are critical core area holdings and conservation areas important as outstanding examples of natural habitat, or home to critical populations of rare or endangered species, but these areas are known to need connection to allow for proper migration, population survival, genetic flow, accommodation of climate change, and adaptation to catastrophes, natural dispersal, and allowance for wide-ranging species. It is also increasingly clear that landscape level protection and connection as has occurred in the natural past are needed to assure overall proper natural functioning, relevant interrelationships across ecosystems, and the full cross section of ecological health and services benefit. The riparian corridors and related upland habitats of the Altamaha are relatively undeveloped and provide numerous ecological and wildlife habitat protection benefits, while also providing scenic beauty, historic character, recreation, economic, and quality of life benefits. They create and buffer natural habitats, foster wildlife and plant movement and distribution, provide flood control, protect water quality and quantity, assist in air quality protection and carbon storage, preserve greenspaces, protect areas of historic and cultural importance, and provide opportunities for recreation, tourism, and economic development, as well as sources of human food and outlets for healthy activities. According to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, over 70 percent of all terrestrial wildlife species utilize riparian corridors. In addition to direct benefits and values, healthy riparian corridors help define a community's and the Region's sense of place and character; help maintain the community's and Region's historic and aesthetic definition or background and valued human connection to the landscape; allow for important human environmental interaction, education, and understanding; and help avoid environmental clean-up costs.

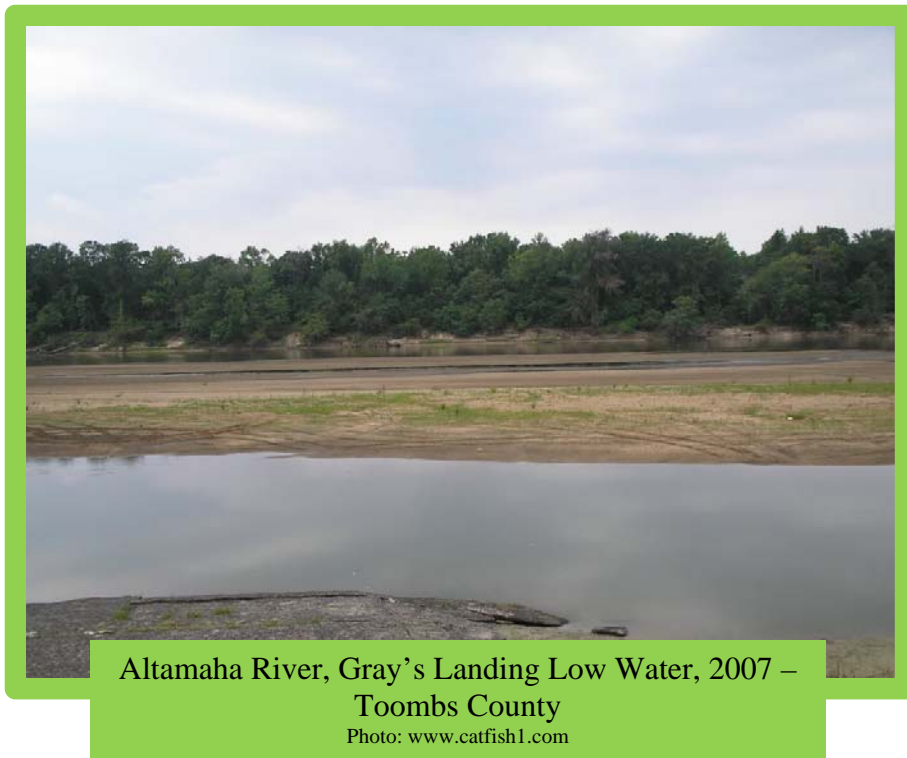
The existing conservation lands and connected, protected riparian corridors are vulnerable to incompatible development pressures, fragmentation of habitat into unsustainable islands, environmental degradation, and lack of proper resource management and ecosystem connection. Incompatible development pressures could be land use conversion to urban or other incompatible development in use, scale, or intensity which destroy necessary habitat, degrade or preclude natural functioning or connection, or exceed sustainable limits. Fragmentation of the landscape may leave protected natural areas of insufficient size to maintain



George L. Smith State Park Wetland Overflow
Photo: flickr Creative Commons, Coastlander

themselves, destroy needed buffers, or connection and interrelation to other ecosystems/natural communities, or exceed sustainable densities. Environmental degradation could destroy required air quality or water quality and quantity, or other attributes necessary for proper functioning, introduce exotic species which displace key native species, cause loss of natural vegetation or other critical components of dependent ecological functioning, and contribute to the overall loss of biodiversity or habitat. The lack of interrelated resource management could cause irreversible damage to proper functioning and continued viability of individual species or habitats, loss of culturally important sites or landscapes, loss of human connection and interaction, and unforeseen losses and consequences to both humans and the environment.

A principal vulnerability of the Altamaha River Watershed and other rivers of the Region is the increasing lack of adequate water flows from above the Region, and the resulting low water levels and flows within the Region, particularly in the summer. The aquatic communities of the waterways; the adjacent wetlands, bottomland hardwoods, and floodplains; the tributaries; and the overall functioning of the interrelated watershed ecosystems, not to mention the Georgia marshes and beaches; are all dependent on adequate water flows, and normal crests and falls of river and storm water levels, for sustained and proper natural functioning.



STATE VITAL AREAS

Overview

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs planning rules require that State Vital Areas be included as Regionally Important Resources, or at least their critical protection areas. Within the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region, the State Vital Areas only include those resources covered by the Part V Environmental Planning Criteria. The Part V Environmental Planning Criteria were initially established by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 which charged the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to develop minimum standards and procedures for protecting important natural resources. The resources first included water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, and wetlands. However, protected mountains and protected river corridors were added as additional Part V natural resources by the Georgia Mountains and River Corridor Protection Act of 1991, which amended the Georgia Planning Act. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources Environmental Protection Division established formal Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria in Chapter 391-3-16 of Georgia's administrative rules. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs planning standards for local governments incorporate these Part V Environmental Planning Criteria by reference. The Part V nominal description traces its history from Part 5 of House Bill 215, which became the Georgia Planning Act.

These Environmental Planning Criteria rules recognize the identified five natural resources covered as critical environmental resources of state importance, and direct local governments to develop planning and protection efforts for them. Within the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region, the Part V natural resources of import are groundwater recharge areas, protected river corridors, and wetlands. There are no protected mountains in the Region, and while only the City of Dublin has a water supply watershed, it effectively does not require additional planning efforts under the rules. The City of Dublin does have a surface water intake on the Oconee River, but it is a secondary water source, primarily intended for industrial use. This may exempt applicability of the planning rules in the first place, but additionally the Oconee River is considered a "large water supply watershed." This large watershed status primarily requires a 100



Oconee River, Beaverdam
WMA – Laurens County

foot buffer, which already is required by the environmental planning rules on the Oconee because of its protected river status. A state owned wildlife management area along the Oconee River corridor above Dublin (Beaverdam) provides further protection. The Dublin water supply watershed is thus not sufficiently threatened to warrant additional protection measures, or applicability of the environmental planning criteria in this area.

The Part V planning standards require protection for river corridors along Georgia protected rivers. “Protected river” is defined as any perennial river or watercourse with an average annual flow of at least 400 cubic feet per second as determined by the U.S. Geological Survey. Within the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region, protected river status is conferred on all of the Altamaha, Ocmulgee, Oconee, and Ohoopsee river corridors through the Region. Other Region protected river corridors include a portion of the Canoochee River in Evans County, a portion of the Little Satilla River in Wayne County, and the Ogeechee River segment forming the northern border of Emanuel County. Some local governments within the Region have chosen to confer additional protected river status to other reaches to avoid confusion and recognize the river corridor’s local significance. Thus all of the Canoochee River corridor is considered a protected river in Evans County and all of the Little Satilla River corridor is considered a protected river in Wayne County. The principal environmental protection measure required by protected river status under the Environmental Planning Criteria is a 100 foot vegetated buffer. The buffer is defined as being measured as 100 feet horizontally from the upper most part of the river bank, but the rules also note the area between the top of the bank and the edge of the river is also to be considered part of the required buffer area (in addition to the 100 feet). The required buffer area can shift with river channel changes over time. Because of the principal designation of all of the Region’s protected rivers, as well as additional rivers and streams, as Regionally Important Resources under the Green Infrastructure Network (all “Primary Corridors”), the protected rivers of the Region are already designated Regionally Important Resources with greater definition and recommended protection than that afforded by the Environmental Planning Criteria.

Groundwater recharge areas are areas of the earth’s surface where water infiltrates the soil structure to replenish an underground aquifer. For the purposes of the Environmental Planning Criteria, DNR conveyed protection to “significant recharge areas” as mapped in the Georgia Hydrologic Atlas 18. Within the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region and the Coastal Plain in general, Hydrologic Atlas 18 mapped surface outcroppings of important aquifers used for drinking water and soils having high permeability. The groundwater recharge areas of Hydrologic Atlas 18 were further categorized by identification of their vulnerability to pollution

infiltration defined as high, medium, or low “pollution susceptibility” areas in the Georgia Hydrologic Atlas 20.

Within the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region, the significant groundwater recharge areas identified by Hydrologic Atlas 18 are recent shallow aquifers (“Miocene/Pliocene Recent Unconfined Aquifers”) in most of the Region. These recent unconfined aquifers are not the source of major public drinking water supplies within the Region, but are utilized by private individual wells for drinking water and some agricultural use. Most of the identified recharge areas for these recent shallow aquifers are primarily sand ridges next to rivers and streams. However, in Bleckley, Laurens, and Wilcox counties within the Region, there are identified groundwater recharge areas for the Floridan/Jacksonian Aquifer System. The Floridan Aquifer is the almost exclusive source of public drinking water within the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region, and for much of South Georgia, as well as being extensively used in Florida and South Carolina. The identified significant groundwater recharge areas in Bleckley and Wilcox counties for the Floridan/Jacksonian system again are sand ridges along the Ocmulgee River and some of the Ocmulgee’s important tributaries. Within Laurens County, the identified significant groundwater recharge areas mostly are clustered around Turkey and Rocky creeks and other tributaries in western Laurens County, and to a lesser extent along the Oconee River above Dublin. Most of the significant groundwater recharge areas identified within the Region are identified as having high or medium pollution susceptibility in Hydrologic Atlas 20. It is significant to note that the important Floridan/Jacksonian aquifer recharge areas in Bleckley, Laurens, and Wilcox counties are identified as being vulnerable to high pollution susceptibility. In fact, most of the Region’s Miocene/Pliocene aquifer recharge areas have some portions identified as vulnerable to high pollution susceptibility. The primary constraints on development in groundwater recharge areas required by the DNR rules are limitation on location of certain land uses (sanitary landfills, hazardous wastes handling/disposal, petroleum storage, agricultural waste impoundments, and stormwater infiltration basins), and the density of residential uses.



Little Ocmulgee Oak Ridge Trail Sandhill –
Wheeler County

Photo: www.gastateparks.org

The third natural resource protected by the Environmental Planning Criteria and located in the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region is wetlands. Wetlands, because of the slow change in

elevations within the Coastal Plain and the many rivers, streams, and tributaries, are abundant in the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region. Wetlands as defined in the DNR rules are “those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions.” As stated in the DNR rules, “wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs and similar areas.” There is scientific debate, and often expensive scientific analysis and delineation, of exactly what constitutes a wetland in practice in the field. Generally the DNR rules and generally accepted interpretation support the federal definition of regulated wetlands as those wetlands subject to federal Clean Water Act permitting by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers under Section 404. These wetlands are often referred to as “jurisdictional wetlands.” This is especially critical in South Georgia and the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region where many of the “flatwoods” areas encompassed by pine plantations and commercial forestry uses might be considered wetlands. The strict interpretation of the federal permitting rules for wetlands requires all three parameters of hydric soils, wet hydrologic conditions, and hydrotrophic vegetation, to be present for an area to be classed as a jurisdictional wetland. Relevant U.S. Supreme Court rulings have further narrowed jurisdictional wetland delineations to those with rational nexus connection to navigable waters of the U.S., and have excluded isolated wetlands without such connection.

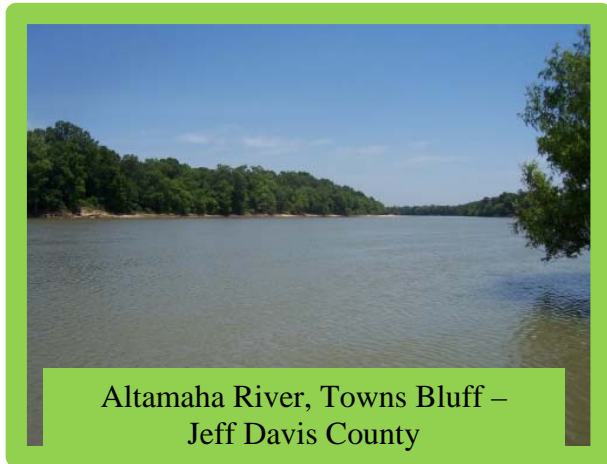


George L. Smith State Park
Wetland

Photo: flickr Creative Commons, J. Wilburn

The only widely available maps for wetlands in the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region, and Georgia in general, are the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) maps of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The problem with these maps is that the NWI maps include virtually all wetlands, manmade or natural, and isolated or not. Regardless of definition, it is clear that the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region has an abundance of wetlands. Most of the Region’s significant wetlands, and those most often recognized without question, are the floodplains and wetlands associated with the many rivers, streams, and creeks of the Region and their tributaries.

