



Club Fostered Stewardship Grant Report

2019

Sponsored by  **L.L.Bean**





Club Fostered Stewardship Program assists local, regional paddling organizations

Since 2002, the ACA has partnered with L.L. Bean to sponsor the Club Fostered Stewardship (CFS) Program. The CFS Program provides funding to local and regional paddling clubs and organizations that undertake stewardship projects on waterways in their area. The purpose of the program is to encourage paddling clubs to take an active role in protecting and improving the nation's waterways.

CFS grants are available for projects that utilize volunteers in efforts to protect, maintain or restore recreational waterways, provide for or improve public access, or enhance safe navigation. Eligible projects include cleaning up waterways, clearing in-stream safety hazards, maintaining access areas, erecting signs and controlling erosion, establishing and maintaining paddle trails, acquiring threatened access points, and providing sanitary facilities. Grant amounts range from \$100 to \$1,000.

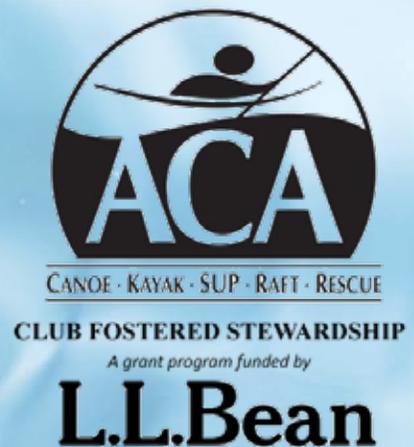
Past projects receiving CFS grants have included:

- Removing heavy debris and trash from rivers and bays in numerous locations throughout the U.S.
- Improving access for local paddlers
- Establishing water trails
- Water quality monitoring
- Environmentally sensitive woody debris removal
- Riparian buffer restoration and improvement
- Environmental education and outreach programs

The ACA is proud to be able to help local paddling clubs and organizations improve their waterways and make this world a better place to paddle! Through funds provided by L.L. Bean, the ACA's CFS Program has provided nearly \$160,000 to over 175 different stewardship initiatives since its inception. With the continued support of L.L. Bean, the ACA can continue to support paddling clubs and grassroots organizations around the country in their efforts to care for our waterways. For more information, please visit www.americancanoe.org/LLBean_CFS_Grant.

In 2019, the CFS Program funded 13 projects run by the following organizations:

- Boardman River Clean Sweep
- Clinton River Watershed Council
- Guardians of the West Fork River Watershed
- Louisville Area Canoe & Kayak
- Northern Forest Canoe Trail
- Paddles 4 Conservation
- Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy
- Sugar Island
- Team River Runner
- Tennessee Scenic River Association
- Tennessee Valley Canoe Club
- Upper Oconee Watershed Network
- Vermont River Conservancy





About the American Canoe Association

Founded in 1880, the ACA is a national nonprofit organization serving the broader paddling public by providing education related to all aspects of paddling; stewardship support to help protect paddling environments; and sanctioning of programs and events to promote paddlesport competition, exploration and recreation. The ACA is the National Governing Body (NGB) for the Olympic paddlesports of canoe slalom and canoe sprint and the Paralympic sport of Paracanoe.

The ACA believes it is our role to:

- Provide the general public with FUN paddlesport opportunities;
- Make paddling education and instruction accessible;
- Improve access to all paddling venues;
- Expand paddlesport to people of all abilities and to the underserved;
- Influence stewardship issues and public policy that affect paddlers and the paddling experience;
- Promote paddlesports competition at the local, regional and national levels;
- Create strategic alliances with clubs and other organizations that represent the outdoor experience in order to expand awareness and knowledge of paddlesport;
- Communicate the benefits of canoeing, kayaking, rafting and stand up paddleboarding as healthy lifetime recreation activities; and
- The heart of the ACA is the people who paddle, cherish and protect the rivers, lakes, streams, bays and oceans of the United States and beyond.

The ACA has more than 30,000 members, and 300 paddling clubs and affiliated organizations. The ACA provides sponsorship and insurance for over 4,000 events each year, including 200 races. The ACA education program has an estimated outreach of 800,000 people a year. ACA members reside in all 50 states and over 35 countries worldwide.

For more information, please visit: www.americancanoe.org.

