



THE EDDY LINE

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Alligator Creek
By Suzanne Welander

It was a warm day in February as we stood mid-bridge gazing down at Alligator Creek's channel and access. Two concerned local residents pulled their car over to ask if we were in need of assistance. After learning our intentions, they proceeded to offer this helpful advice: "You don't want to paddle there. It's 35 miles until the next bridge! They call it Alligator Creek for a reason. So many 'gators in there. You'll never come out the other side. And it's 60 miles to the next bridge!!"

That checked all our boxes. We were going. The original plan had been to paddle the nearby Little Ocmulgee. With the USGS Little Ocmulgee gauge registering 8.1/630 cfs, its tributary, Alligator Creek, became an enticing option.

Scott Taylor of Three Rivers Outdoors agreed to run our shuttle after verifying our skill and experience. Alligator Creek is not for beginners. It's a busy and technical run that combines zippy current speed, dead trees, and tight turns.

Alligator Creek is more channel than swamp. This section snakes between clearly defined banks that cut through the surrounding bottomlands. True to its name, the creek provides a secluded habitat for alligators. One biggie slid into the water as we approached, letting us glide by silently overhead.

The creek was between 30 – 50' wide at this level—narrow enough to provide a rarely interrupted tree canopy overhead. Bluffs rise up to 30' on the left, a result of the ancient persistent eastward winds that also created the Ochoopee Dunes. Occasional pockets of lake-like sloughs flooded the open spaces where the bluffs receded from the river.

Thickets of 4' tall palmettos topped the left-side banks. A vertical wall of kaolin rose from
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(Alligator Creek, continued from page 1)

the creek at one point. In contrast, the topography on the right was comparatively flat.



Be warned that the potential for blockages forcing a portage is high. At this level, we were able to paddle around the approximately 10 blockages we incurred. A strong back ferry came in handy for avoiding the inconveniently located strainers often found immediately downstream of the obstruction.

Nearing the confluence with the Little Ocmulgee the channel stretches into straighter hallways sheltered by trees. It's here that the state purchased 3,000 acres of land in 2017 (in cooperation with the Nature Conservancy and others) to establish Alligator Creek WMA. The WMA borders the stream on the left for the remaining

1.3 miles to the confluence and another 2.1 miles beyond it on the Little Ocmulgee.

Practically no one has built a house near the banks of Alligator Creek. Several unmarked private access points, infrequent timberland, and deer stands are the only signs of modern human intervention throughout most of the run. That, and the innumerable yellow signs announcing the WMA boundary every 25'. Due to the limited time available for our trip, we opted to takeout on the Little Ocmulgee 0.4 miles upstream of the confluence rather



than paddle another 4.2 miles to the next downstream access at Lumber City.

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(Alligator Creek, continued from page 2)

That upstream paddle turned out to be half as long thanks to a sneak channel that permitted early entry to the Little Ocmulgee before the confluence and to the ample water flooding the Little Ocmulgee's bottomland forest. With the exception of one 30' stretch, we completely avoided the assertive current coming down the Little Ocmulgee in favor of a little ol' paddle through the woods in the general direction of the car.

Distance: 6.4 Miles. Includes 0.4 mile upstream paddle on the Little Ocmulgee

Gauge: USGS Little Ocmulgee

Level: 8.1'/630 cfs

Put in: Hwy 134 Springhill Church Road

Take Out: Sand Pit Road

Outfitter:

Three Rivers Outdoors

www.3riversoutdoors.net

Scott Taylor

912-594-8379

Alligator Creek WMA

<https://georgiawildlife.com/alligator-creek-wma>

-EL

Smoky Mountain Weekend—Sunday trip By Roger Nott

Heavy morning rains and Saturday's physically and emotionally strenuous trip culled our numbers to just Brad Keene and me showing up in a heavy rain Sunday morning. We ended up paddling 2-2 1/2 miles of the Nantahala "Bypass" downstream of Junaluska Road, where the fast dropping staff gauge read 1.7, a little below a recommended minimum but still reasonably passable. The going was pretty technical but pleasantly relaxed compared to the previous two days of intensive high water paddling. Here Brad runs a fun series of drops. - EL