Designation of Regionally Important Resources



Altamaha River, Towns Bluff –
Jeff Davis County

The State Vital Areas formally designated as Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region “Regionally Important Resources” are “protected rivers,” “jurisdictional wetlands” and “significant groundwater recharge areas” as shown on the “State Vital Areas” layer on the HOGARC “Regionally Important Resources Map.” As noted in the Overview above, the Region’s “protected rivers” are already included as part of the “Green Infrastructure Network” principal layer’s

“Primary Corridors.” The rivers and their waterways, and more beyond, are integral to the Altamaha River Ecosystem and the ecological functioning of all identified rivers and streams, whether as a primary corridor or secondary connector. The necessary fluctuating water regimes of these waterways are key to the interrelationships of virtually all the recognized important and significant natural communities and ecosystems and are vital in their functioning and continuation.

All of the significant groundwater recharge areas of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region as reported on Hydrologic Atlas 18 are designated as “Regionally Important Resources” on the “State Vital Areas” layer regardless of pollution susceptibility. While the DCA Planning Rules indicated that only “critical protection areas,” such as high pollution susceptibility groundwater recharge areas, had to be designated regionally important resources, it was determined by HOGARC staff that all Region groundwater recharge areas were actually significantly important to Region ecology. HOGARC staff came to this conclusion and designation for several reasons. First, most of the Region’s significant groundwater recharge areas had high pollution susceptible areas, and the practical delineation of what part of an area is high pollution susceptible and what part is not is difficult because of the scale of the hydrologic atlas. Second, when the significant groundwater recharge areas are mapped, and particularly when superimposed on the Region’s Green Infrastructure Network of important primary corridors and secondary connectors, it is easy to see the interrelationship and importance of these areas to the Region’s significant rivers, streams, and wetlands.

As noted in the description of DNR’s use of soils having high permeability in the delineation in the Hydrologic Atlas 18, and as noted in the Region description of groundwater

recharge areas in the Overview above, the practical result is that many of these recharge areas are primarily sand ridges located next to rivers and streams. These sand ridges as discussed under the “Green Infrastructure Network,” often are home to rare and endangered communities and ecosystems. Examples include the Big Hammock Natural Area and the Oohoopee Dunes Natural Area Preserve System. These areas also happen to be the two National Natural Landmarks of the Region. The permeability of the soils and sand ridges obviously plays a related role in water recharge of nearby wetlands and streams.

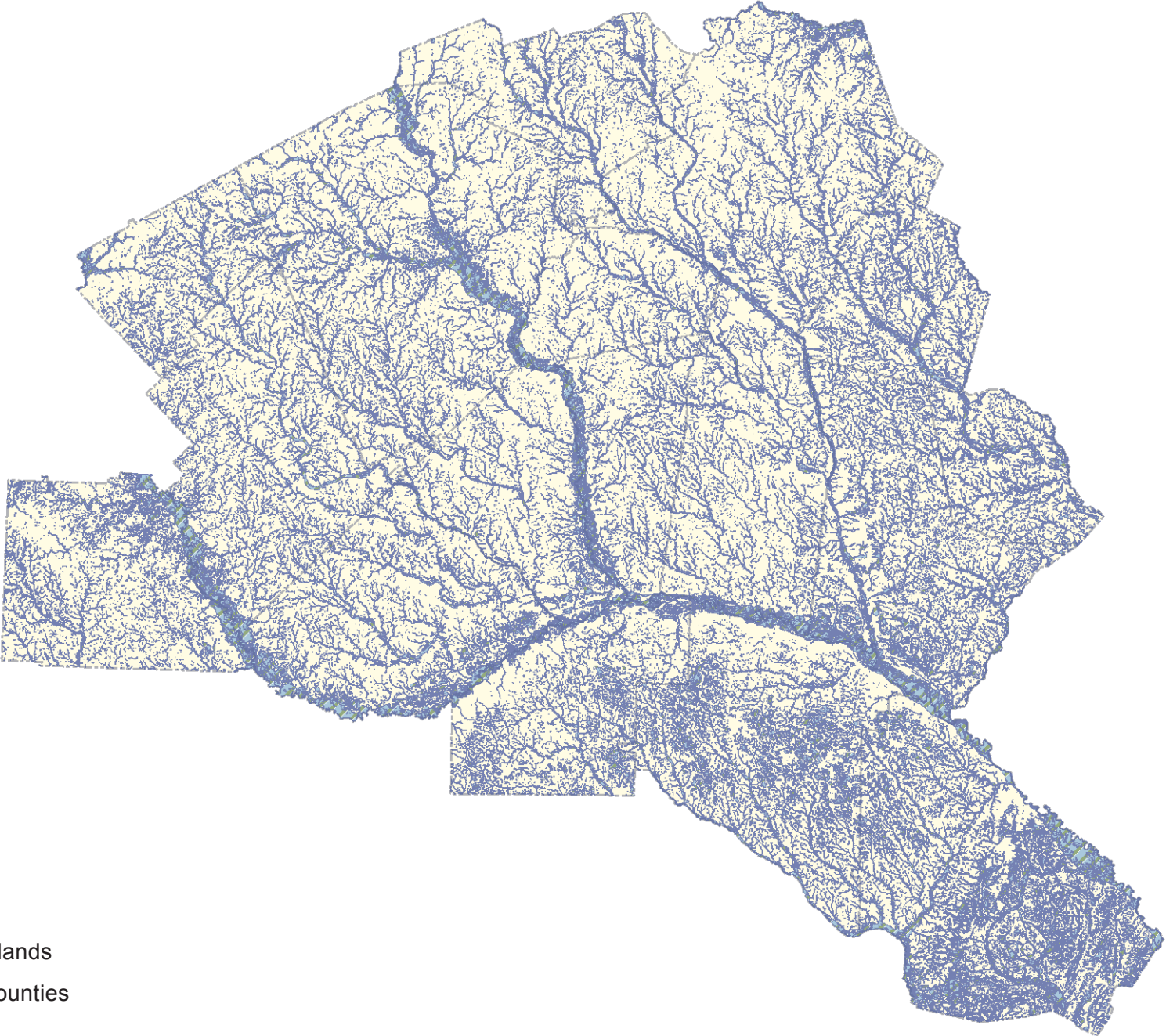
Only jurisdictional wetlands as shown on the “State Vital Areas” layer of the HOGARC “Regionally Important Resources Map” are formally designated “Regionally Important Resources” in the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region. It is recognized that there are additional wetlands within the Region which may or not be important depending on the perspective. However, it was concluded by HOGARC staff that the intent of RIR designation, and truly of the DNR Environmental Planning Criteria, was that only important jurisdictional wetlands be formally regulated.

If the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) maps are utilized, then essentially the entire Region would be designated a “wetland,” with virtually no room left for development outside of a wetland. This is easily illustrated in Illustration 1, which shows the generalized wetlands of the Region as appearing on the NWI maps. This widespread designation and definition of wetlands would be further complicated by the DCA planning rules, if they were so designated as regionally important resources. The DCA planning rules requirement calling for review of any large development within one mile of a designated RIR, would significantly hamper Region economic development activities. Rather than generating public and community support for the protection and management of important Region natural and cultural resources, it would be seen as an impediment and would generate disdain and dismissal of the Regional Resource Plan, regardless of motive, intent, or the good promoted.



When the hydrologic regime of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region is mapped to show only the rivers and streams of the “Green Infrastructure Network,” other related tributary streams, and then the next couple of orders of smaller tributary connectors of these streams, a more appropriate and manageable map of jurisdictional wetlands in the Region emerges. This is what is shown on the “State Vital Areas” RIR map layer as “Jurisdictional Wetlands.” As clearly shown, the Region still has many important jurisdictional wetlands. These jurisdictional wetlands, and their importance and relationship to the identified important river and stream corridors and “Green Infrastructure Network” are also clearly illustrated. This provides further

HEART OF GEORGIA ALTAMAHA REGIONAL COMMISSION

NWI WETLANDS INVENTORY



Legend

-  NWI Wetlands
-  HOGA Counties



Source: DCA, National Wetlands Inventory / Generalized Wetlands 2009

support and credence to protection and management of the globally important Regional ecosystems and the Altamaha River Watershed while allowing ample room for development. It also makes for a better, more focused guide to those public and private agencies seeking to protect and manage the Region’s natural and cultural resources.

Value and Vulnerability



Altamaha River Corridor, Big Hammock WMA – Tattnall County
Photo: flickr Creative Commons, GA DNR, L. Kruse

The State of Georgia has already analyzed and recognized the value of protected rivers, groundwater recharge areas, and jurisdictional wetlands by prescribing them “State Vital Areas.” The state purpose for protected rivers in the DNR Environmental Planning Criteria Rules describes the protected river corridors as of vital importance to Georgia in that they help preserve wildlife habitat, recreation sites, clean drinking water sources, help control erosion and river sedimentation, help absorb flood waters, and allow for free movement of wildlife. As documented in the “Green Infrastructure Network”

description herein, there are many ecological, historic, archaeological, social, environmental, recreational, economic, tourism, and health benefits associated with river corridor protection.



Altamaha River, Town’s Bluff Landing Nature Trail – Jeff Davis County

Groundwater recharge areas were included in the DNR Environmental Planning Criteria Rules primarily to protect necessary drinking water supplies and their quality. There is obvious benefit to a continued source of water suitable for human consumption, the avoidance of health risks, the avoidance of water treatment and related costs, and the avoidance of contamination clean-up costs. As noted elsewhere, there is the important contribution of groundwater to the recharge of wetlands and to the flows and water regime cycle of rivers and streams. A recent scientific study noted that the Floridan Aquifer, so critically important to public drinking water supply in the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region and elsewhere, was also important to baseflows in the Ocmulgee, Oconee, and Altamaha rivers. It was indicated that the Floridan contributed about 350 cubic feet per second (cfs) of the Ocmulgee River base flow and about 115 cfs of the Oconee River baseflows. These baseflow contributions were estimated to be 15-30 percent of typical summer low flows of these rivers, and almost 50 percent then of the resulting baseflow of

the Altamaha River. It is believed these baseflows of the Floridan derive from flowing springs in the Upper Coastal Plain.

Wetlands provide water quality protection, flood storage, filtration of stormwater runoff, collection of rainwater, regulation of the water regime, fish and wildlife habitat, and other environmental, economic, and social benefits. Wetlands are critical components and contributors to the interrelationships of many natural communities and ecosystems in the Region. Much of the biologic productivity of the natural environment is related to proper functioning of well-supplied and watered wetlands. Wetlands help prevent soil erosion, prevent flood damage, and provide food, shelter, nursery, resting areas, and homes to many plants and animals. Wetlands also provide many recreational, aesthetic landscape, and economic benefits to humans.

The State Vital Areas are vulnerable to upstream and surrounding pollution and other environmental damage (both point and non-point) to structure or function, such as channelization, drainage, or flow interruptions; incompatible adjacent land uses; development of incompatible scale or density; and the introduction of invasive species or other disturbances to natural functioning or relationships. There is continuing understanding and knowledge being gained about the complex interrelationships of the State Vital Areas, and how disturbances to past natural connections of the landscape can produce unexpected consequences in nearby vital areas, natural communities, and related ecosystems.



Ochwalkee Creek Wetland – Laurens County

Photo: thewaysofnaturelaurens.blogspot.com, S. Thompson



Ocmulgee Public Fishing Area – Bleckley County

POTENTIAL CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITY AREAS

Overview

Any review of the importance of the river corridors in the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region, and particularly the Altamaha River Watershed, to natural and cultural resources protection quickly shows that while a number of conserved lands and areas are present, there are many important areas not yet conserved but with much potential. There are notable areas, such as Sansavilla, the Altamaha-Ohoopee forks, more Ohoopee Dunes lands, and better connections between already conserved lands, which are obvious even to the interested layman and casual observer. The designation by The Nature Conservancy of the Altamaha River Bioreserve and the organization's stated objective of conservation of a continuous corridor along the Lower Altamaha all the way to the Georgia coast also speaks to the need for further protection and conservation. It illustrates the presence of other important non-conserved lands of significance to natural and cultural resources preservation. There are additional apparent needs along the Oconee, Ocmulgee, Ohoopee and other river/stream corridors when the Regional map of river corridors and currently conserved lands is portrayed and observed, particularly together. These observations are part of the reasoning behind the designation of a connected river/stream corridor based "Green Infrastructure Network" as the principal "Regionally Important Resource" in the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region.

