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Footnotes Issue #73: April 19, 2013

Settlement, but no Federal Funding for Savannah River Deepening

The future of the deepening of the 38 mile long Savannah Harbor Channel took another big step sideways on Wednesday. As reported in the [Savannah Morning News](#), parties that have been battling over deepening of the Savannah River from 42 to 47 feet have reached a settlement. The South Carolina River Maritime Commission and South Carolina DHEC have been on the same side as conservation groups, represented by the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC), in their efforts to challenge the project as proposed by the US Army Corps of Engineers and the Georgia Ports Authority.



Details of the settlement were reported in the [Bluffton News](#). Provisions include an additional \$33 million from the Georgia Ports Authority for additional environmental mitigation, including water monitoring and wildlife and wetlands protection. Georgia Department of Transportation will give 2,000 acres in Jasper County, SC to the Maritime Commission for wetlands protection. Most importantly, the settlement forces the Corps to demonstrate that the "bubblers," which they maintain will keep levels of dissolved oxygen at appropriate levels, will actually work before the dredging begins.

Of course, the big news on the deepening was the release of the federal budget last week and the [revelation that it does not provide the federal share of the estimated \\$652 million estimated cost](#). Instead, the budget had a placeholder \$1.28 million. Even if Georgia officials are willing to come up with the missing federal \$300 million, project boosters will also certainly have to wring the additional \$30 million or so in additional mitigation out of Georgia's budget.

Wiser heads might question the site selection of a project which will cause cost more for mitigating environmental damage than the cost of the 38 mile deep-dredge itself. And that figure doesn't include the estimated \$30-\$40 million dollars it will cost to build a back-up reservoir pond to protect Savannah's fresh water intake from anticipated salt water intrusion.

The worst thing is that the entire project is being conducted as if Savannah were on a different planet from the rest of the nation. What ports are appropriate for supersized ships, which are not? How many deep water ports do we need and where? How should all ports be interconnected, and how will they link up with the onshore transportation grid? The Corps admits it is not analyzing any of this, and they don't plan to. The impact on the American tax payer, environmental damage, and the undermining of America's transportation infrastructure caused by this failure will be enormous if not corrected soon.

Photo Contest

To help celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, the Georgia Chapter Wildlands Team is holding a photo contest! There will be a series of events over the next 18 months that will culminate in October 2014 in a [national conference in Albuquerque](#). For more details on how to enter, click [here](#), deadline is June 1st.



Sierra Club Meetings

Smart Energy Team Meeting, Monday, May 6, 7:00 p.m.

Robert Feria, rhferia@gmail.com

Wildlands Committee Meeting, Monday, April 15, 7:00 p.m.

Mike Murdock - Chair, murdock1@mindspring.com

RAIL, Monday, April 22, 7:00 p.m.

David Emory - Chair, david.emory@gmail.com

Fundraising Committee, Wednesday, April 24, 7:00 p.m.

Sybil Cypress, sybil.cypress@sierraclub.org

Other Events



Saturday April 27 - Ellicott Rock Wilderness Hike - Join our Wildlands and Wildlife Committee for a 7 mile moderate hike as we explore Georgia's only designated Wild and Scenic River, the Upper Chattooga, which forms the border of North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia in the middle of the Ellicott Rock Wilderness. Brent Martin, Southern Appalachian Regional Director for the Wilderness Society based in Sylva, NC, will provide an

overview of some of the threats faced in this area and how increased protection is needed to make sure that commercial encroachment and overuse do not occur. Wilderness areas are necessary protectors of wildlife, bio-diversity, and watersheds and provide critical habitat corridors that will be needed for species to adapt as our climate continues to change.

Saturday April 27 - LWV Legislative Review - The League of Women Voters of Atlanta-Fulton County invites you to The Doris Von Glahn Legislative Review on Saturday, April 27th at 11:15 am at the Buckhead Library at 269 Buckhead Ave. Atlanta, GA 30305. Issues covered include Budget, Environment, Health and Women's issues, and Education.



Monday May 6 - Support the Georgia Chapter at Bantam + Bidy - Bantam + Bidy is donating 10 percent of their daily proceeds after 5 PM to the Sierra Club. Located in Ansley Mall, 1544 Piedmont Rd in Atlanta, Bantam + Bidy provides a casual, family-friendly eatery featuring regional, all-natural pastured poultry. The restaurant offers breakfast, lunch and dinner daily.

Save the Date! Semi-Annual Chapter Retreat Oct. 4-6 - Every other year, the Georgia Chapter hosts a retreat with workshops, outings, wine tasting and all things Sierra Club! This year we'll be at Camp Wahsega near Dahlonega. Look for more details and registration information soon!



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