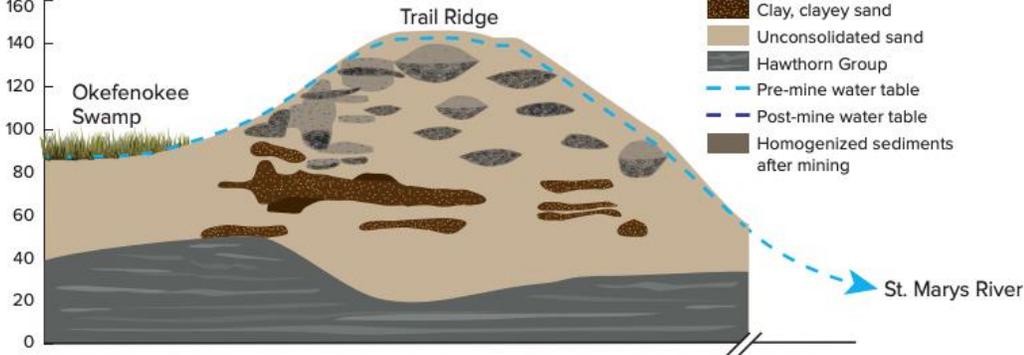
GCA welcomes paddlers from all races, genders, and sexual orientations. We will continue to strive to promote diversity among the paddling community and work to create a safe space for all to enjoy our paddling adventures.

IMPACTS OF TWIN PINES' PROPOSED MINING ON HYDROLOGY OF THE OKEFENOKEE SWAMP

BEFORE MINING

Elevation above sea level

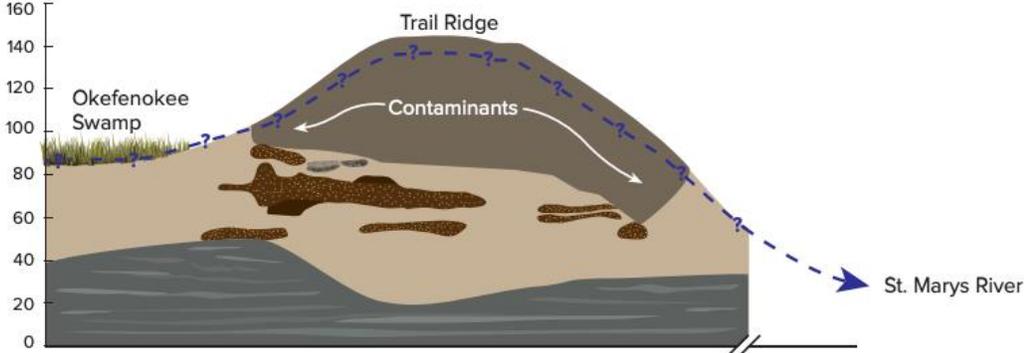
Feet



AFTER MINING

Elevation above sea level

Feet



Notes: Post-mining water table will vary based on a variety of factors: i.e., actual continuity between low permeability units, permeability of processed materials, recent rainfall, etc. Contaminants that would be released by mining have yet to be identified and quantified.

This diagram represents a general cross section of mining on Trail Ridge.

For more information, please contact
Bill Sapp
SELC Senior Attorney
bsapp@selcga.org