Review of published scientific data on important natural areas in the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region, such as the Southeastern Ecological Network, Southeastern Aquatic Network, and the Georgia State Wildlife Action Plan, also confirms the presence of many non-conserved areas important to natural, and by default cultural, resources in the Region. Most of the high value lands discussed and outlined in this data are located along the Region's river and stream corridors. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Resources Division Nongame Conservation Section applauded the HOGARC "delineation of a green infrastructure



Little Ocmulgee River Corridor – Telfair County

Photo: flickr Creative Commons, JENO

network that will help ensure the ecological functioning of natural systems and the connection of current and future conservation areas.” This was stated in the Nongame Conservation Section’s review of the RC’s “Preliminary Green Infrastructure Network Map” sent as part of the RIR Nomination Invitation process. The Nongame Conservation Section also nominated and encouraged use of its identified “Potential Conservation Opportunity Areas.”

Georgia’s DNR utilized scientific evaluation using a computer driven Gap Analysis Program (GAP), confirmed by field testing and observation, to identify these potential conservation opportunity areas. These identified areas were part of a larger effort to develop a federally mandated Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, and are included in the State Wildlife Action Plan. The effort seeks to target conservation efforts and monies to identified areas of high value. The identification process uses Geographic Information Systems and the GAP analysis to identify areas containing relatively undisturbed natural vegetation, predicted habitat for rare species, and/or a documented occurrence of a rare species. The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region and its river and stream corridors were documented as having some of the highest rated identified “potential conservation opportunity areas” in Georgia.



As noted earlier, several of the already existing wildlife management areas currently utilized and operated by DNR in the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region are not state-owned, but are leased from private owners. These include the very significant, both naturally and culturally, Sansavilla WMA. These leased WMAs obviously contain elements of natural importance for DNR to use them for important wildlife management and outdoor recreation opportunities. Again, all are located on important river or stream corridors as documented previously.

Fort Stewart is a U.S. Army military installation covering 280,000 acres, including parts of Evans and Tattnall counties within the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region, and Bryan, Liberty, and Long counties outside. The base is home to the 3rd Infantry Division, and is the largest military installation east of the Mississippi River. Not only is Fort Stewart important militarily, it is also an important conservation area. The base contains the largest area of the rare longleaf pine forest ecosystem remaining in Georgia. It is home to six federally listed endangered or threatened plant or animal species, and 20 state-listed or federal species of concern.

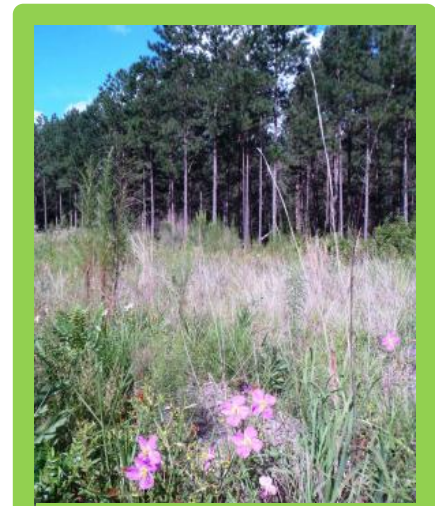


Fort Stewart Mature Longleaf Pine Habitat
Photo: US Army

The U.S. Army has established the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program which seeks to preserve military missions and realistic training capabilities of its installations, and also preserve high-value and sensitive natural habitats on, and in a buffer around, the installation. The ACUB program works in partnership with environmental and conservation agencies and local communities to limit incompatible development encroachment, and protect mission,

environment, and community. Within and around Fort Stewart, the ACUB Program seeks to protect all potential and existing habitats known to exist on Fort Stewart, and in an identified buffer, while also helping to preserve military readiness, allow perimeter training and maneuver areas, and protect off-base air travel corridors.

ACUB obtains development rights through donation or purchase of conservation easements on properties in the identified buffer. Fort Stewart conservation partners include the Georgia Land Trust, the Georgia Land Conservation Program, and The Nature Conservancy. Important natural habitats on Fort Stewart include longleaf pine/wiregrass, bottomland hardwood forests, depressional wetlands, and Canoochee and Ogeechee river corridors. Rare species known to exist on Fort Stewart and its ACUB buffer include the flatwoods salamander, striped newt, gopher frog, Bachman’s sparrow, swallow-tailed kite, red-cockaded woodpecker, gopher tortoise, indigo snake, Florida pine snake, purple honeycomb head, and pond spice. Fort Stewart’s natural habitats and ecological importance as a conservation area were the principal reason HOGARC staff included Beard’s Creek as a “primary corridor” on its principal “Green Infrastructure Network” Regionally Important Resources Map layer. Beard’s Creek directly connects Fort Stewart with the Altamaha River Corridor. Fort Stewart personnel formally nominated the Fort Stewart ACUB as a Regionally Important Resource.



Fort Stewart ACUB Parcel
Photo: GA Land Trust

Designation of Regionally Important Resources

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Wildlife Resources Division designated “Potential Conservation Opportunity Areas” are formally included as Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission’s (HOGARC) Regionally Important Resources. These “Potential Conservation Opportunity Areas” are part of Georgia’s official Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy and State Wildlife Action Plan, and can be accessed through www.georgiawildlife.com. Appropriate GIS coverage was obtained from DNR by Heart of Georgia Altamaha GIS staff to include this data on the “Potential Conservation Opportunity Areas” layer of the HOGARC “Regionally Important Resources Map.” The acronym-based legend scheme of DNR is such that “<100” represents natural vegetation patches with core area less than 100 hectares (~247 acres) in size, and “>100” represents patches with core areas greater than 100 hectares in size. “SCDO” represents areas with a significant number of documented occurrences of species of concern, while “PTVSC” represents areas with significant numbers of predicted terrestrial vertebrate species of concern, with six combinations of these layers shown.

The existing DNR State Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and lands which are currently only leased, not owned, by the State within the Region for wildlife management and public outdoor recreation opportunities are also designated RIRs for the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region. These leased DNR WMA lands are included on the “Potential Conservation Opportunity Areas” layer of the HOGARC Regionally Important Resources Map. Their inclusion on this layer results both from their potential for more secure conservation ownership, and the fact that most are also DNR designated “potential conservation opportunity areas.” Their use as direct full WMAs, or as supplemental areas to other state-owned WMAs, speaks to their value for natural heritage. Their locations also have the potential for cultural heritage preservation, some already recognized. Leased WMA areas in the Region include the very important Sansavilla WMA, as well as the Little Satilla WMA, the Ocmulgee-Gum Swamp Creek Tract WMA, the Rogers Tract, and other additional lands.

The portions of the Fort Stewart Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB), as designated by the Fort Stewart Joint Land Use Study and the U.S. Army, which are included in Evans and Tattnall counties, are formally designated as RIRs. This ACUB area is included on the “Potential Conservation Opportunity Areas” layer of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission’s Regionally Important Resources Map because of its value, not yet realized, to natural and cultural heritage within the Region, and also to its economic and social values related to protection of the military missions of the Fort Stewart Military Installation.

Value and Vulnerability

All of the resources listed in the “Potential Conservation Opportunity Areas” layer of the HOGARC RIR Map have documented intrinsic values related to natural and cultural resource heritage preservation of the Region as noted above. These areas would further help conserve the natural diversity of the state, would contribute to a more complete green infrastructure network, and conserve important examples of relatively undisturbed habitats and concerned species occurrences. At the same time, the conservation of these natural areas would provide important recreational, economic, aesthetic, and cultural protection opportunities and values. They may also provide for future human interaction, education, and research. The successful preservation of these areas would further contribute to overall landscape protection, ecosystem interrelationships, and natural functioning of the Altamaha River Watershed and Region.

These “Potential Conservation Opportunity Areas” are prone to the same vulnerabilities as existing conserved natural and cultural areas within the Region. These include incompatible development, habitat fragmentation, environmental degradation, interrupted water regime, and loss of ecosystem connection. Their vulnerabilities are significantly heightened by their lack of permanent conservation ownership.



CULTURAL RESOURCES

Overview

Cultural resources is a more general term used to reflect the importance of identification, interpretation, maintenance, and preservation of every aspect of human and community origin and development. The concern for cultural resources protection and management is to include the heritage of our land, homes, structures, waterways, roadways, places of worship, economic means and development, landscapes, and other historical and archaeological evidence of our past and evolved interaction with each other and the environment. Important cultural resources are cultural landscapes, archaeological sites, historic properties, extant records, industrial heritage, folklife and other traditions, and other artifacts of the past. Cultural resources are tangible reminders of our past which provide both meaning and context to the present, and continuity to the future. Cultural resources preservation can add to quality of life, and provide an important sense of place, identity, evolution, and community. Such preservation is much more than saving or reusing old structures or artifacts. It also involves conserving scenic views, natural landscapes, and traditions which provide important definition and context to our daily lives and our past. Cultural resources preservation is about protecting valued treasures which would be sorely missed if significantly altered or destroyed. They are non-renewable, and once lost, gone forever.

Georgia and the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region have much history. Humans have inhabited the state for more than 12,000 years. Georgia is estimated to contain over 1,000,000 archaeological sites important to understanding the tapestry, context, and achievements of the habitation, and its evolution and ties to today. Most are not protected, or even known. Only about 38,000 sites are recorded in the Georgia Archaeological Site File maintained by the University of Georgia, and currently fewer than 100 of those are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It is known that Georgia contains some of the most important archaeological sites in the country. Similarly, Georgia has many extant historic properties, and has been long recognized as a leader in historic preservation. Among the most notable Georgia historic preservation efforts, and utilization for tourism, has been the City of Savannah. Georgia has over 2,000 listings of buildings, sites, structures, and historic districts on the National Register of Historic Places. There are over 86,000 such listings in total in the U.S.

As noted throughout this document, the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region has much history and culture which truly are very important and related to both the origin and development of Georgia and the English settlement of the U.S. The Region and its important rivers and hunting grounds provided food, shelter, and transportation to archaic Native Americans. It has witnessed the introduction of Spanish exploration and missions, European traders and territorial battles, intertribal warfare, various wars of international import, and English settlement. Upon Georgia's founding, the Altamaha River was the border of Indian Territory, and truly its rivers remained borders and sources of national conflict until the Indian removals of the 1830s. It is estimated there are more than 1,000 Native American archaeological sites along the Altamaha. The Region has witnessed and endured conflict during every period of warfare which has happened on U.S. soil. The Region and its extraordinary natural history has also been documented through the collection and writings of many important early American botanists, including John and William Bartram, the LeContes, and Stephen Elliott.



The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region's development and settlement is tied closely to farming and forest resources. The Region's longleaf yellow pine forests were the source of much early wealth, and its rivers were the market conduits. Cutting of the forests also led to establishment of fertile cotton and later, tobacco fields. Various means of riverborne



transportation, including steamboats, were used to get these agrarian products to port and market. The abundance of agrarian products also led to later establishment of railroads, and many of the current municipalities. The Region was also the epicenter of turpentine and the pulp and paper industry of Georgia. The last commercially operating turpentine still within the U.S. was located in the City of Baxley in Appling County until its closure in 2000.

The Region's forests and fields, with pine plantations and the Vidalia Onion and other row crops, remain an integral component of the economy, even today.



Waller's Pecan Farm, Centennial Farm – Candler County

Photo: flickr, GA DNR, SHPO, C. Miller

Since Georgia's establishment of a Centennial Farm program in 1992 to recognize farms which have remained in production for over 100 years, often in the same family, 47 Region Centennial Farms, out of 402 total, have been recognized. Rayonier's operating pulp mill in Jesup is considered the world's largest producer of specialized chemical cellulose.

Despite the important magnitude of cultural resources heritage in the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region, much of it has not been properly documented, evaluated, or preserved. There are only about 45 National Register of Historic Places listings (some are large districts with multiple properties) in the 17 county Region, most historic structures located in the Region's municipalities, and very few of them archaeological. There are no recognized National Historic Landmarks located in the Region. There are about 2,000 Region archaeological sites in the Georgia Archaeological Site File, but less than 100 are even considered National Register eligible. Many important Region archaeological sites known from written history such as Fort Venture, Captain Alleck's farms/villages, the legendary Spanish Mission Santa Isabel de Utinahica, and other forts and ferry sites, have not yet been located with exact certainty.

What is clear is the interrelationship of the Region's natural and cultural resources preservation. It is known that many of the Region's most important cultural resources are located in and along its river corridors, whose extraordinary value for outstanding natural resource, ecological, and biodiversity protection is without question. River corridor protection will also preserve archaeological and historic records of critical importance to Region, Georgia, and U.S. history for future discovery and documentation. Such arguments have already been advanced by professional archaeologists (notably Jackson and Tylor in *Early Georgia*, 2005). These interrelationships are also seen in past and current cultural resource folklore and tradition preservation efforts of the Region. In 1982, Project R.A.F.T. (Restoring Altamaha Folk Traditions) was organized by Georgia Southern University and others to construct a full-size pine log raft and float it from Lumber City to Darien, much as it was done in the heyday of river transport. The project was documented by Georgia Public Television in a 1986



The Last Raft Marker, McRae's Landing – Telfair County

documentary, “The Last Raft.” Today, the City of Lyons Better Hometown Program sponsors an annual folk-life play called “Tales from the Altamaha” based on the writings of Colonel T. Ross Sharpe about life and colorful persona along the Altamaha River.

