GCA
GEORGIA CANOEING ASSOCIATION
P. O. Box 611, Winston, GA 30187

THE EDDY LINE

VOLUME 59 NO. 3 JULY 2024

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GCA Florida Trip

By, Lisa Haskell

Once again GCA will be venturing south for the MLK holiday weekend to paddle some of Florida's beautiful springs and rivers. We will be setting up our base camp near the Chassahowitzka River Campground and doing day trips from there. We will be driving down on Thursday, January 16, 2025 and paddling the next four days (Friday, January 17, 2025 – Monday, January 20, 2025). Potential paddling locations include (but are not limited to): Withlacoochee River, Chassahowitzka River, Ichetucknee Springs, Crystal River, Weeki Wachee River, Rainbow River, Silver River, Juniper Springs, Braden River, Hillsborough River, etc.

For several years we camped at the Chassahowitzka River Campground and met each morning in their main parking lot to get organized for the day's adventure. We will continue to meet in their parking lot each morning to group up and you are still welcome to camp there. If you choose to camp, you are responsible for making your own reservations. Their contact information and campground details can be found at http://www.chassahowitzkaflorida.com/.

ADDITIONAL LODGING OPTION:

As you know, it can be quite cold in Florida in January. In the past we have stayed at a campground but, after the weather we've had the last few years, I have decided that I am tired of being cold at night. Therefore, I have reserved the Chassahowitzka Hotel again for this year. The Chassahowitzka Hotel is located about one mile from the Chassahowitzka River Campground where we will be meeting in the morning. The Chassahowitzka Hotel is different from a lot of hotels because it is really a large house which has been converted into a hotel. They rent out rooms in the house but both levels have a common area where people can gather and visit. They have porches where people can also visit if the weather is nice. There are two bathrooms upstairs – one is designated for men and the other for women. There is also a very large dining room table near the kitchen. We are not allowed to use the kitchen to cook (we can use the microwave to heat things up), but they have someone who comes in each morning to fix a continental breakfast (included in the cost of the room). We usually eat lunch on the river and dinner out at a restaurant, so this works well. We will still meet at the campground parking lot in the morning to get organized for the daily trips. There were a few problems at the beginning of our stay last year, but they were due to new management. I have spoken with the new owner, and he has assured me that those issues have been resolved. Staying together at the hotel made it much easier to visit with the other trip participants and get

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(GCA Florida trip, continued from page 1)

to know them a bit better. I thought this was a nice benefit.

The hotel can sleep up to 21 people if we share rooms/beds and fill the hotel to capacity. The projected cost is around $300 per person - if we don't fill the facility completely the cost could be slightly higher but it shouldn't be
more than about $315 per person. This amount covers five nights lodging (Thursday – Monday nights) and includes a continental breakfast each morning.

As of right now, I have reserved the entire facility for five nights. If you are interested in staying in the hotel, please let me know as soon as you can so that I can put you on the list. I don't need a deposit now, but I will need to collect the money from you by Thanksgiving. You will be able to send me a check, use Venmo or Zelle.

You can use the links below to get more information and to see some pictures of the facility.

https://www.chazhotel.com/
https://lisahaskell.smugmug.com/Chassahowitzka-Hotel/n-NKDLdN

The first 21 people who say they want to stay at the hotel will get those spaces. If more than 21 people respond affirmatively I will start a waiting list.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: This is an official GCA trip. You will be expected to wear your PFD, not just have it in your boat. Also, this trip is for GCA members – not the general public. Please do not post this trip on other websites.

Please contact me, Lisa Haskell, by email at lshkayaker@gmail.com or by phone at (678) 858-2012 to register for this trip. Using the RSVP button on the website does not mean that you are signed up for the trip.

I hope to see you in Florida! - *EL*

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.

Chattooga River Clean-Up

By Roger Nott

Thanks to our hard-working crew of 7 who thoroughly cleaned GCA's adopted section, the last 3 miles of Chattooga Section III, from Thrifts Ferry to US Hwy. 76 and its access areas. Padding after cleaning on foot were Kevin McInturff and I in open Canadian canoes; kayakers Adam Barb, Brian Belke and Jim Chase; and Barb and Chris Kaumeyer and their dog Crusher, an enthusiastic but well-behaved Bizsla, in a raft.

We collected six large bags of trash and an assortment of large junk, including a paddle, which we returned to Southeastern Expeditions. Our cleanup was co-sponsored by American Rivers, which provided the trash bags, and the GCA, which supplied a large cooler of assorted beverages.