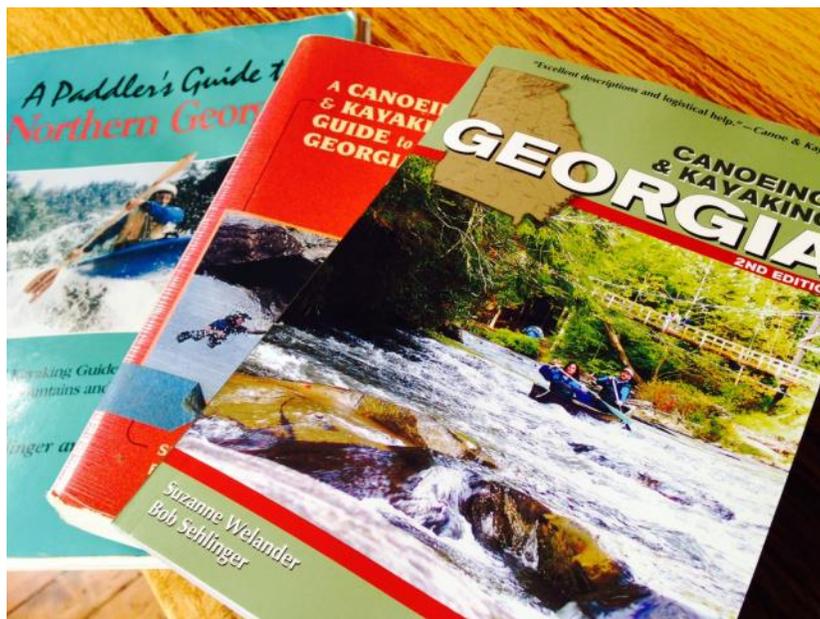
Why are we so concerned about the proposed Twin Pines mining project on the edge of the Okefenokee Swamp? Of course, there are all of the usual concerns of any industrial operation: noise pollution; light pollution (This is proposed as a 24 X 7 operation); air pollution and sedimentation from the mine and the roads accessing it. What is extraordinarily concerning about this mine though, is the hydrologic effects it could have on the swamp.

As you can see from the illustrations below, Trail Ridge forms the Eastern boundary of the swamp. It is what keeps the swamp water from flowing directly into the Atlantic Ocean. It also serves as a sieve that filters water flowing into the swamp from the East. The illustration above shows the potential impact of the mine.—EL

**Georgia River Guidebook to
Be Updated
By Suzanne Welander**

Work is underway to update Canoeing & Kayaking Georgia.

Please consider sharing your knowledge and experience. What streams should be added? Do you have any high resolution paddling photos that showcase a Georgia river? Anything you'd like to see updated, corrected, or added? Are you a pro when it comes to modern names for major features on the Ocoee? Contact Suzanne Welander at suzannewelander@gmail.com and spill the beans.



Photos of Middle and South Georgia waterways are particularly needed, especially of the Altamaha watershed.

The upcoming third edition will make the jump to full color photos and maps. Most other changes will improve accuracy and reflect changes in access, river trails, VMAs, place names, outfitters, etc. Watch for a couple of new waterways to be added.

GCA members have contributed a wealth of knowledge and experience to every generation of this guidebook, starting with the first books in the series published in 1980. Menasha Ridge Press will be publishing the new edition of Canoeing & Kayaking Georgia in 2022. Deadline for submissions is June 2021.—EL

KEEP YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS CURRENT

Each month numerous "copies" of the pdf version of *The Eddy Line* bounce back due to bad or outdated email addresses. If an email to you bounces back, you will be deleted from the recipient list until we get an updated email address.

What to Know Before You Go! (The Intangible Five) By Lisa Haskell

Spring is coming which means that the days will be warming up and people will be getting outside more. New boaters (and those that don't paddle during the winter) will all be getting their gear out so they can take advantage of the nicer weather and longer days. As you head off to the river there are some things that you should remember, both for yourself and for those paddling with you.

Just as we talk about needing a "handful" of things for paddling (boat, paddle, skirt, PFD, helmet – the Tangible Five) there is another "handful" of things we need to consider when paddling – the Intangible Five. The "Intangible Five" include: your run, your boat, your equipment, your frame of mind and your crew. These need to be considered before each run.

THE INTANGIBLE FIVE:

YOUR RUN:

This is the river you will be running - you need to know more about it than just its name and where to put in. You should know the character of the run, is it big and bouncy? Is it low flow and creekly? Does it have a large watershed? Is it prone to flashing? Where is the gauge in relation to the actual section of river being paddled? Are there any particular hazards? Is it narrow and prone to wood? How does the run change at higher water lev-

els? Increased water level and speed can change the entire character of the run (keeper holes, boils, strainers) which raises the class level and consequences, and requires faster reactions and better river reading. Its easy to get complacent about familiar runs. If you don't know the answers to these questions, consider doing some research or asking your friends/crew for information.