This described context of cultural resources of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region provides valuable framework for Regionally Important Resources (RIR) designation. As noted in the Introduction of this document and outlined above, despite the quality, importance, and significance of extant cultural resources within the Region, many, if not most, have not been properly identified, evaluated, and preserved. A first step in the staff analysis of RIR cultural resource designation led to the National Register of Historic Places. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Division, while not formally nominating any RIRs, provided comment that it was its opinion that all Region properties on the National Register, whether historic, cultural, or natural, be considered for RIR listing.

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation’s historic places deemed worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is maintained by the National Park Service as part of a national program to support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America’s historic and archaeological resources. Almost every county in the United States has at least one place listed on the National Register, but only significance at the local level is required for listing. In point of fact, most of the 45 current Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region National Register listings, even the five or so districts, are only locally significant. Although the districts, in particular, could be considered important to coordinated regional heritage tourism, ultimately it is a local responsibility to truly protect, preserve and manage them for sense of place and organized tourism, or other economic development uses. These resources are truly important in that context, but RIR designation might be counterproductive even to those aims because of DCA Planning Rules development review requirements, and the resentment and loss of local support that likely would result.

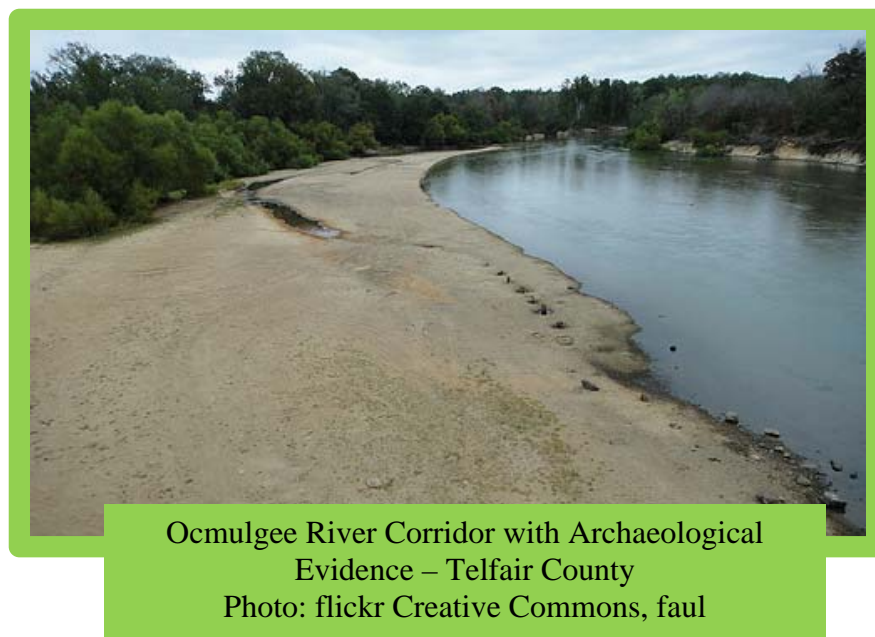
Only one current Region National Register listing is a purely archaeological resource, Fish Trap Cut along the Oconee River in Laurens County. The Society for Georgia Archaeology and the Georgia Council of Professional Archaeologists jointly formally nominated 73 “National Register quality”



Oconee River, Fish Trap Cut –
Laurens County

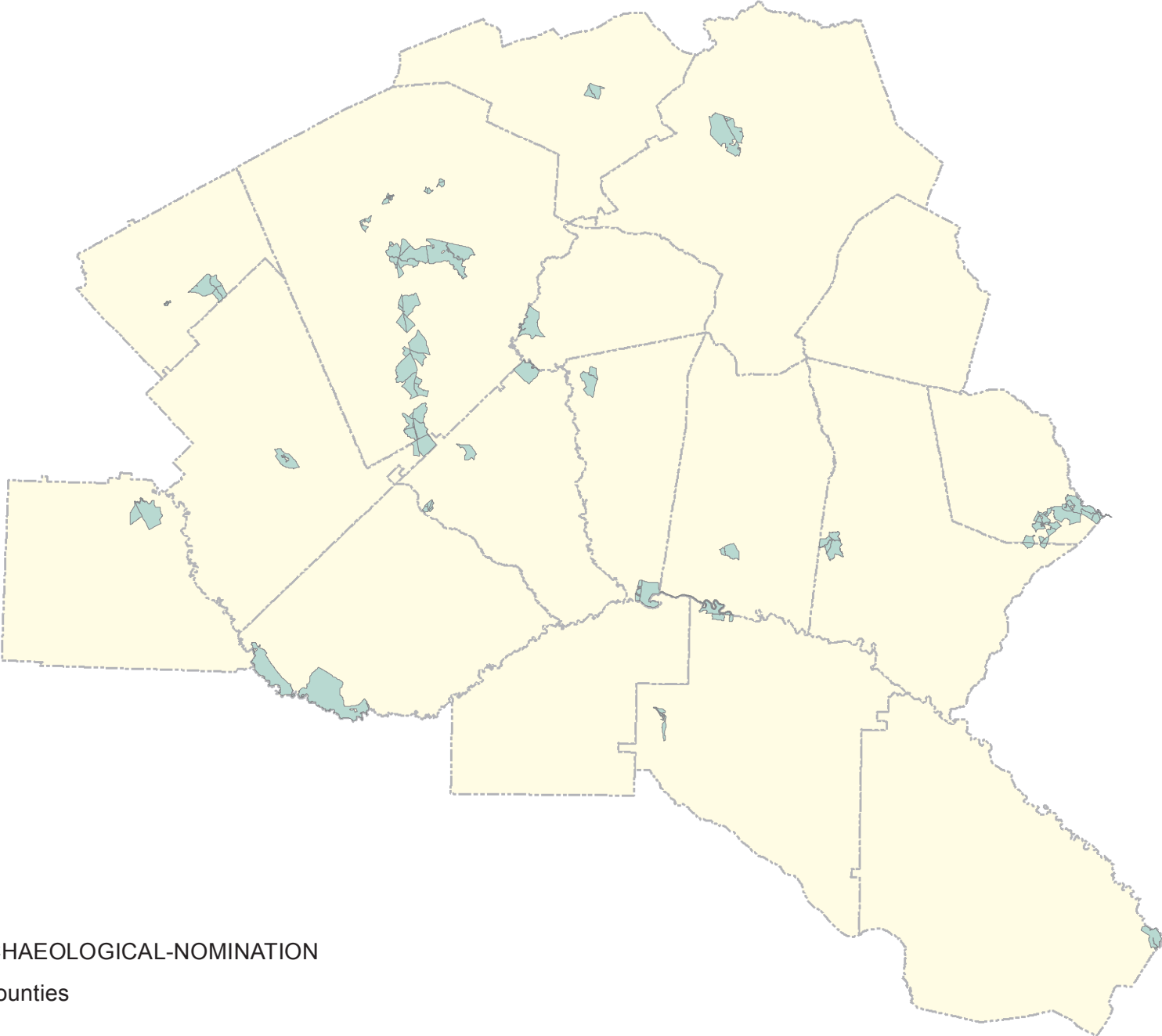
archaeological sites (out of 1,974 known sites) for RIR designation. These are shown on Illustration 2. Careful analysis of this nomination revealed similar problems to the historic resources listed on the National Register. Upon careful analysis, it is clear that many of the 73 nominated sites simply result from federally required Section 106 National Historic Preservation Act and/or Section 4(f) of the National Transportation Act reviews of federally funded highway or other federally assisted projects, and many might be only of true local or limited significance. By the same token, it was clear that known very important Regional archaeological sites, such as Doctortown and “the Forks” were not included in the 73 sites. It would be hard to say that Section 106 sites along U.S. 441 have regional significance, and Doctortown does not.

As discussed herein and known generally, many of the important and significant cultural resources of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region, both documented and undocumented, are located along the Region’s river and stream corridors. Examination of DCA generalized depiction of Regional archaeological resources provided as a planning resource in Georgia, clearly confirms this principal location along the Region’s rivers and streams. This DCA generalized depiction is shown on Illustration 3. It also confirms the fact that conservation of the Region’s river and stream corridors for natural resource and ecological preservation reasons will have the added and secondary effect of preserving significant Regional cultural resources, both known and unknown.





HEART OF GEORGIA ALTAMAHA REGIONAL COMMISSION

NOMINATED ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES



Legend

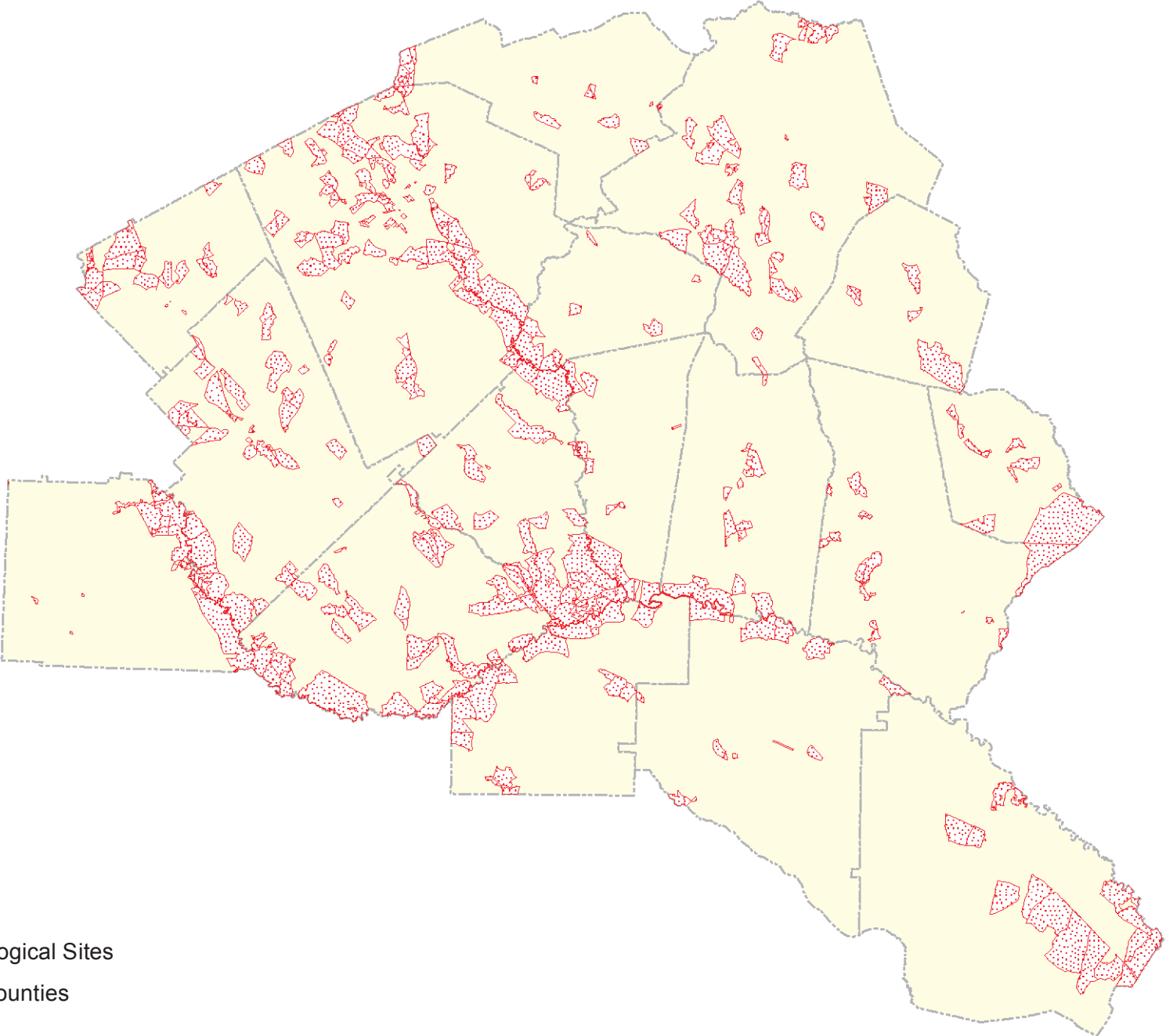
-  RIR-ARCHAEOLOGICAL-NOMINATION
-  HOGA Counties

Source: HOGARC



HEART OF GEORGIA ALTAMAHA REGIONAL COMMISSION

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES



Legend

- Archaeological Sites
- HOGA Counties

Source: DCA, Cultural Resource Maps



Designation of Regionally Important Resources

In the final analysis, Heart of Georgia Altamaha staff formally designated limited numbers of cultural resources as Regionally Important Resources under two categories. The first category is “National Register Rural Landscapes.” As noted, the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region’s past, and to a large extent, its present are closely tied to an agrarian economy and a rural landscape dominated by fields and pine forests. More than 80 percent of its current land use remains in agriculture and forest. This overall rural land usage is not under serious or immediate threat. It is because of this fact that prime farmland and existing forest land in the Region were not designated RIRs. These categories of land use are expected to remain predominant in the Region, and will provide important landscape, aesthetic, scenic, and natural connection and support to the designated “Green Infrastructure Network” of the Region. However, it was decided to recognize rural landscapes/farms already listed on the National Register of Historic Places in deference to the importance of agriculture/forests to the economy and rural character of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region, and to serve as examples and models. This is especially important since these farms are located outside the designated “Green Infrastructure Network.”