Boardman River Clean Sweep



The [Boardman River Clean Sweep](#) has been the recipient of several ACA - LL Bean CFS grants in the past. Much of the organization's success for the past 15 years is directly due to these grants. With the ACA's help, Boardman has grown from doing one annual river clean-up event to doing a record 55 projects last year on 20 different rivers and at many illegal streamside dumping sites.

About the Project

This year, the Boardman River Clean Sweep concentrated on getting more fishing-related litter out of the local rivers.



"We targeted the Boardman, Betsie and Lower Manistee rivers, which endure heavy steelhead and salmon fishing pressures. People who fish for steelhead and salmon use heavy monofilament lines, metal swivels, steel wire leaders, treble hooks and lead sinkers. When these lines get snagged in a tree or on an underwater log, they do not break easily and often long pieces of line with all the hardware is left in the river to snare birds, fish, other wildlife, tangle around or injure swimmers, get wrapped around powerboats props, and hook passing paddlers," said Norman Fred, chairman of the Boardman River Clean Sweep.

The organization used grant monies to build 10 monofilament recycle bins and place them in locations on the Lower Manistee River and on the Boardman River. These were in locations owned by the U.S. Forest Service, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Grand Traverse County and the City of Traverse City, Michigan.

"We were able to get permission to place 10 of these bins. We were unable to get permission for the Betsie River. But we feel now that we can show how successful these have been in the locations where we have placed them, we can get permission to place one there next year," added Fred.

When the bins were being placed, anglers were happy that someone finally was doing this, and they have stepped up to use them and help maintain them. On the Lower Manistee, the bins are being used extensively.

The Boardman River Clean Sweep also used grant monies to do a cleanup on the Lower Manistee River on July 20.

"It was the worst day we have ever spent on any river anywhere," recalled Fred. "It was cool and thunder was in the area when seven of us launched, but in just a few minutes, the rains came and in the next three hours it rained more than 6 inches with constant lightening, thunder, wind and pounding rain.

"One volunteer described it as a 'Wrath of God' storm. We took shelter under our canoes for a while but finally had to gather up our courage and head out in the storm. We managed to take out 20 pounds of litter from the river, but our hearts were not in it. We wanted to get off the river before someone got killed," said Fred.

"We all survived and are none the worse for the experience. We did learn a few valuable lessons and we will be more careful the next time," he concluded.

Clinton River Watershed Council



The [Clinton River Watershed Council](#) is a 501(c)3 environmental nonprofit organization, located in southeast Michigan, whose mission is to protect, enhance, and celebrate the Clinton River, its watershed, and Lake St. Clair. The council was formed in 1972 as an association of local governments and reorganized as a nonprofit in 1994.

For more than 47 years, CRWC has served to coordinate the efforts of local governments, businesses, community groups, and individuals in improving water quality, promoting innovative watershed management techniques, providing public education, and celebrating the river as a natural and recreational resource.

About the Project

Keeping it Clean is one of CRWC's flagship volunteer programs that engages citizens of all ages in trash clean-ups throughout the Clinton River watershed and along the Lake St. Clair shoreline. Organizing what CRWC affectionately calls "Trash Runs," is a multifaceted process that relies heavily on support services from local liveries to help get hundreds of volunteers into donated rental canoes or kayaks, paddle the river collecting trash and debris, and doing it safely. Paddling cleanups began in June and will continue through September.

The CFS grant funds were used to purchase critical safety equipment and help fortify water vessels that

are commonly used for all CRWC Keeping it Clean events. Volunteer data is tracked via sign-in sheets, waivers, and program tracking excel spreadsheets. This data is used for reporting to local communities and government agencies as part of CRWC's Stormwater Education Program.



Guardians of the West Fork River Watershed



Founded in 1997, [Guardians of the West Fork Watershed](#) is a volunteer 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to the preservation and improvement of the ecological integrity of the West Fork River, its tributaries, and its watershed.

It monitors and assists agencies in monitoring biological, physical, chemical, and cultural characteristics of the watershed to identify sources of degradation and suggest their elimination. It also publicizes the status of the watershed and encourage education and recreational enjoyment of the watershed.

About the Project

The Guardians held its annual Clean the Fork event April 6, 2019,

as part of West Virginia's Make It Shine Program. The cleanup was in preparation for the annual Float the Fork, a popular community paddling event scheduled for June 1. The goal of the Clean the Fork event is to clean as many access sites as possible depending on the amount of volunteer participation. In 2018, eight access sites were cleaned during this single-day event.