We had a humid, partly cloudy day, with a little initial rain, which brought the river at the USGS gauge up to 1.44, a fine level for a cleanup. We also enjoyed much playing and cooling off in the cool, clear river. Here Barbara recorded Chris and Jim enjoying a rope swing. Our only unplanned swim was taken by me running Bull Sluice! Fortunately we had already portaged the trash!

After the trip two paddlers had to rush off, but most of us feasted together at Humble Pie. I missed getting our usual group photo but recorded this of me and most of our booty.—*EL*

Visiting the Buffalo River in Arkansas

By Aine Hansen

What is this beautiful place that inspired the nation to create its first "national river" and assign it a "wild and scenic" designation? What might a person find there? And how can one coordinate a paddling trip to see it all?

The Buffalo River in Arkansas has a stunning, pristine beauty with vast limestone cliffs, shockingly clear water reminiscent of Florida springs, an abundance of wildlife, and extremely few signs of human development. Best of all, much of the river can be paddled by a relatively novice crew, though the most remote-feeling experience is reserved for those prepared to boat-in camp along the riverbanks. The Buffalo River became the first national river in the United States in 1972, with 135 of its 150 miles administered by the National Park Service (NPS) as it flows from west to east, eventually merging into the White River. Official wildlife observers at the park have recorded 55 species of mammals, 250 species of birds, and 59 species of fish, along with a many reptiles, amphibians, insects and other invertebrates, according to the NPS web site. An overhead perusal of Google satellite imagery confirmed its unspoiled and wild nature, and our team was sold on the trip.

Our crew of 9 paddled the Buffalo River the last week of April 2024. We had already planned to skip the whitewater section (Boxley) but when we started, we found the subsequent section (Ponca, mile 28) was too low to run, so we started 23 miles down at Pruitt and kayaked the last 100 miles of the river. We had planned for up to a 7-day trip but were off the river in four, despite a late start on launch day. Speaking to both the benefits of 14' boats and the persistent-though-gentle flow of the river at the "low but floatable" level, four of us hit personal records for longest distance paddled with 28 miles on day three, topped by going 32 miles on day four. Our mild push had been motivated by a forecast of thunderstorms, so we spent day five following a tip and checking out the incredible Blanchard Springs Caverns. The thunderstorms that day served us well. Ponca flooded overnight then came back down to boatable levels, so we returned on day six to catch the first 10 miles of rapids and visit Hemmed-in Hollow Waterfall, the tallest waterfall between the Rockies and the Appalachians. The crew: Kelly Harbac, Diane Windham, Susan Thompson, Angi Hansen, Kathy Adamo, Carol Proctor, Karen Heath, Charles Geis, and Jonathan Mann, with an honorable mention and immense gratitude to gracious human and shuttle-driver extraordinare Brannen Proctor.

I couldn't believe how much beauty we saw around every corner, the entire length of the river. I had heard that the bluffs between Ponca (mile 28) and Kyle's Landing (mile 39) were the most spectacular, and I might prioritize that section if you can only fit one day on the river since it also has more waves, but spectacular bluffs were visible throughout the entire length. This was true even during the middle third, which I had feared would be more bland.

Hemmed-in Hollow waterfall (mile 36) was a straightforward, mostly-flat hike about a mile from the river, most easily spotted because of all the boats parked there. Its 209-foot drop was spectacular, and robust after a day of rain—we had been warned that it dries up completely at times. It's also accessible via by road, though that hike is considered challenging.

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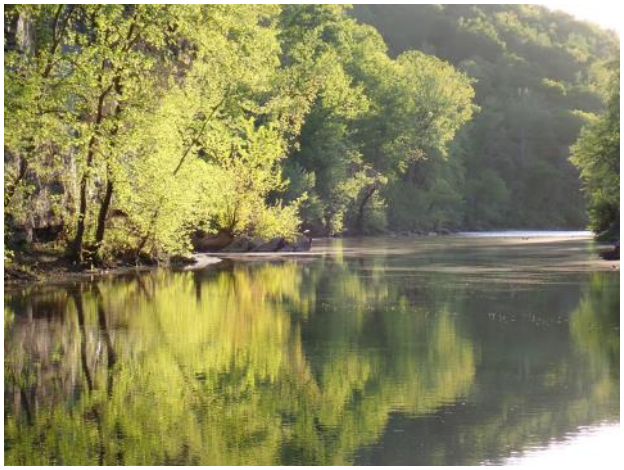
(Buffalo River, continued from page 4)

Partial caves were occasionally visible the length of the river, with some notable ones near Skull Bluff (mile 77) that allowed boating in one end and out the other.