YOUR BOAT:

What boat should you take on this run? Some boats are more suited to certain runs than other boats. While experience and skill affect which boat is a good choice for a particular run, what you need to consider is YOUR experience and skill in comparison to the river YOU will be running. If it is a creekly, low volume river then perhaps a creek boat would be the best choice. If it has a lot of flat water, then perhaps a boat with some length would be a good idea. If this is an easy, familiar river then perhaps your play boat or slicey boat would be a good choice. If you only have one boat, and your boat is not a good match for the run, then perhaps this is not the time for you to run this particular section of river.

YOUR EQUIPMENT:

What will you use, wear and take with you on the river? If the water is still cold, do you have the right gear for it? Do you have a drysuit? Or a wetsuit with splash gear to keep you warm? Consider taking something
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(The Intangible Five, continued from page 6)

warm to drink with you or some way to make a fire. Is your PFD in good shape? Will it float you in big water which is always possible in the spring? Consider taking some overnight gear with you just in case. If you hand paddle, do you have gloves to keep your hands warm? Do you have a helmet? Is this run something that warrants a full face helmet? If it's going to be a very rocky run then think about protecting your face (unless your plan is to finance your dentist's vacation!). Be sure to take a throw rope and first aid kit with you as well as food and water. If it is going to be particularly cold or remote, consider running something below the top of your skill set to allow a safety margin.

YOUR FRAME OF MIND:

What is your frame of mind? How are you mentally, physically and emotionally? Are you stressed? Overworked? Over tired? All of these factors can affect how you paddle. They can affect your stamina, your coordination and the focus that whitewater can demand for a safe run. If you are particularly tired or stressed, then consider paddling a bit below the top of your skill set to allow a safety margin. You should also let your crew know if you aren't at the top of your game. Let them know that they might want to keep an eye on you or that you might not be as much help as usual. Always remember that it is okay to decide not to run something after looking at it or getting additional information. The fact that you drove to the river does not obligate you to run it - the river will still be there when you are ready for the run.

YOUR CREW:

The group you will be paddling with is your crew – you will be relying on them for safety, as well as camaraderie, and you need to know that they will have your back. You also need to remember that you are their crew. You need to be there for those you are paddling with. Consider taking some skills classes if offered (the best thing about paddling is that it is always possible to improve your skills or develop new skills). Consider taking a Swift Water Rescue class and CPR/First Aid. If you are new or less experienced, then you should let your crew know what you can help with or what your limitations are. If you have limited paddling experience but lots of medical experience, let them know. If you have a really good roll but don't read water all that well, let them know. Communication is key!

THE TAKE AWAY:

What I'm hoping people will take away from this article is the knowledge that there is a big difference between having skills and having experience. Skills are essential and will be needed to advance in the sport. However, there is no substitute for experience and the knowledge that is gained from years of paddling. Ultimately, the goal is to have both and end up with a long, safe paddling journey.—EL

TRIP AND EVENT SCHEDULE

- April 3rd & 4th - Coastal Georgia Kayaking
- April 4th—Slalom Clinic in partnership with Endless River Adventures
- April 10th - Nachoochee Hooch (Class I-I+)
- April 11th - North Georgia Wildcard Paddle (Class I-II)
- April 18th - Spring Membership Paddle at Wildwood - Upper Hooch with possible option of Wildwood to Mossy
- April 24th - Spring Wildcard Trip (Class II-III)
- April 25th—Slalom Clinic in partnership with Endless River Adventures

Please see the GCA Calendar for details, updates, and to sign up at www.gapaddle.com. For any questions or class suggestions, e-mail eddylineeditor@gmail.com.

To Volunteer To Coordinate Trips email Cruisemaster Terri Abbott: abbott.terri@gmail.com.