This year's cleanup took place along the water trail starting at the Stonewall Jackson Dam and proceeding downstream through Lewis and Harrison county areas in West Virginia. A second event will be held at the historic Jackson's Mill site focusing on tire

fishing. This section of the river is estimated to contain hundreds of discarded tires. This event will be scheduled when the water temperature and levels are suitable for entry – sometime in the June, July or August 2019 timeframe.

Flat water paddling is a growing water recreation activity in the area. In 2016 three low head dams were removed restoring the natural flow to a 40-mile section of the river. This grant will help to improve the Water Trail and make the visitor experience a positive one. The goal is to make the West Fork River a destination place and positively impact the local economy.



Louisville Area Canoe and Kayak Club



The Louisville Area Canoe and Kayak (LACK) club is an informal group of kayakers in Kentucky. The group conducts cleanups of Harrods and Beargrass creeks. In 2018, the club helped with five cleanups involving 20-30 paddlers combined). Some events were only for club members and volunteers, while others included members of the Beargrass Creek Alliance and local youth groups. A local canoe and kayak outfitter offers free rentals to volunteers who want to participate but do not own kayaks.

About the Project

Since Harrods Creek is such a popular recreational waterway, most of the group's past focus has been there. However, Beargrass Creek is in rather poor shape and needs much attention. During previous cleanups, large and hazardous items were discovered, including a 50-gallon drum of windshield washing fluid, a submerged picnic table, and several tires and rims. Because of its poor appearance, many paddlers avoid Beargrass Creek as a recreational waterway.

Another area in need of attention is Towhead Island, which is near Beargrass Creek on the Ohio River. Previously, the island was used by a local company for barge parking. That company is no longer in business and occupancy has returned to the City of Louisville. The island

is a great location for bird watching and community members are working to rid the island of invasive species and to construct an observation deck for public use. Cleanups for Towhead Island will be combined with the Beargrass Creek cleanups if enough volunteers can be arranged.

Cleanup event sponsor, Troy Eskridge, is a high school teacher at Atherton High School. He uses the events to discuss the importance of water conservation with students. The school where he teaches has been certified as a full IB school. Part of the certification includes mandatory community service for all students. Eskridge has been involving urban high school students, most of whom have never been on the water, in the waterway cleanups. His goal is to conduct at least three cleanups this summer. He's already completed one cleanup at Beargrass Creek.

Several students from Atherton High School helped and the group collected a lot of trash that day. A second cleanup took place at Harrods Creek.

This event was organized in conjunction with the Louisville Area Canoe and Kayak club.

"Harrods Creek was in better shape than Beargrass. We had 12 people participate, many who had never been on the water before. Louisville Kayak Company donated free kayak rentals to those who participated in the cleanup," said Eskridge.

Prior to kicking off one cleanup, volunteers gathered at the Louisville Community Boat House. Guest speakers from Kentucky Waterways Alliance and Beargrass Creek Alliance spoke to them about the importance of urban waterways and the role of Beargrass Creek as a recreational waterway. A discussion followed covering water safety and how to work together in the voyager canoes.



Northern Forest Canoe Trail



The [Northern Forest Canoe Trail](#) works to protect and steward its water trail and foster community vitality to promote inspiring outdoor experiences in the Northern Forest Region. Completed in 2006, the Northern Forest Canoe Trail is a 740-mile water trail from Old Forge, New York, to Fort Kent, Maine. The trail follows traditional travel routes used by Native Americans, settlers and guides.

The NFCT's program areas include:

- Trail Stewardship: Maintaining and providing access to the trail.
- Trail Experiences: Providing opportunities for paddlers of all ages to experience the trail. Partnering with communities to promote sustainable tourism.

About the Project

This summer the nonprofit organization completed two portage trail stewardship projects along the Northern Forest Canoe Trail in

New York's Adirondack Park: Raquette Falls Carry (Raquette River) and McCasland Bridge Carry (Saranac River).

The Raquette Falls Carry is a 1.5-mile portage around two sets of waterfalls along a popular canoe route. A spur trail provides a scenic return route for those completing the carry, providing views of two sets of falls and numerous cascades.