The water was delightfully clear most of the time (except during and after flood stage), and turquoise when deeper. I had thought that was a fluke in Google Maps Satellite view, but NPS says it's sunlight reflecting off limestone in the water (specifically, limestone as it's breaking down into calcium carbonate crystals). And the mist rising off the water each morning felt positively magical.

In addition to the gorgeous scenery, we saw 20 elk, river otters (transporting branches!), dozens of bald eagles, several rare golden eagles, fox, mink, a deer crossing the river, fox squirrels, beautiful zebra swallowtail butterflies, cliff swallows, hawks, osprey, kingfishers, turkeys, vultures, brown bats, and turtles, then were serenaded at night by whippoorwills, barred owls, and coyotes. One member of our crew would occasionally drop in a fishing line then hurry to catch up with the other kayaks, and still managed to catch and release roughly 10 fish with his very intermittent efforts, including bass, gar, bluegill, and trout.

Generally speaking, spring is the best time for decent water levels for a longer trip; the top sections tend to dry up over the summer. I found the most useful gauges to be on the Buffalo Outdoor Center "Current Buffalo River Levels" page, which loads all 6 USGS gauges into a single page and adds labels to the different levels – "very low," "low but floatable," "moderate," high - experienced floaters," and "flood."

Sometimes outfitters over- or under-estimate what a crew can do, but having boated the river, I 100% agree with their assessments. I had thought "very low" might be doable for those of us who run the Upper Hooch at 1.3' but it really wasn't; we saw that we would be dragging boats over pebbles for 20-50 yards at a time. Hard pass. "Low but floatable" was precisely that. Water reading skills were immensely valuable, as we'd paddle through 50 yards of shoals a mere 12" deep before water levels deepened again. When we returned to Ponca post flood, the gauge was on the line between "moderate" and "high - experienced floaters" and the bouncy waves were reminiscent of much of the Lower Nantahala. That section was relatively crowded with rec boaters, and accidental swims abounded though we didn't see anything traumatic despite the occasional shrubs in the river. I do absolutely recommend a helmet if boating that section of the river at that level, even though our own crew had dry hair days. I should caveat that at "low but floatable" levels there were occasional turns with deeper water, and often a strainer on the outside of the curve. The strainers were generally easy to avoid at this level, but it's still helpful to keep an eye on your crew and provide support for any newer boaters. When stopping for a break or overnight, locals recommend marking the water line using a stick as a "flag pole," then adjusting it periodically when the level changes. This makes it easy to see whether the water is rising or falling. They told us that chocolate-milk-colored water means flood waters coming from upstream; if you see it it's best to exit for high land, and not resume boating until levels are dropping again.

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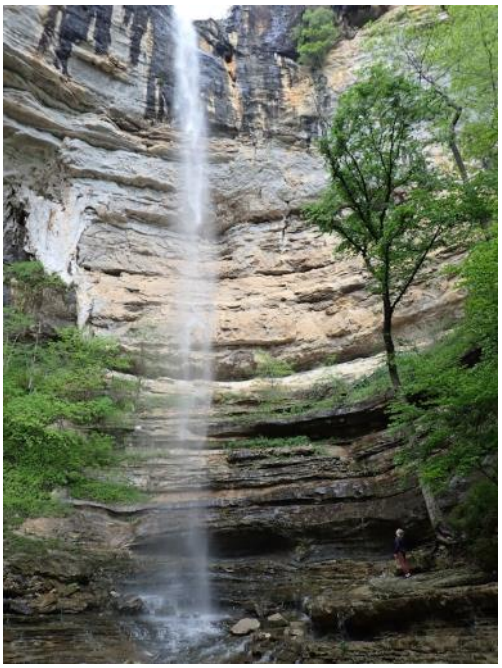
(Buffalo River, continued from page 5)

I created a list of the official NPS campsites, mileage, and whether each had water, bathrooms, vehicle access, and/or camping. Although water is important (more on that in a moment) and bathrooms quite useful, I'd actually recommend against camping at those sites. They're often a slight distance from the river, tend to fill with people, and the only night we spent at an official site we had multiple hunters driving past our tents at 5 a.m. with booming music. All our other campsites were blissfully remote and serene, with zero concerns about people stopping their vehicles near our gear at the shoreline while we tried to sleep. Camping is legally allowed anywhere on the river, as long as you're at least one-half mile away from an officially designated site.



In terms of gear tips, a sleeping mat is nearly essential since most beaches have pebbles rather than sand. Tents work well; hammocks are hit and miss depending on the site. You do need to bring a trowel and decomposable wipes to handle bathroom needs, though semi-regular river flooding means the dirt / sand is easy to dig. It's worth noting that we saw humans at each of the camp sites as we paddled past, but otherwise almost no one else on the water downstream of Pruitt.