As usual, we need trip coordinators for all types of trips, from flatwater to Class 5 white-water. Our excellent trip schedule depends on the efforts of volunteers, so get involved and sign up to coordinate a trip on your favorite river today! The GCA needs YOU!

Thinking of joining a paddling trip?

When deciding to join a GCA trip, whether an “official” trip posted on the website, or a pop-up trip posted on the Facebook page, please keep the following bit of river etiquette in mind: **Always** check with the trip coordinator before inviting a guest to come along on the trip with you, especially if your guest is an inexperienced paddler. This is to insure the skill level of your guest matches the targeted skill level of the group. Many pop-up trips will not have safety boaters., and it’s considered rude to expect the other paddlers in the group to be responsible for an unexpected paddler. Please don’t put the trip coordinator in the uncomfortable position of having to turn someone away because their experience level doesn’t match that of the group.

KEY TO GCA SKILL LEVELS

Flat Water - no current will be encountered; safe for new paddlers.

Beginner - mild current, occasional Class I riffles; new paddlers can learn basic river techniques.

Trained Beginner - moving water with Class 1-2 rapids; basic strokes and bracing skills needed.

Intermediate - rapids up to Class 3; eddying and ferrying skills needed; kayakers need solid roll.

Advanced - rapids up to Class 4; excellent boat control and self-rescue skills required.

Address: 141 Railroad St
 Canton, Ga 30114
 Phone: (470) 292-6706
 Website: www.nomadicflowoutfitters.com
 Email: info@nomadicflowoutfitters.com
 Hours
 Monday-Wednesday: Closed
 Thursday: 11am-7pm
 Friday: 11am-7pm
 Saturday: 10am-7pm
 Sunday: 12pm-7pm



Nomadic Flow Outfitters is Atlanta's premier paddlesports retailer conveniently located just north of Atlanta in Canton, Ga along the beautiful river banks of the Etowah River. We offer a full service retail shop carrying all the best brands in the industry, rental/demo programs, paddling schools and guided trips. Our friendly and knowledgeable team is dedicated to serving our amazing paddling community and making paddling adventures more easily accessible for all. So whether you're looking for those relaxing float trips, fishing your local spot or chasing after the rush of whitewater our team at NFO is here to help you!

Keeping In Touch

To contact the GCA, write Georgia Canoeing Association, Inc., P.O. Box 611, Winston, GA 30187.

Groupmail: GCA maintains a group email list to help members share information of general interest. To sign up, send an e-mail to gcalist-subscribe@groups.io.

Website: Information about GCA, forms (including membership application and GCA waiver form), a link to the GCA Store and links to *Eddy Line* advertisers are all at <http://www.gapaddle.com>.

Facebook: Visit the GCA Facebook page for photos, video, trip reports, or to join an upcoming impromptu trip.

ALL ABOUT THE EDDY LINE

The Eddy Line, the official GCA newsletter, is available in pdf format. To subscribe, contact Vincent Payne at 678-343-5292 or vincent.payne9354@gmail.com, or mail your request to P.O. Box 611, Winston, GA 30187.

Submissions/Advertising: All submissions and advertising should be sent to *The Eddy Line*, at: EddyLineEditor@gmail.com.



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GEORGIA CANOEING ASSOCIATION, INC.

Post Office Box 611
Winston, Georgia 30187

[WE'RE ON THE WEB:]
www.gapaddle.com

The purpose of the GCA is to have fun and promote safety while paddling.

GCA is a member-operated paddling club with over 500 family and corporate memberships comprising more than 1500 Individuals. Canoeists and Kayakers of all ages and paddling abilities are equally welcome. Some of our mutual interests include whitewater river running, creeking and playboating, river and lake touring, sea kayaking, paddle camp outs and competition and racing activities. We espouse conservation, environmental and river access issues as well as boating safety and skills development. Group paddling, training and social activities of all kinds are conducted throughout the year thanks to the volunteer efforts of our many members and friends. Membership is NOT limited to Georgia residents.