Work along the spur trail involved a 200-foot re-route to protect a wetland, trail benching and erosion control, the placement of approximately 12 stone steps, and the installation of wayfinding signage. Community volunteers completed the project during a weekend waterway work trip led by the NFCT's four-person stewardship June 28-30. This was the second phase of a two-year project along the carry.

The McCasland Bridge Carry along the Saranac River serves as a take-

out for day paddlers journeying downstream from Saranac Lake as well as a portage around a low farm bridge. The carry has never been formally maintained and is suffering from erosion.

To protect water quality and improve access to the public, on July 5-7, NFCT installed a set of 10 six-foot-wide timber-cribbed steps. Constructed out of 6x8 cedar, the steps are anchored with rebar, backfilled with gravel, and armored with riprap size rock. The steps were constructed as a training project for stewardship interns, providing a hands-on learning opportunity for college students interested in careers in the environment and recreation management.

Both projects are part of a larger, ongoing effort to engage community volunteers and students to complete stewardship and improve public access along the 740-mile Northern Forest Canoe Trail.



Paddlers for Conservation- Kayak and Canoe Club



The [Paddlers for Conservation – Kayak and Canoe Club](#) is a nonprofit 501(c)3, volunteer-based organization dedicated to promoting paddling, education and conservation. Their mission is to restore and enhance the Tippecanoe River and Kosciusko County lakes and streams through hands-on environmental stewardship in order to preserve rivers, lakes and streams for the future. The group aims to bring the community together through various cleanup projects and organizing family fun float trips which will foster a healthier environment and instill positive friendships among members and the community.

About the Project

P4C partnered with numerous local organizations, individuals, schools, and other nonprofit groups to foster awareness of local natural resources and promoted conservation efforts to clean up the

Tippecanoe River, including several of its tributaries.

As was the case in 2018, Mother Nature played a major role in the group's accomplishments in 2019, as they were forced to postpone river cleanup days until late August. Despite the above average rainfall in 2019, the group completed two river cleanups in August totaling 15 hours, 30 volunteers, and 450 man-hours. They removed 29 log jams, 3 tires, 9 bags of trash, and numerous items including a cooler and a patio deck chair.

At the time of writing, the group was planning cleanups day in the fall that they anticipated would total another approximately 60 volunteers and more than 1,000 hours.

P4C supported the 2019 Lakes Festival and helped coordinate the Kayak for Kids event, providing an opportunity for kids,

many of whom had never been in a kayak or canoe, a chance to experience it for the first time. They also continued assisting other community groups in their efforts to improve water quality in the Tippecanoe Watershed.

“Our efforts in the past four years have now encouraged others to conduct their own riverine projects and we have been there to provide equipment and man-power to continue in our community's efforts to promote water quality, improved access, and quality paddling experiences for our residents.

A highlight of this year was an appreciative landowner providing lunch to more than 20 of our volunteers for having cleaned up a stretch of the Tippecanoe River near his property,” said Scott E. Fetters, vice president of P4C Paddlers for Conservation.



Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy



The [Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy](http://www.perkiomenwatershed.org), founded in 1964, is dedicated to serving the people and communities of the Perkiomen Watershed by conserving and protecting land and water resources through a commitment to and leadership in environmental education, watershed stewardship, and conservation programs. Each year, thousands of students and community members experience our environmental education programs, participate in the organization's outdoor events and become involved in the conservancy's on-the-ground conservation work.

About the Project

Each spring, the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy hosts the stream cleanup focused on removing trash, tires and other debris from regional waterways.

This is the largest of the Conservancy's on-the-ground conservation projects. Community volun-

teers, including corporate groups, scout groups, local high school and college students, sports teams, clubs and general volunteers, work together to clean dozens of different sites throughout the Perkiomen Watershed.

This annual cleanup is vital for the health and safety of local waterways. Litter can be extremely harmful to both wildlife and water quality. It can also make recreating in and around stream and creeks dangerous for human residents. Each year, in the months leading up to the cleanup, the Conservancy strives to educate the public about the harmful impacts of trash through social media posts, email newsletters and informational fliers.

The Conservancy has been holding the Stream Cleanup since 2004, and it has become the largest cleanup in the area, with the 2019 Stream Cleanup being the largest single-day stream cleanup in the

state of Pennsylvania! During this year's cleanup the Conservancy had a record-breaking 1,170 volunteers remove 1,024 bags of trash, 78 bags of recyclables, 145 tires and 3,620lbs of scrap metal from 88 different sites throughout the watershed! The total number of volunteer hours was 3,510 hours.