The “National Register Rural Landscapes” formally designated as RIRs in the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region are shown on the “Cultural Resources” layer of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission’s Regionally Important Resources Map. These include the Mitchell J. Green Plantation, the McLemore-Sharpe Farmstead, the Willie T. McArthur Farm, and Woodland Plantation (Winship-McArthur Farmstead). Each is briefly discussed below.

Mitchell J. Green Plantation. Also known as Cottonham Plantation, this is a privately owned 433 acre farm located in Evans County off U.S. 301 which was listed as an excellent example of a post Civil War plantation. Part of its significance, listed at the “national level,” was that it was an outstanding example of an intact agricultural complex of structures, and varied farm and forestry uses. It remains in agricultural/forestry use as it has been since prior to the Civil War. The Green Plantation was listed on the National Register in April, 1980 and was designated a Georgia Centennial Heritage Farm in 1993.

McLemore-Sharpe Farmstead. When listed, this was an approximate 40 acre family farm complex, consisting of a



McLemore Cabin – Toombs County

Photo: www.georgiatruster.org

1864 log cabin, a newer 1903 family farm house, and related outbuildings. The farmstead was listed as important because of its illustration of farms and family evolution across generations, economy (slave to tenant), technology (labor to mechanization), and crop changes. The property now is in residential use, with the older McLemore Cabin under the auspices of the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation (for sale with covenants). The farmstead was listed on the National Register in August, 1982 at the “state” level of significance. It is located off Georgia 130 southwest of Vidalia in Toombs County.



Willie T. McArthur Farm Barn

Photo: www.georgiashpo.org

Willie T. McArthur Farm. This farm is a 175 acre farm, which has been operated by the same family since the 1890s, located in the McGregor community of Montgomery County near Ailey. The property was listed in the National Register at the “state” level of significance, with listing completed in July, 2012. The farm was listed as significant as an excellent example of

a farm complex with an intact main house, preserved domestic and agricultural outbuildings, historic landscapes, and intact farm acreage. The property has intact outbuildings dating from the 1890s to 1920s, as well as more recent agriculture support structures dating from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1980s, thus illustrating farm economic adaptation with physical structures. The farm remains in private agricultural use and was previously recognized as a Georgia Centennial Farm in 2006.

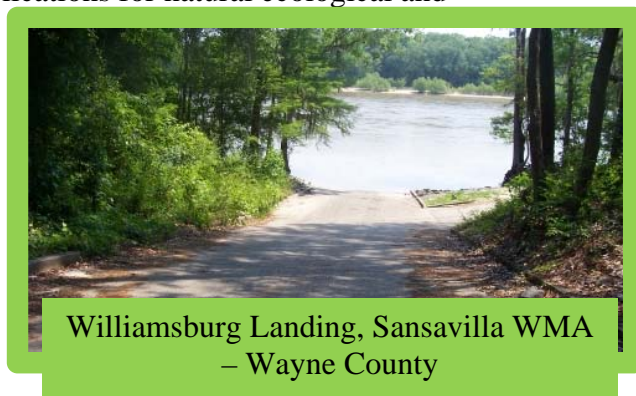
Woodland (Winship-McArthur Homestead). This property was listed in the National Register because of the architectural significance of the main house, and its association with the late 19th century timber industry so important to the Region and state. The National Register listing dates from June, 1984, and due to technical interpretations at the time, actually only includes about four acres around the 1877 main house. This listing needs modern expansion as the actual total property is a much larger farmstead which remains in continuing private agricultural and forestry uses, including an 80-acre pecan orchard visible from Georgia 19. Other related farmstead structures, including the original early 1800s two-story log home, a carriage house, commissary, and family cemetery remain on the property. The property is located off Georgia 19 in Wheeler County. The 1877 Victorian Eclectic home remains the largest and most imposing residential structure in Wheeler County.

It is recognized that other potential important rural landscapes and farms in the Region, likely eligible for the National Register, exist. The 45 other recognized Centennial Farms in the

Region testify and give hint to this. However, for whatever reason, including lack of owner consent or support, simple lack of formal documentation, or others, these properties are not currently listed on the National Register. They also may not be of more than local significance. The Million Pines Plantation in Treutlen County, for one, has incredible history related to pine plantation establishment, and important experimentation by Charles Herty, likely of national significance. The value of resources such as these should not be disregarded or neglected simply because they are not yet National Register listed, or formally designated RIRs. Policies, procedures, and other efforts utilized to insure protection and management of locally, as well as regionally, important cultural resources should be continued and considered for these other, not yet formally recognized, important heritage resources.

The “Known Significant Archaeological Sites” of the Region chosen for formal designation as RIRs are also shown on the “Cultural Resources” layer of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission’s Regionally Important Resources Map. These include the Sansavilla WMA, Doctortown, the Fernbank Glass Site, Fish Trap Cut, “The Forks (Altamaha and Ochoopee), and “The Forks (Oconee and Ocmulgee).” All of these sites are located within the RIR designated “Primary Corridors” of the Altamaha River Basin and are of likely “national” significance. They are all significant Native American and beyond historic/archaeological sites extremely worthy of preservation. Their preservation could be central components of more proper evaluation, interpretation, and display of incredible Regional, Georgia, and U.S. history. They literally are the tip of the iceberg as related to the history and culture of the Region, Georgia, and the U.S., but they stand out given current, limited knowledge and evaluation of much yet to be completely understood or known. Each is discussed briefly below.

Sansavilla WMA. This wildlife management area, located in eastern Wayne County along the Altamaha River, not only has important implications for natural ecological and landscape preservation of the Region, but is an incredible location of Regional, Georgia, and U.S. history. The Sansavilla WMA is truly deserving of National Monument or Park status, yet remains in private forest industry ownership without permanent protection. It is presently only leased by DNR as a WMA. Sansavilla has major association with General James Oglethorpe, the founder of Georgia; with Mary Musgrove, who is at least as important to English settlement of Georgia and the U.S. as the more well-known Pocahontas; and with Captain Alleck, a Cussetta Creek chief living and



Williamsburg Landing, Sansavilla WMA
– Wayne County

farming there in early Georgia colonization, who was a critical ally and treaty facilitator of Georgia and the English. There is also evidence of the location of an early Spanish Mission and later forts within Sansavilla. The first postal service south of Savannah traveled through the WMA along a historic Native American/Kings Road trail, and the area contains a key crossing of the Altamaha important in the Revolutionary War. The WMA has association with nearly every war fought on U.S. soil through and including the Civil War, and lies south of the river across from the more documented Fort Barrington. The Josiah Barrington Plantation for whom the fort was named, was located on Sansavilla. Sansavilla also contains the location of the first municipality of Wayne County, the abandoned Town of Williamsburg. An important ferry operated at the site from Colonial days to the early 20th century.

Doctortown. This historic area located just east of U.S. Highway 84/301 near the Rayonier pulp mill is of high importance to Native American/Georgia history, to Region forestry and transportation history, and to local Civil War history. It is believed Captain Alleck, the same Cussetta Creek Indian chief of Sansavilla, moved his farm/village there, after ceding Sansavilla and moving the Indian boundary Penholloway Creek in a 1768 agreement with Georgia Governor Wright. Doctortown is located at the Alachua Indian Path crossing of the Altamaha River, and “Alecha” (easily seen as converted to “Alleck”) is a Muskogean (Creek language) Indian word purported to mean “doctor.”

Doctortown was also a steamboat landing, and a wreck of one (the “Gulf Mist”) lies nearby in the Altamaha River. The Savannah, Albany, and Gulf Railroad crossed the Altamaha River at Doctortown around 1850. The still extant Doctortown railroad trestle (part of CSX Railroad today) was the scene of a skirmish during Sherman’s March to the Sea in which the Georgia Militia successfully defended the railroad bridge from a raiding side party of Sherman’s troops. The railroad bridge was also defended by the U.S. Coast Guard in World War II.



After the Civil War, Doctortown became an industrial center of Georgia’s timber industry, first as the location of the McCann Lumber Company sawmill, and later Rayonier’s pulp mill. The Rayonier pulp mill, first established in 1954, remains active today, and is the

world’s largest producer of specialized chemical cellulose. Rayonier currently owns the Doctortown site.

Fernbank Glass Site. This archaeological site is located on the Ocmulgee River near Jacksonville, Georgia in Telfair County. This site was scientifically explored under the direction of archaeologist Dennis Blanton of the Fernbank Museum of Natural History in Atlanta, Georgia. The archaeological study and fieldwork at the site, conducted beginning in 2006 for several years, initially sought to identify the location of fabled Spanish Mission Santa Isabel de Utinachia. However, artifacts found at the site, particularly Spanish glass beads dating from the early-to-mid 1500s (thus the “Glass Site”), are said to be more likely an indication of encampment by the Hernando de Soto expedition in 1540. This location is farther south down the Ocmulgee River than the previously believed De Soto route, but there is archaeological evidence of an Ichisi Indian village at the site, as referenced by De Soto’s party. Other scholars have suggested a more unlikely story that the Spanish artifacts were left by deserters of the lost Spanish colony Ayllon. The site is not believed to be the site of a Spanish mission. Regardless, the Fernbank Glass Site is of extreme importance, and gives definition to the idea that the Altamaha Watershed river corridors hold much history not yet documented or known.



Fish Trap Cut. This is currently the only National Register of Historic Places listed archaeological site within the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region. It is located on the Oconee River south of the City of Dublin, and was listed on the National Register in October, 1974. Archaeologists now refer to this site as the Sawyer Site after its believed original recorded owner, Jonathan Sawyer, the founder of the City of Dublin. Many locals have believed that the site was the location of a rock weir fish trap of the Native Americans. However, an archaeological study by Mark Williams in 1994 found no such evidence. It is known that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers placed a closing dam (with 600 cubic yards of rock) at an old river channel at the location in 1889 to aid steamboat navigation, and apparently destroyed this closing dam with explosives around 1900 after it had successfully served its purpose.

What is known about the site is that it is an important Native American village site. The site contains two mound sites of the Mississippian period about equidistant from the important Shinholster Mound Site upstream, and the legendary village site at “The Forks” junction of the Oconee and Ocmulgee rivers downstream. Perhaps even more importantly, the Williams

investigation discovered evidence of an earlier Woodland period village between the Mississippian mounds at the site. This village, about 200 meters by 300 meters in size, is significant as the earliest known Woodland period village site in Georgia, and dates to around 100 B.C.

The Forks (Altamaha and Ochoopee). This site has not been formally investigated archaeologically. However, the site is known through oral Native American culture and stories. During the Colonial Era, the “Forks of the Altamaha” is often referred to as meaning the confluence of the Ochoopee River with the Altamaha, both in writings and maps. The distance of this confluence is about 50 miles from the Altamaha’s outlet near Darien, a logical location of settlement. A Spanish map and other evidence found in archaeological files dating to the Okefenokee Swamp’s National Wildlife Refuge establishment in 1937 do show a road/travel route traversing the western edge of the Swamp from Florida to the Altamaha/Ochoopee river confluence. It has been suggested the Altamaha-Ochoopee confluence forks is a possible logical location of the fabled Spanish Mission Santa Isabel de Utinahica. Regardless, it does seem to be a likely site of high archaeological significance.

The Forks (Oconee and Ocmulgee). This junction of the two important tributaries which form the Altamaha River, is more commonly referred to as the “Forks of the Altamaha” only since the early 19th century. Early writings do suggest the location of both Ocmulgee and Hitchiti Indian settlements near this “Forks,” and important Native American artifacts have been found. A 1994 scatter plot of recorded Native American site file records in the Georgia Archaeological Site Files prepared by Mark Williams for a 1995 review of “Historic Indian Period Archeology of the Georgia Coastal Plain” by Chad Bradley shows significant clusters at this “Forks” confluence. This Oconee-Ocmulgee-Altamaha confluence forks is also said to be the third and last location of a Mary Musgrove trading post opened with her last husband, Thomas Bosonworth, after 1744. This “Forks of the Altamaha” may or may not be the location of the legendary village “Tama,” or the Spanish Mission Santa Isabel de Utinuhica as hypothesized by many. The region was mentioned in several Indian treaties with Georgia, and thus has implied importance. Again, all of this anecdotal evidence, while indicating high archaeological significance and potential, begs for more scientific investigation and definitive evaluation. The Ocmulgee-Oconee-Altamaha River Archaeology Zone is cited by some as one of the most important in understanding the true history of the Southeastern Indians. The site’s preservation for natural conservation reasons will likely prove of extreme cultural importance later, and reveal a more definitive documentation of Region history. The site is not currently in protective ownership.