We brought three days' water each, since sometimes there were 30-mile gaps between sites with water. I was also surprised to find that campsites with water didn't place the spigots near the river. At Tyler Bend (mile 94) one of our crew had a planned early departure, and the gracious Brannen actually drove us two miles to the spigot so we could refill water bottles. Without his help we would have likely skipped that site, even though it was one of the more developed ones. If you plan to use them, I strongly recommend scouting water refill spots prior to launching your trip. One can optionally bring a water filter instead, but it's extremely hard to find information about current levels of heavy metals in the water—there are abandoned mines upstream from the river, and the government spent tens of millions of dollars in 2010-2020 to address environmental issues on the river (mercury, lead, pesticides, PCBs, PAHs, etc.), but it's remarkably difficult to find any information on current levels of contaminants. Water filters will remove bacteria and sometimes viruses, but typically not these other contaminants. Consider bringing extra water, scouting the campsite spigots, and the relative risk of using a filter for refills. Personal-use test strips for heavy metals are available on Amazon, though you'll need to make sure you have adequate water intake regardless of the results they give you.

Limited cell service was available from Tyler Bend (mile 94) to Gilbert (mile 99), but not before or after. That was enough for us to see a forecast of "gusty thunderstorms, flooding downpours, hail, damaging wind gusts, and an isolated tornado" as well as the reality that the forecast was changing quickly—the anticipated high temperature dropped by 10 degrees overnight. Although we had 2 other people on our team with InReach for emergencies, we ended up relying heavily on Jon's Zoleo device to receive text messages from a friend with the latest weather updates each morning. These forecasts absolutely influenced our paddling decisions for the better, and I strongly recommend this for any paddling expedition in the area. Locals suggest that any trip to the Buffalo should include a Plan A, B, C, D, and E, and we saw for ourselves why that

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was the case. Prior to the trip, we also found various Buffalo River Facebook groups especially helpful for gathering current intel and advice.

As mentioned above, pay attention to the continually-changing local weather forecasts, and be prepared for it to vary by 10-15 degrees in either direction. One evening the forecast low had held steady at 42°F but we woke to find ice and frost on our gear, and all wet socks frozen solid. A flood and thunderstorms did materialize on day 5 as predicted by the day-before weather forecast, though they hadn't been in the forecast prior to getting on the water. It's hard to generalize from just one trip, but it seemed the day-before forecasts were fairly accurate, but the week-before forecasts significantly less so. Awareness and caution are useful on every kayak camping trip, but a communication device to get updates mid-trip proved to be immensely valuable.

If you have spare time before or after a trip, we found these local attractions well worth a visit:

Eden Falls in Lost Valley – located a couple of miles north of the put-in at Ponca, this is a mild hike with lovely waterfalls plus a pretty incredible waterfall inside a cave for those who have good knees. (No belly crawling required, but it does narrow to 2' tall and 15' wide so you'll crabwalk a lot.) A headlamp and/or bright flashlight are recommended for spotting and then lighting up the waterfall for photos.

Blanchard Springs Caverns – this stunning cavern in a national park is absolutely spectacular. Be sure to visit the nearby Blanchard Springs and Mirror Lake in the park. This is located southeast of the Buffalo City takeout (mile 154), so best to do before or after the rest of your trip, unless using it as a rainy-day detour.

Hemmed-in Hollow Falls – mentioned above, this is near the Ponca section of the river, and best to do after a rain since it dries up at other times. It's about a 1-mile hike from the river, or a strenuous 2.5-mile hike from the road (that a ranger described as "feels like an 8 mile hike").

Although the Buffalo River is a 10-hour drive one way from Atlanta, it's well worth the drive and a multi-day visit for boaters from Georgia. In 2023 it had a surprising 1.5 million visitors, so this national treasure is well worth checking out before it becomes even more well known. - *EL*

Bucket List Trip on the Buffalo River

By Karen Heath; photos by Aine Hansen

My part of the Buffalo trip started way back when my children were in Junior High (~1994). They went to a summer church camp and canoed part of the Buffalo River. When I retired, it was still on my bucket list. When Angi asked me to join the group, I didn't even have to think about it. It took the group a year of planning and gathering information because we wanted to do 130 miles of the river from Ponca to Buffalo City. It's not a hard river. At normal levels it's only max class 1+ to II-. The only things we had to worry about were strainers and storms which could raise the level of the river way past flood stage in less than 12 hours.

Let's talk about the fun parts.