An event of this size is a huge undertaking that requires a great deal of resources. As an environmental nonprofit, the Conservancy relies completely on donations and grant funds to make this event possible. The funds from L.L. Bean and ACA grant were used to cover staff time spent coordinating the cleanup including recruiting and organizing volunteers, acquiring necessary supplies including gloves, road vests and trash bags, disseminating educational materials, and identifying streamside areas in need of clean-up, etc. This grant funding certainly helped to make the 2019 Stream Cleanup a record-breaking success!



Sugar Island



On July 1, 1901, the ACA purchased [Sugar Island](#), an unimproved 35-acre island on the St. Lawrence River in Gananoque, Ontario, in a garden of islands called the “Thousand Islands.” For over 100 years, the island has been a place for camping and a home base for ACA paddlers of all types. Soon after the purchase of the island, the all-volunteer Sugar Island Board of Trustees was established to maintain and oversee all activities on Sugar Island. Privately owned by the ACA, Sugar Island is available to all members for year-round use.

About the Project

With the age of the island’s primitive infrastructure comes the need for updates. Sugar Island’s outhouses and its greywater sewage systems are in dire need of replacement. The old, traditional outhouses and greywater sewage systems are centrally located near the clustered camping areas on the island. The goal of this

project has been to replace/install outhouses and greywater disposal systems to meet health department requirements. The work is part of a multi-year plan.

Sugar Island is using the CFS grant to install four drywells, otherwise known as Class 2 septic systems by the province of Ontario, Canada, on the island. Due to the remote location and limited “working season” on Sugar Island, installation of the system is a multiyear project. Work will continue in early 2020.

The CFS Grant has assisted Sugar Island with the purchase of a septic installation permit and will assist with the system installations. The Class 2 septic systems are large dry wells that are designed to meet the needs of all campers on Sugar Island. The systems will provide a means for visitors staying on the island to dispose of water that has been removed from the river for

cleaning purposes. The main use of the systems will be for proper disposal of dishwater and cooking water. Using the Class 2 septic systems will ensure the contaminants in the dishwater do not enter the pristine environment of the St. Lawrence River.

A meeting with the Health Inspector for the Town of Leeds, Ontario, Canada took place on Sugar Island. The inspector was shown many of the camping sites on the island. During this visit, the inspector identified locations and the quantity of needed systems. A map of Sugar Island with the locations of the systems has been created.

This project has used the services of eight volunteers at various times over the past year. All told, these volunteers have given no less than 220 hours of their time moving this project toward completion.



Team River Runner Decatur Chapter



[Team River Runner Decatur Chapter](#) is a 100% volunteer-driven paddling group that was formed in January 2018 to provide all veterans and their families an opportunity to find health, healing, community purpose, and new challenges through adventure and adaptive paddlesports. The group is comprised of veterans, active duty service members, disabled veterans and non-veterans, and community members. Members meet weekly on Lake Decatur March through November and hold special events throughout the summer. On weekly paddling sessions Team River Runner members practice boat safety, techniques and stewardship. Members are encouraged to join in keeping the waters clean of debris and trash.

About the Project

Team River Runner Decatur Chapter is leading a volunteer group effort to promote paddling on Lake Decatur and contributing water sources. The goal is to develop a water trail to educate and encourage usage.

Paddling is becoming more popular in the city and Team River Runner would like to help direct the community on route options to ensure a safe and fun experience. Team River Runner Decatur volunteers will work with City of Decatur and Macon County to design water trails and maintain clean waterways on Lake Decatur, Sangamon River and Big Creek for the project's first phase. Currently nothing exists as far as signage or brochures to promote paddling routes in Decatur. With the help of the CFS program, the group is providing needed direction and promotion of areas to kayak, SUP and canoe.

Team River Runner is also working to promote access areas, launch points and amenities offered around the lake, river and creek. This project is the start of an ongoing effort to increase paddling interest and conservation in Central Illinois. The CFS grants funds were used to purchase signage at Decatur Lake, Sangamon River, and Big Creek access points. Identifying the

area as a water trail and mileage information. Funds were also used for brochure/map production detailing information about the trail and lengths of paddling opportunities or trails. The trail is marketed on the Team River Runner national website, social media, local newspaper, news, and radio stations. Additionally, the park district and county parks are encouraged to promote the new trail in their publications.