These designated “Known Significant Archaeological Sites,” while without much question of being of extreme, and likely national, significance as discussed earlier, are certainly



Doctortown Trestle – Wayne County
Photo: www.waynetourism.com

not the only Native American or other significant historic archaeological sites in the Region’s river corridors. It was noted that about 1,000 Native American sites are known along the Altamaha. Doctortown is not the only steamboat lumber port landing. The current region municipalities of Lumber City, Jacksonville, and Abbeville on the Ocmulgee, and Dublin on the Oconee, were also important steamboat lumber port landings. The Fort Barrington/Sansavilla ferry site is just one of

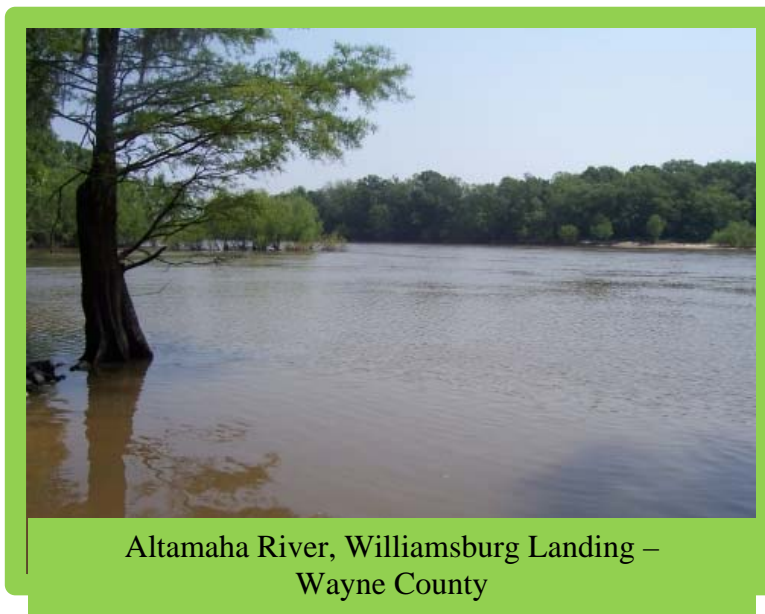
many. There were more ferry crossings along the Altamaha than there are current highway bridge crossings. There are no interpreted or celebrated ferry crossings within the Region, except by historic marker. Similarly, there are also no steamboat interpretations, or celebrated turpentine stills or festivals. Perhaps more importantly, overall scientific evaluation and context of the Region’s cultural resources history, both Native American and otherwise, is sorely lacking. Because of the importance of the Region’s river corridors to this cultural resources heritage, conservation and protection of these corridors will also serve to preserve much unexplored cultural resources history for more focused future scientific research and definition. Local and regional policies and measures of resource protection and conservation should be directed and developed with the twin goals of both cultural and natural resources protection in mind, even if the cultural resources protection and significance are not completely understood at the time.

Value and Vulnerability

The identification, evaluation, and protection of cultural resources in the broadest sense provides continuing existence of sites, buildings, objects, and records connecting our human and community past with its present and future development. These irreplaceable physical links and treasures can contribute much to quality of life, community pride and sense of place, providing and conserving unique depth to scenic views and natural landscapes and economic development, tourism, and recreational opportunities. The continued existence of the physical links also provides enriching educational possibilities, and opens avenues for scientific research and evaluation. Cultural resources protection, preservation, maintenance, and interpretation provide color and depth to daily life, education, and economic activities. Preserved cultural resources can

expand knowledge and understanding of human history, provide scientific data and information not available elsewhere, provide ideas to help solve present-day problems, attract outside visitors, and provide jobs. Cultural resources can truly make for more interesting and livable communities, and help define their uniqueness and character.

Cultural resources, both historic properties and archaeological resources, face many dangers and vulnerabilities. A foremost one for the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region is the lack of scientific understanding, identification, and definition, especially for archaeological resources. Cultural resources cannot be protected or preserved if they are not first known. Other dangers are neglect, lack of maintenance, and vandalism or looting which destroys important context. Urban sprawl, inappropriate density, type of land use development, or even incompatible agricultural or forest practices can damage or destroy important cultural resources. Even numbers of recreational users or visitors beyond sustainable limits of the resource can permanently affect cultural resources in a negative manner. There are certainly large needs for protection and preservation of cultural resources, even of the limited ones known, within the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region. Beyond these preservation needs, there is also great need for education to develop greater understanding and respect for Regional cultural resources, and the many benefits which could result from their preservation. Again, Regional river corridor preservation for natural resource conservation, and expanded coordinated historic preservation and tourism efforts, seem the best avenues for Regional cultural resources preservation at present.



PROTECTION POLICIES AND DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE

Overview

As noted in the Introduction, an essential purpose of the Regional Resource Plan is to serve as an advocacy guide to inform, educate, and provide a decision framework for all concerned to understand the importance of natural and cultural resources in the Region. It has been shown throughout the resource narratives and other information contained within this plan that the natural and cultural resources of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region are of outstanding and extraordinary value at many levels. The “Green Infrastructure Network” and allied resources proposed in this Plan for conservation, protection, and management are of high, and can be of greater, significance to environmental, cultural, social, economic, and quality of life issues and perspectives for the Region, state, and even beyond. The sustainability and retention of these properly functioning and contributing resources are vital to the human, economic, and natural health and well-being of the Region and beyond.

To help in this education and advocacy role, the DCA Planning Rules for Regionally Important Resources require the Regional Resource Plan to not only identify and designate the significant Region natural and cultural resources, but also important protection policies and measures, and appropriate development practices for new developments to be located within one mile of designated RIRs. These policies and the development guidance can be utilized by all concerned for



Towns Bluff Heritage Center – Jeff Davis County
Photo: www.hazlehurst-jeffdavis.org

coordinated, appropriate protection and management strategies of the identified resources, and in evaluation of decisions potentially affecting the resources and their functioning. There should be enhanced focus on protection and management of these identified critically significant natural and cultural resources. This enhanced focus should involve improved coordination in resource

protection and management, and careful consideration and planning of all possible impacts of new development on these resources. This will help avoid degradation of the resources, and will help foster avoidance and mitigation of negative impacts. It will take the coordinated efforts of many to assure these designated Regionally Important Resources remain amazing wonders and revered treasures for generations to come.

General Policies and Protection Measures

General policies and protection measures are intended as guidance to local governments, conservation agencies and groups, and others for planning and decision-making for protection and management of the identified Regionally Important Resources, and in other areas where there could be effects on those resources. In addition, the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission will utilize these policies and protection measures as part of the review of local comprehensive plans for consistency with the Regional Plan, and to advocate for RIR protection.

- Support The Nature Conservancy goal of a continuous, permanently protected Altamaha River Bioreserve corridor in conservation use
- Seek to connect existing conservation lands of all the Region's river corridors with protected conservation uses
- Support and encourage the efforts of The Nature Conservancy, the Georgia Land Conservation Program, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the Georgia Land Trust, and any others to acquire permanent conservation easements or fee titles on additional non-public unprotected lands identified on the HOGARC Regionally Important Resources Map, particularly those in, or allied to, the Green Infrastructure Network
- Encourage use of Conservation Easement, Conservation Tax Credit donations, and Conservation Use Assessment, Preferential Assessment, or Forest Land Conservation Assessment programs by private landowners of RIR properties
- Encourage and support the designation of RIR lands as conservation areas in local comprehensive plans, and other incorporation of RIR protection in local planning efforts
- Support, encourage, and promote public education and promulgation efforts concerning designated RIRs and the values and benefits of their protection

- Advocate, promote, and support efforts which promote general environmental stewardship
- Encourage the development of local advocacy groups in each county concerned with protection, utilization, and management of river corridors, wildlife recreation and conservation, other local conservation efforts, and RIRs
- Support and seek to develop multi-use trails, other outdoor recreation facilities and usage along the Region's river corridors, especially those with multi-county linkages
- Establish local festivals, sportsmen events, and other efforts designed to increase outreach, economic, and tourism utilization of the Region's river corridors
- Provide greater boating access, camping facilities, and other amenities and attractions which promote enhanced outdoor recreation use of the Region's rivers
- Expand and coordinate local and regional tourism efforts
- Encourage local greenways, rails to trails, bike paths and other linkages to the RIR Green Infrastructure Network
- Promote and support regional cooperation, marketing, and partnership in river corridor protection, development, economic utilization, and enhanced recreational and tourist attraction of the Region's river corridors and RIRs
- Promote, support, and expect use of best management practices by the public, developers, and agricultural, forest, and other interests
- Enlist and support the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission, the Georgia Forestry Commission, and Cooperative Extension Service in promoting RIR protection and conservation efforts, and use of best management practices in the agricultural and forestry community
- Encourage and support local civic and other group environmental awareness, stewardship, and clean-up efforts within the Region's river corridors and RIRs (e.g. Adopt-a-Stream and Keep Georgia Beautiful)

- Encourage statewide groups like Paddle Georgia, the Georgia Conservancy, Rivers Alive, Altamaha Riverkeeper, and others to plan and carryout regular events within the Region along and in the Region's river corridors
- Encourage continued agricultural, forestry, and other open space uses within one mile of RIRs to the extent possible
- Encourage intense development (commercial, industrial, large residential, etc.) to utilize areas of location in or near the Region's municipalities already served by water, sewer, and other infrastructure, and avoid location near RIRs
- Encourage development sensitive to the existing rural character; sense of place; overall scale of massing, size, context, and style of development; viewsheds of natural and cultural resources; continued proper functioning of onsite and nearby natural resources; and to minimization of stormwater runoff and pollution
- Encourage protection and enhancement of supportive open space and passive recreation throughout the community and local linkages to existing trails, open space, and RIRs
- Encourage infill development within or close to municipal areas already served by infrastructure as a preferred alternative to consumption of new areas requiring extensions of service
- Require DRI-scale, or other large, developments to survey the environmental and cultural features of the site (topography, soils, hydrology, trees/vegetation, wetlands, wildlife habitat, historic sites or other sensitive features); to encourage protection of sensitive areas as open space, recreation or environmental use; and to discourage development of lands physically unsuitable for development
- Encourage adaptive reuse and protection of historic integrity of existing structures and areas of historic and cultural importance to the community
- Use infrastructure availability to steer development away from areas of natural, cultural, historic, and environmentally sensitive resources
- Locally, adopt the model Environmental Conservation, On-Site Sewage Management and Permit Ordinance prepared by HOGARC, or otherwise adopt and implement ordinances which meet at least the minimum standards for the DNR Environmental Planning Criteria

- Adopt or amend local floodplain management ordinances to limit development and minimize intrusions in the recommended RIR buffers
- Encourage and support implementation of Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) implementation plans to reduce or mitigate pollution of Region streams on the EPA 303(d) list
- Consider zoning or other alternative land development ordinances which formally protect RIRs, control and limit development type and scale, and otherwise encourages conservation
- Establish a formal coordination and review process to allow for comment by the public, affected parties, and conservation advocates for any development located within one mile of a designated RIR

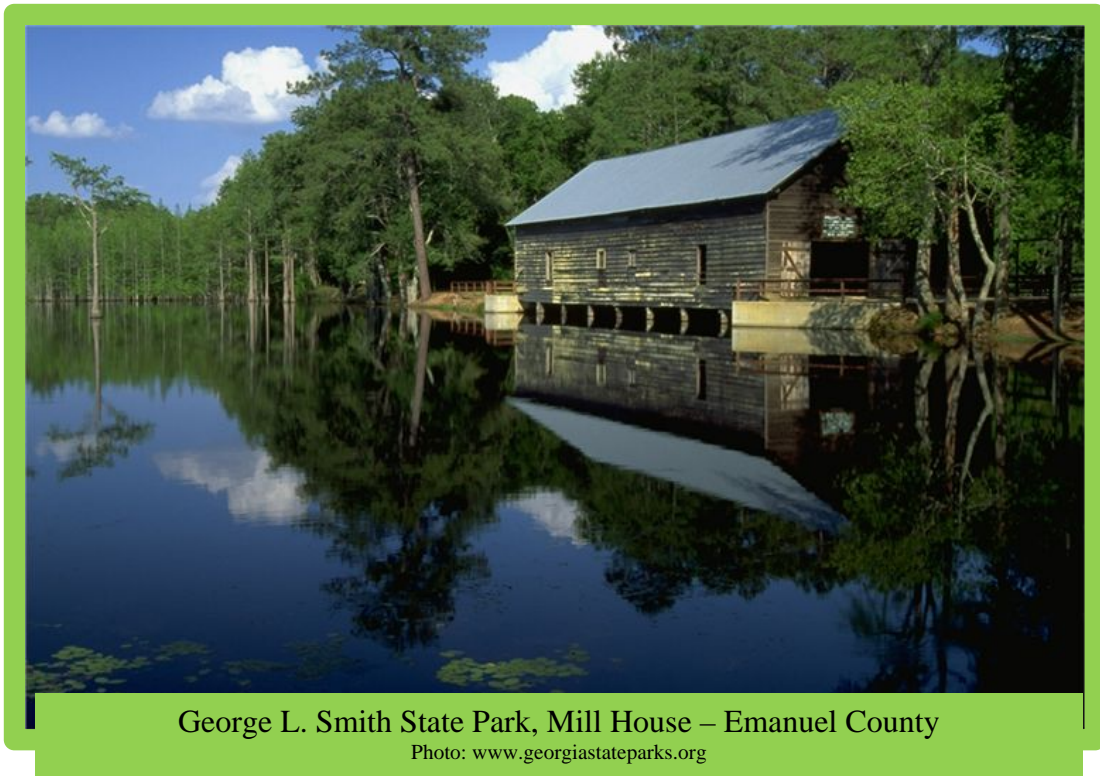
Guidance for Appropriate Development Practices

The following practices are provided as guidance to developers in planning, and to local governments in evaluating, new developments located within one mile of a designated Regionally Important Resource. The overall goal is to preserve the entire existing landscape with as minimal disturbance as possible, and to protect the complete natural functioning of the entire RIR ecosystem to the extent possible. The integrity and functioning of the complete landscape level area is not just restricted to the RIR resource itself, but includes water regimes and runoff, air and water quality, viewsheds, habitat connections, public access, and other impacts on adjacent lands which may detract or cause damage to the RIR or its functions.

