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## Georgia Chapter

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Footnotes Issue #82: March 21st, 2014

### Georgia Legislative Session Review

The 2014 Georgia General Assembly has finally ended, with several big wins for the environment and few losses. In the energy area, HB 874 The Solar Power Free-Market Financing and Property Rights Act, which would have opened up the solar market by allowing consumers to get solar for no money down, was placed in study committee. We expect it to be revived next year and if it passes, it will reverse current policy which requires the purchase of solar panels to involve full up-front payment and prevents the exclusive sale of solar panels by electric utility companies.



For transportation, HB 257, began as a total repeal of the tax breaks for zero emission (electric) vehicles, which Rep Martin said represents a potential outstanding liability to the state of \$18 million. In the end, the Senate was debating amendments and ran out of time, so Georgia keeps its \$5000 tax credit for consumers without a limit. A big win was the passage of HB 1009, which provides Clayton County with an opportunity to join MARTA by lifting the sales tax cap that prevented a vote by Clayton citizens to join the system as a full partner. In the past, MARTA provided bus service to areas in the County, but was Clayton was never a member, as are Fulton and DeKalb. With this bill approved, the Clayton County Commission could put a MARTA referendum on the ballot for voters to approve this November. Bus service restoration could become a reality as soon as next year in Clayton, expanding personal mobility options for thousands of citizens.

The Georgia Water Coalition, of which Sierra Club is a founding member, effectively opposed SB 213, the Flint River Drought Protection Act. As introduced, this legislation would have given the Director of the EPD the power to declare that any water added to the flow of a stream in an "augmentation" project, which was not defined, could be declared the property of the state, a step that would undermine the basic riparian rights principles of Georgia water law. Thanks to concerns raised by citizens to their elected officials, the bill was amended by limiting the practice of "augmentation" to a very specific set of circumstances, a very particular location, and no significant claim of title to large volumes of water.

The Environmental Protection Division (EPD) Emergency Response bill, HB 549 also passed, requiring that the EPD create a permanent emergency response function and train and coordinate local responders to deal with emergency releases of pollutants into GA's waters. This was once considered an ordinary function of the agency, but budget cuts prevented the program from performing. Several catastrophic spill events showed the need for a permanent program, and Rep. Burns stepped forward to lead the effort to make the program permanent.

Thanks to everyone who took action this Legislative Session, your voice made a difference!

### 2014 John Muir Outings Series

On most Saturdays in April, let's get outdoors together for the 2014 John Muir Outings Series. On these unique outings, you can learn about our current conservation campaigns and how you can help protect Georgia's environment. This year, we will kick off the series with a visit to coal plants in Coweta county near Chattahoochee Bend State Park. We've got trips planned to hike up the Ocmulgee Monument Expansion, as well as paddle down the



Withalacoochee River to see where the proposed Sabal Pipeline might cross the river. With another hike planned in the Chattahoochee National Recreation area, and one more river paddle against pollution on the Savannah River, there is plenty to do this April! Join us, along with our special guests, as we share our environmental visions of how to enable a grand and sustainable Georgia, one of which our founder would be proud. [Click here](#) for more information.

## Sierra Club Meetings

**RAIL Committee Meeting**, Monday, March 24, 7:00 p.m.  
David Emory - Chair, [david.emory@gmail.com](mailto:david.emory@gmail.com)

**Fundraising Committee Meeting**, Thursday, March 27, 7:00 p.m.  
Colleen Kiernan, [colleen.kiernan@sierraclub.org](mailto:colleen.kiernan@sierraclub.org)

**Smart Energy Committee Meeting**, Monday, April 7, 7:00 p.m.  
Cecilia Harris, [ceciliaharris@gmail.com](mailto:ceciliaharris@gmail.com)

**Wildlands Committee Meeting**, Monday, April 21, 7:00 p.m.  
Mike Murdock - Chair, [murdock1@mindspring.com](mailto:murdock1@mindspring.com)

## Other Events

**March 22 - Weather Ready Nation** - Join City Council President Ceasar Mitchell, Fulton County Commissioner John Eaves, the Atlanta Regional Commission Director, and thirty experts and specialists for Weather Ready Nation: Building Resiliency into Our Cities, Communities, Infrastructure to Mitigate the Impacts of Severe Weather. This event is specifically being held to provide bonfide recommendations for the Office of the Mayor, City of Atlanta and to Governor Nathan Deal's Severe Weather Task Force. Saturday, March 22, 2014 from 9am to 12 pm. To RSVP, [please click here](#).



**March 22 - Keystone XL Pledge of Resistance Training** - Greg Sutherland, a member of the Georgia Sierra Club's Savannah River Group, is planning an Atlanta #NoKXL Pledge of Resistance public assembly. This rally will be crucial as the Obama Administration nears a decision on approving the Keystone XL pipeline. By publicly preparing for coordinated action at State Department offices across the nation- with tens of thousands of activists committed to participating- we hope to put enough pressure on President Obama that he rejects Keystone XL. All participants should plan to attend a training before the action. The first training will be held at the Atlanta Friends Meeting House on Saturday, March 22, starting at 10am. Please [click here](#) to sign up.

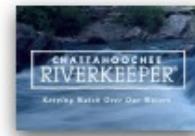
**March 26 - Sierra Club & Beer: Georgia's Wild Side** - Every other month, Sierra Club and Beer provides a space and great beer (from our friends at Marietta based Red Hare Brewing Company) for meeting like-minded people, while learning a little something new. There is even team trivia to make the night more interesting! This month, our guest speaker Kasey Sturm, President of the Board of Directors at Georgia Forest Watch, will be discussing Georgia's wilderness as we approach the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act! \$5 Suggested Donation for Beer. Please consider biking and [PLEASE RSVP HERE](#) so we are sure to bring enough brew for everyone!



**March 29 - League of Women Voters Doris Von Glahn Legislative Review** - The League of Women Voters of Atlanta-Fulton County invites you to The Doris VonGlahn Legislative Review Capitol Wrap. This is your opportunity to hear a review of what happened in Georgia's General Assembly 2014 from the experts. Alan Essig, Executive Director of the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute will discuss budget; Jennette Gayer of

Environment Georgia will provide an overview of environmental legislation; Tim Sweeney of the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute will cover Health Care Issues; and Sally FitzGerald, Legislative Observer for the League of Women Voters, will discuss education. For more information, [click here](#).

**April 12 - Sweep the Hooch** - Slots are already filling up for the Chattahoochee River's annual spring cleaning on April 12. It will be Chattahoochee Riverkeeper's fourth year hosting the event with partners Upper Chattahoochee Chapter of Trout Unlimited and the National Park Service. The multi-site cleanup will traverse some 60 miles and include 27 sites, many within the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area. More than 550 volunteers hauled 3.7 tons of refuse from the river in 2013. Find additional information, including how to register, please [click here](#).



#### April 12 - Red Hare Brewing, Atlanta Artists Benefit Art Show

- Red Hare Brewing is throwing a Benefit Art Show featuring local Atlanta artists. A portion of all proceeds will be donated to Furkids, Inc.. Ployd will be performing live, Mighty Meatball Food Truck onsite, several local artists will be displaying and selling their work, and

Furkids will be bringing their furry friends. \$10 will get you 6 sample tickets, brewery tours, and a souvenir pint glass. For more information, [click here](#).



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