We planned to get on at Ponca but the river was too low so we put in at Pruitt. We got to see some amazing bluffs! The bluffs are formed by gently folded sandstone, shale, chert-dolomite, and limestone. It's very similar to the Karst formations in Florida but here the rain and running water produced HUGE bluffs. You can see faults and folds in the rock which make the bluffs even more interesting. In 1972, the Buffalo River was named as the first National River. It flows freely for all of its 135 miles. It is one of the few remaining undammed rivers in the lower 48 states.

Around every corner were a new series of bluffs reaching up to 550 feet high! Big Bluff (Goat trail) is the tallest sheer bluff face found between the Rocky Mountains and the Appalachians. One more thing that is the tallest between the Rockies and Appalachians is the Hemmed in Hollow waterfall! It was only a one mile hike from the river to the waterfall and worth every step! Pictures don't do either of these features justice.

We camped along the river on gravel bars or sand bars. The gravel bars were beautiful but if you didn't have a good pad under the sleeping bag, you didn't get a good night's sleep. The first morning was cold. There was ice on the cockpit cover I put on my kayak to keep critters out of my boat. I didn't want to have to walk on water to get away from any creepy crawly (mouse, snake, tick). By the way, the only thing my children complained about from their trip long ago were the ticks. Arkansas is known for its ticks so beware. I sprayed my tent and sleeping bag and the outside of the bottom of my pants with Permethrin and I only had 3 or 4 by the end of 3 days. I tried as much as possible to stay out of the woods or any grass taller than 6 inches.

I got out at Tyler Bend with one other person and the rest paddled all the way to the confluence of the Buffalo and the White Rivers. The day after I got out, there was a rain event (Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Arkansas had tornados!) which raised the level at Ponca (way upstream) to more than flood stage. After the rest of the group made it to Buffalo City, we hurried up

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(Bucket List Trip on the Buffalo, continued from page 8)

stream to a hotel in Harrison so we could paddle that first leg which had been too low. From Ponca to Kyles Landing was amazing!! Now the river was still very high, but just below flood stage. The river was moving so fast that we did that 10 mile section twice as fast as we did any of the others and we hardly had to paddle! We saw a few strainers but they were easy to avoid. We hiked to Hemmed in Hollow and saw the most stunning bluffs and rock formations.

Will I go back? Absolutely! I only took a little over 500 pictures and I want to take more next time
Some highlights I saw on the trip: Skull Bluff, Hemmed in Hollow waterfall, Eden Falls, lots and LOTS of Eagles, Lots of bluffs, Great blue herons and so many more things not named.—*EL*

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**.

TRIP AND EVENT SCHEDULE

Please see the GCA Calendar for details, updates, and to sign up at www.gapaddle.com.

August 10-11: Hand paddling clinic

August 31: Hiwassee River, Powerhouse to Reliance—contact Carol Proctor, crproctor11@gmail.com or 404-597-2128

September 1: Hiwassee River, Powerhouse to Reliance—contact Carol Proctor, crproctor11@gmail.com or 404-597-2128

We need trip coordinators for all types of trips, from flatwater to Class 4 whitewater. 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!

GUIDE TO ACA SKILL LEVELS (KAYAK):

Level 1: ***Flat water:*** Ability to control the boat on flat water, moving the boat forwards, backwards and sideways; ability to turn the boat.
Level 2: ***Up to Class I rapids:*** Efficient forward paddling, ability to stop the boat, ability to paddle in reverse with reasonabile control, ability to use sweep strokes to turn on the move, ruddering, low braces, eddy turns, peel outs, forward ferrying, side draws.
Level 3: ***Moving water with class I-II rapids:*** all Level 2 skills, plus reverse ferries, C-turns, S-turns, low and high brace to prevent capsize, the ability to turn on the move using edging and bow draws.
Level 4: ***Moving water with class II-III rapids***: all Level 3 skills, plus the ability to surf and the ability to perform a safe and effective roll from a non-setup position in class II-III water.
Level 5: ***Moving water with class III-IV rapids***: all Level 4 skills, plus the ability to utilize a variety of draw strokes, ability to navigate rapids using a variety of strokes and edge management, ability to use surface features and maintain angles while ferrying, ability to enter, exit and sustain surfs with control in both waves and holes, ability to blend strokes during maneuvers while maintaining safe, efficient and effective technique in challenging conditions a safe and effective roll from a non-setup position in class III-IV water.

Thank you to our sponsors/partners

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.

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.

The Eddy Line, © 2024, is published monthly as the official newsletter of the Georgia Canoeing Association, Inc., publication address: 9354 Grapevine Drive, Winston, GA 30187.

THE EDDY LINE

GEORGIA CANOEING ASSOCIATION, INC.

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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.