- Utilize the site for continuing agricultural or forestry uses, if possible
- Prepare site plans, design structures, utilize landscaping and buffers, and conserve open space to minimize visual and environmental impacts
- Consult with local governments and natural resource agencies, like the NRCS and Soil and Water Conservation Commission, on appropriate design and best management practices to protect sensitive environmental areas and the natural functioning of the RIR
- Employ cluster development practices and techniques to preserve open space within the development site

- Consider conservation easement and/or conservation tax credit donation of development rights, or fee title donation, to allow continued agricultural and forestry use, or complete conservation use, if possible
- Realize that large developments requiring extensive new infrastructure are not appropriate or consistent with local and Regional vision for RIRs as important conservation uses
- Maintain the proposed development site in as much natural condition as possible, and limit use of impervious surfaces
- Utilize environmental features of the site (water features, view corridors, wetlands) and adjoining natural areas as amenities and character defining features of the development
- Provide linkages and open space or conservation connections to community trails and RIRs wherever possible
- Utilize vegetated buffers alongside neighboring properties, protect as much existing natural vegetation and as many mature trees on site, and overall minimize disturbance of pre-development conditions to the maximum extent possible
- Go beyond required minimums, and develop “Green” developments which aid in the community desire for protected functioning conservation areas, and take advantage of the increased property values possible with connection to important community greenspace or RIRs
- Consider nature-based or agri-tourism uses, or similar compatible uses, which take advantage of the nearby location of the Green Infrastructure Network as the primary land use of the site
- Employ development types, styles, size and scale compatible with existing development, rural character, and conservation uses
- Preserve and adaptively reuse existing historic or cultural resources, and incorporate them into the proposed development
- Utilize federal and/or state tax incentives for historic rehabilitation to make historic preservation of important cultural resources more attractive and economical

- Undertake stream or wetland restoration, streambank stabilization, natural plantings, or other conservation restoration of previously compromised environmental features of the site
- Maintain natural vegetated buffers along water features of the site as wide as possible and exceed minimums, even of best management practices
- Comply with, but exceed, required minimums of all local, state, and federal environmental regulations and recommended measures for protection of natural and cultural resources and RIRs
- Become an active partner and advocate in the protection and management of designated Regionally Important Resources and enhancement of the Green Infrastructure Network
- Keep contamination of the natural environment by runoffs and other pollutants from the site to the lowest amount possible
- Limit site clearing and construction disturbance to as small an area of the site as possible



APPENDIX A

PUBLIC/STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT MATERIALS

RIR Nomination Letter

RIR Nomination Invitation

Preliminary Green Infrastructure Map

HOGARC RIR Nomination Form

List of Stakeholders

RIR Regional Hearing Notice

HEART OF GEORGIA ALTAMAHA REGIONAL COMMISSION

5405 Oak Street, Eastman, Georgia 31023
Ph. 478-374-4771 - Fax 478-374-0703

331 West Parker Street, Baxley, Georgia 31513
Ph. 912-367-3648 - Fax 912-367-3640

November 21, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Potential Stakeholders and Other Interested Parties

FROM: Rafael C. Nail, Assistant Executive Director *RCN*

SUBJECT: Invitation to Nominate Regionally Important Resources

The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission in south Georgia is currently accepting nominations for Regionally Important Resources, and you are invited to participate and nominate important natural, historic, or cultural resources you deem appropriate within the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region. These nominations are due no later than December 31, 2011.

Please see the attached nomination invitation for more information, and please utilize the attached nomination form for your nomination to be formally considered. Both documents are available electronically at our website, www.hogarc.org. For more information on “regionally important resources,” please consult the Georgia Department of Community Affairs website, www.georgiaplanning.com under “regionalism,” and then “regional planning.”

You should be aware that we are attempting to not only identify both natural and historic/cultural resources of sufficient size and importance to warrant special consideration in planning and conservation, but also to identify a green infrastructure network for healthy ecological functioning and connection of existing and future conservation, and other important areas, to the extent possible. We have preliminarily identified and mapped a green infrastructure network, and you are also invited to comment on this as well. This preliminary map can be seen on our website, www.hogarc.org. A hard copy is also enclosed.

Please properly follow the guidelines/instructions in the invitation and nomination form, and submit your properly documented nomination no later than December 31, 2011.

Thank you for your interest and participation in this important planning endeavor.

RIR Nomination Invitation

The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission (HOGARC) is a regional planning agency created under Georgia law, and includes the counties of Appling, Bleckley, Candler, Dodge, Emanuel, Evans, Jeff Davis, Johnson, Laurens, Montgomery, Tattnall, Telfair, Toombs, Treutlen, Wayne, Wheeler, and Wilcox in south Georgia. The HOGARC is currently preparing a Regional Resource Plan for the protection and management of identified regionally important natural and cultural resources in accordance with the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Rules (Chapter 110-12-4).

You have been identified as a potential stakeholder or interested party in this Regionally Important Resources nomination and selection process. You are hereby invited to officially nominate any natural or cultural resource within the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region for potential inclusion in the HOGARC's Regional Resource Plan. Please utilize the attached nomination form for organization of your nomination. Please complete the form in its entirety, and be sure to include a map of any resources you nominate with clearly identified resource boundaries and which also identifies any municipal or county boundary falling within the clearly identified resource boundary. A narrative of the resource's value, vulnerability, regional importance, and the degree to which the nominated resource is threatened or endangered must also be included. Please note that any resource nomination should be submitted **no later than December 31, 2011**.

You should be aware that the DCA rules require that our final Regionally Important Resources Map depict a green infrastructure network which continuously links identified resources to the extent possible. To that end we have consulted important and protected resources information listings, and recommendations from many existing private, state, and federal sources, and have developed a preliminary "Green Infrastructure Network" map. This map is available on our website, www.hogarc.org, and may be of assistance to you in your nomination process. This preliminary "Green Infrastructure Network" map does link most of the existing public and private conservation lands (leased lands are not shown) within the Region through identification of "primary corridors" and "secondary connectors." We believe this concept could guide future conservation and planning efforts by establishing priorities for conservation lands, natural corridors, and travelways linking important areas on a linear basis, particularly river corridors/basins, while also providing critical cross connections to other corridors, basins, and natural areas. As an additional thought, we also believe that this network captures the majority of regionally important historic and archaeological sites, and many of the critical, vital wetlands areas of the Region. What do you think?






Please remember to send us your RIR nomination(s) with complete form, map, and narrative as soon as possible, but **no later than December 31, 2011**. If you simply want to comment on our preliminary "Green Infrastructure Network" map, you may send comments to nail@hogarc.org. Your assistance is appreciated.


Thanks for your important consideration in this process, and for your attention to, and interest in, the future protection and management of important natural and cultural resources in the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region.

Regionally Important Resources







Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission

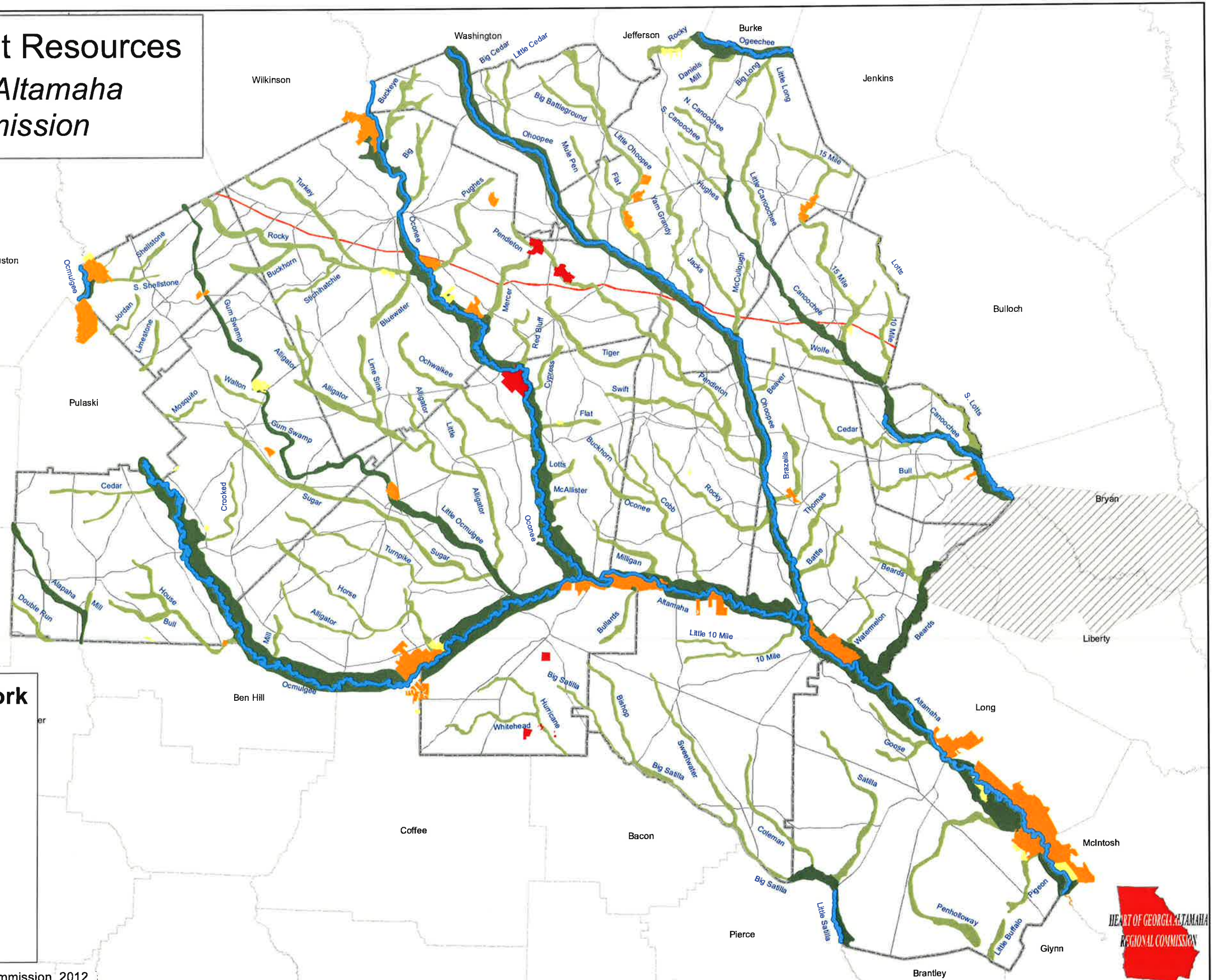
Reference Map

-  County Boundaries
-  Fort Stewart
- Federal/State Roads**
-  Interstate Hwy
-  State Hwy
-  Railroad

N


Green Infrastructure Network

-  Protected Rivers
- Corridor Types**
-  Primary Corridor
-  Secondary Connector
- Conservation Lands**
-  Georgia Department of Natural Resources
-  Land Trust and Other Private Lands
-  Other State Lands





HEART OF GEORGIA ALTAMAHA REGIONAL COMMISSION

REGIONALLY IMPORTANT RESOURCES NOMINATION FORM

REGIONALLY IMPORTANT RESOURCES are defined as any natural or cultural resource areas identified as being of regional importance. Following identification of these resources, the Regional Commission will prepare a *REGIONAL RESOURCE PLAN* recommending best practices for their protection and management. The *REGIONAL RESOURCE PLAN* will be used by the Regional Commission to promote coordination of activities and planning by local governments, land trusts, and conservation or environmental protection entities to better manage these resources. Resources identified through this process will be mapped and linked to form a continuous regional green infrastructure network. This network will be presented on a *REGIONALLY IMPORTANT RESOURCES MAP* that will be widely distributed throughout the region.

I. INFORMATION ABOUT PERSON OR ORGANIZATION SUBMITTING NOMINATION

Name: Type the Name of the Person or Organization Submitting this Form, Here

Type of Organization (Please select the most appropriate category):

- Land Trust
- Conservation/Environmental Protection Group
- Local Government
- Governmental Agency
- Individual
- Other: If other, please describe...

Contact Person:	Type the Name of the Person Best Able to Discuss the Nomination, Here
Address:	Type Address, City, State, Zip
Phone:	Type Phone Number
Email:	Type Email Address
Fax:	Type Fax Number
Website:	Type Website URL

II. INFORMATION ABOUT NOMINATED RESOURCE

Name (if applicable):

TYPE THE NAME OF THE RESOURCE BEING NOMINATED

Location

(Be as descriptive as necessary. Provide an address, latitude/longitude, GPS coordinates, or any information which would be required to physically locate the nominated resource):

Provide Location Information, Here

Type of Resource (Please select all that apply):

- Water
- Park
- Forest Preserve
- Wildlife Preserve
- Other Natural Resource(s): If other, please describe...
- Historic Resource
- Archeological Resource
- Other Cultural/Historic Resource(s): If other, please describe....

III. PROVIDE A BRIEF, WRITTEN DESCRIPTION OF THE RESOURCE'S VALUE THAT ADDRESSES ITS IMPORTANCE TO THE REGION:

Describe the resource's value to the region, here.

IV. PROVIDE A BRIEF, WRITTEN DESCRIPTION OF THE RESOURCE'S VULNERABILITIES INDICATING THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE RESOURCE IS THREATENED OR ENDANGERED:

Describe the resource's vulnerabilities, here.

V. ATTACH A MAP OF RECOMMENDED RESOURCE BOUNDARIES THAT ALSO IDENTIFIES ANY MUNICIPAL OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES FALLING WITHIN THE PROPOSED RESOURCE BOUNDARIES.

Please return no later than December 31, 2011 to Heart of Georgia Altamaha RC, Attn.: Rafael C. Nail, 331 West Parker Street, Baxley, GA 31513, e-mail to brown@hogarc.org, or fax to (912) 367-3640. Call Rafael at (912) 367-3648 if any questions.

LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS

Environmental Organizations

<p>Altamaha Riverkeeper</p> <p>Coastal Georgia RC&D</p> <p>Conserve Georgia</p> <p>Environment Georgia</p> <p>Fort Stewart Environmental Division Directorate of Public Works</p> <p>Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4</p> <p>Georgia Conservancy</p> <p>Georgia Conservancy, Coastal Office</p> <p>Georgia Department of Natural Resources Sustainability Division</p> <p>Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Resources Division</p> <p>Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Nongame and Endangered Wildlife</p> <p>Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Division</p> <p>Georgia DNR, Nongame Conservation Section</p> <p>Georgia DNR, Region 6 Fisheries Management</p> <p>Georgia DNR, Region 6 Game Management</p> <p>Georgia Environmental Finance Authority</p> <p>Georgia Forestry Commission</p> <p>Georgia IBA Coordinator</p> <p>Georgia River Network, April Ingle</p> <p>Georgia River Network</p> <p>Georgia Wildlife Federation</p> <p>GSU - Applied Coastal Research Laboratory</p> <p>GSU - Department of Sociology and Anthropology</p> <p>Georgia DNR, Historic Preservation Division</p> <p>National Park Service Rivers, Trails, Conservation Assistance</p> <p>The Nature Conservancy</p>	<p>The Nature Conservancy, Southeast Georgia Conservation Office</p> <p>Nature Serve, Southeast Regional Office</p> <p>Ocmulgee Archaeological Society</p> <p>Ogeechee Riverkeeper</p> <p>Pine Country RC&D</p> <p>Satilla Riverkeeper</p> <p>Seven Rivers RC&D</p> <p>Society for Georgia Archaeology</p> <p>South Georgia Archaeological Research Team</p> <p>Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership</p> <p>Southeast Ecological Science Center</p> <p>Southeast Watershed Forum</p> <p>The Conservation Fund</p> <p>The Conservation Fund - Southeast Regional Office</p> <p>The Nature Conservancy, Moody Forest Natural Area</p> <p>UGA - Natural Resources Spatial Analysis Laboratory, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences</p> <p>UGA - Odum School of Ecology</p> <p>UGA - Office of Environmental Sciences</p> <p>UGA Laboratory of Archaeology</p> <p>UGA River Basin Center</p> <p>US EPA, Science and Ecologic System Support Division</p> <p>US Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services</p> <p>US Fish and Wildlife Service, Georgia Ecological Services Field Office</p> <p>USDA - ARS Southeast Watershed Research Laboratory</p> <p>USDA-NRCS</p> <p>Wilderness Southeast</p>
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LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Appling County Board of Commissioners	Chairman, Clerk, and Manager
City of Baxley	Mayor, Clerk, and Manager
City of Graham	Mayor and Clerk
City of Surrency	Mayor and Clerk
Bleckley County Commissioner's Office	Sole Commissioner and Clerk
City of Cochran	Mayor and Clerk
Candler County Board of Commissioners	Mayor, Clerk, and Administrator
City of Metter	Mayor, Clerk, and Manager
Town of Pulaski	Mayor and Clerk
Dodge County Board of Commissioners	Chairman and Manager
City of Chauncey	Mayor and Clerk
City of Chester	Mayor and Clerk
Eastman City Council	Council Chairman, Clerk, and Manager
City of Milan	Mayor and Clerk
City of Rhine	Mayor and Clerk
Emanuel County Board of Commissioners	Chairman, Clerk, and Administrator
City of Adrian	Mayor and Clerk
City of Garfield	Mayor and Clerk
City of Nunez	Mayor and Clerk
City of Oak Park	Mayor and Clerk
City of Stillmore	Mayor and Clerk
City of Summertown	Mayor and Clerk
City of Swainsboro	Mayor, Clerk, and Administrator
City of Twin City	Mayor and Clerk
Evans County Board of Commissioners	Chairman, Clerk, Administrator
City of Bellville	Mayor and Clerk
City of Claxton	Mayor and Clerk
City of Daisy	Mayor and Clerk
City of Hagan	Mayor and Clerk
Jeff Davis County Board of Commissioners	Chairman, Clerk, Administrator
City of Denton	Mayor and Clerk
City of Hazlehurst	Mayor and Clerk
Johnson County Board of Commissioners	Chairman, Clerk, Administrator
City of Kite	Mayor and Clerk
City of Wrightsville	Mayor and Clerk
Laurens County Board of Commissioners	Chairman and Administrator
City of Cadwell	Mayor and Clerk
Town of Dexter	Mayor and Clerk
City of Dublin	Mayor, Clerk, and Manager
City of Dudley	Mayor, Clerk, and Manager
City of East Dublin	Mayor, Clerk, and Administrator
Town of Montrose	Mayor and Clerk
Town of Rentz	Mayor and Clerk

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS – Continued

Montgomery County Board of Commissioners	Chairman, Clerk, and Manager
City of Ailey	Mayor and Clerk
City of Alston	Mayor and Clerk
City of Higgston	Mayor and Clerk
City of Mount Vernon	Mayor and Clerk
City of Tarrytown	Mayor and Clerk
City of Uvalda	Mayor and Clerk
Tattnall County Board of Commissioners	Chairman, Clerk, and Manager
City of Cobbtown	Mayor and Clerk
City of Collins	Mayor and Clerk
City of Glennville	Mayor, Clerk, and Manager
City of Manassas	Mayor and Clerk
City of Reidsville	Mayor and Clerk
Telfair County Board of Commissioners	Mayor and Clerk
City of Helena	Mayor and Clerk
City of Jacksonville	Mayor and Clerk
City of Lumber City	Mayor and Clerk
City of McRae	Mayor and Clerk
City of Scotland	Mayor and Clerk
Toombs County Board of Commissioners	Chairman, Clerk, and Manager
City of Lyons	Mayor, Clerk, and Administrator
City of Santa Claus	Mayor and Clerk
City of Vidalia	Mayor, Clerk, and Manager
Treutlen County Board of Commissioners	Chairman, Clerk, and Manager
City of Soperton	Mayor and Clerk
Wayne County Board of Commissioners	Chairman, Clerk, and Administrator
City of Jesup	Mayor, Clerk, and Manager
City of Odum	Mayor and Clerk
City of Screven	Mayor and Clerk
Wheeler County Board of Commissioners	Chairman and Clerk
City of Alamo	Mayor and Clerk
City of Glenwood	Mayor and Clerk
Wilcox County Courthouse	Chairman and Clerk
City of Abbeville	Mayor and Clerk
City of Pineview	Mayor and Clerk
City of Pitts	Mayor and Clerk
City of Rochelle	Mayor and Clerk

REGIONAL COUNCIL MEMBERS

Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission Regional Council (55 members)

REGIONAL COMMISSIONS

Three Rivers RC	Northeast Georgia RC
Southern Georgia RC	Middle Georgia RC
Coastal RC	Central Savannah RC
	River Valley RC

OTHERS

Multi-Region River Corridor Feasibility Study Mailing List (~60 entities)

(Tourism Boards, Chambers, River Outfitters, NPS, State Parks, Better Hometowns, etc.)

RIR Regional Hearing Notice

The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission has prepared a “Proposed Regionally Important Resources (RIR) Map” after review and evaluation of important natural and cultural resources within its Region, including careful consideration of received nominations from interested parties. This review and evaluation process and development of the “Proposed RIR Map” have been conducted in accordance with the Rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (Chapter 110-12-4).

The “Proposed RIR Map” may be explored on the Regional Commission website, www.hogarc.org. This map is a layered PDF map. The central focus of the Proposed RIR Map is protection of principal river and stream corridors and secondary drainage systems within the Region which form a green infrastructure network important for many reasons. It is expected that protection of these natural features and adjacent buffers will also protect significant archaeological, historic, social, tourism, recreational, and other resources, and provide much economic development, ecological, and other benefit to the Region and state.

Please be aware that the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission will hold a Regional Hearing on the “Proposed Regionally Important Resources Map” and the accompanying Regional Resource Plan on **June 20, 2012 at 10:00 a.m. at the HOGARC Office in Baxley, Georgia**. The HOGARC Baxley Office is located at 331 West Parker Street (U.S. 341 West) in Baxley.

The Regional Hearing will discuss the review and evaluation process resulting in the “Proposed RIR Map,” as well as the accompanying “Guidance for Appropriate Development Practices” and “General Policies and Protection Measures” which will likely be included in the Regional Resource Plan to be submitted soon to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. The purpose of this hearing is to brief regional stakeholders on the contents of the Regional Resource Plan, and provide an opportunity for stakeholders to make final suggestions, additions, or revisions.

APPENDIX B

RIR NOMINATIONS/COMMENTS RECEIVED AND ACTIONS TAKEN

RIR NOMINATIONS/COMMENTS RECEIVED AND ACTIONS TAKEN

The Regionally Important Resources nominations and comments received by the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission are displayed below in a table which describes the resource which was the subject of the nomination or comment, the nominating party name, and the disposition status of that nomination/comment with annotation of the decision reasoning. While not all resources nominated were included, it should be noted that does not mean they are not significant, or do not deserve protection. All of the resources are truly of at least local significance, and do contribute to community, and possibly regional, identity and sense of place. It is just that in the context of formal Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region Regionally Important Resources designation, in accordance with DCA Planning Rules and other included resources, it was decided the nomination as submitted did not warrant inclusion, at least in its entirety. Other related actions taken and the reasoning behind those decisions are also briefly discussed.

TABLE 4
HEART OF GEORGIA ALTAMAHA REGIONAL COMMISSION
REGIONALLY IMPORTANT RESOURCES (RIR) NOMINATIONS
AND COMMENTS RECEIVED AND ACTIONS TAKEN

NOMINATIONS

RESOURCE	NOMINATING PARTY	DISPOSITION/REASONS
Fort Stewart ACUB Parcels	Fort Stewart Fish and Wildlife Branch	The ACUB areas in Evans and Tattnall counties were included as a RIR in “Potential Conservation Opportunity Areas” Map Layer
Georgia Potential Conservation Opportunity Areas	Georgia DNR Wildlife Resources Division, Nongame Conservation Section	Included as a RIR in “Potential Conservation Opportunity Areas” Map Layer
Region Archaeological Resources (73 National Register Quality Individual Sites)	Society for Georgia Archaeology and the Georgia Council of Professional Archaeologists	Not included in its entirety because of significance context. Known significant archaeological sites were directly included as RIRs in “Cultural Resources” Map Layer, and many others indirectly in principal “Green Infrastructure Network” RIR Map Layer
City of Dublin Riverwalk and adjoining Dublin Commercial and Stubbs Park-Stonewall Street Historic Districts	City of Dublin	Not included as deemed of local significance; Riverwalk indirectly included in “Green Infrastructure Network” RIR Map Layer
Mill Creek (Wilcox County)	City of Rochelle	Not included as individual RIR; Was already designated as “Secondary Connector” on “Green Infrastructure Network” RIR Map Layer
Brogdon House	City of Uvalda	Not included as deemed of local significance

COMMENTS

RESOURCE	NOMINATING PARTY	DISPOSITION/REASONS
Consider National Register of Historic Places listings	Georgia DNR Historic Preservation Division	Not included in entirety because of significance context and many deemed of only local significance; “National Register Rural Landscapes” included as RIRs in “Cultural Resources” Layer
Consider vacant rail trails; use more than aquatic resources	Georgia DCA Office of Planning and Quality Growth	Local trails not included because of significance context and deemed local significance; More than aquatic resources were included in formal RIR designation (and more were intended, even in Preliminary RIR Map)