“This water trail will be the first in our city,” said Team River Runner President Jennifer Hahn. “Many people in our area have never heard of water trails. Lake Decatur is the center of our city and most community members are not even aware of the paddling potential or routes available to them. With the help of the CFS program we can begin to educate people on the amazing recreational opportunities in our city. Hopefully, our trail will encourage people to explore other water trails in new areas.”



Tennessee Scenic Rivers Association



The [Tennessee Scenic Rivers Association](https://www.paddletsra.org) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit volunteer organization dedicated to the preservation, protection and restoration of the scenic, free-flowing rivers of the state. Based in Nashville, Tennessee, the organization has approximately 1,000 members across the state and the South.

About the Project

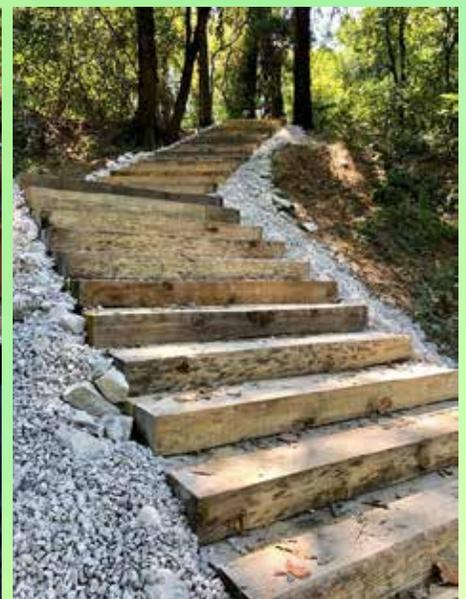
The grant project involved replacing an access that had deteriorated to the point of being hazardous. The new access was built about 100 yards upstream from the current site in an environmentally safer location.

In five outdoor days in the heat of early September, TSRA volunteers built another access structure along the Harpeth River. This one is located on the property of the Williamson County Recreational Center, Fulton Greer Lane in Franklin, Tennessee. Special thanks to all the volunteers who came out to do this project.

Doing this work, 92 volunteers spend a total of 416 hours building a strong, family friendly and environmentally sound access. Besides setting up hundreds of timbers, cutting timbers, nailing, drilling rebar, jackhammering rebar, and sledgehammering it into place,

volunteers moved over 40 tons of riprap by hand with bright orange buckets! We did some filming of the project and hope to make a how-to video on building an access in the future.

This structure increases access to a number of spots along the Harpeth River in Franklin, Tennessee. From the Ladd Park to the Rec Center is 11 miles, from Eastern Flank Park, it is 5 miles and from Harlinsdale Park it is 2 miles. This means there is opportunity for an all-day paddle, an afternoon outing, or a short family paddle or fishing event. This also helps alleviate the heavy use of the Harpeth further downstream.



Tennessee Valley Canoe Club



The [Tennessee Valley Canoe Club](http://www.tennesseevalleycanoeclub.org) is an all-volunteer, 501(c)(7) organization based in Chattanooga with over 1000 active members. TVCC brings together those interested in canoeing, kayaking and related activities; increases the knowledge, safety and appreciation of paddlesports for those who are interested; and supports conservation and preservation of recreational waterways. The club provides free high-quality programming, instruction, and Swift Water Rescue training to our members.

About the Project

TVCC volunteers conducted creek maintenance to remove hazards, trash, and debris from the most popular paddling creeks in the Tennessee River Valley. This includes 78 miles of navigable waterways on creeks that flow into the Tennessee River, all within a one-hour drive from Chattanooga. Additionally, over 20 access points to these creeks were also cleaned of trash and plant overgrowth. The effort focused on removing downed trees and other blockages that created difficult pas-

sages for paddlers as well as cleaning up accumulated garbage. Two special highlights were the addition of 13 miles on the Sequatchie River and seven miles on the Conasauga River which opened new paddling opportunities for local enthusiasts.

Teams of TVCC volunteers, using their personal kayaks and canoes, met approximately twice a week starting on April 5, 2019, and continuing through the last week of August 2019. In total, 18 volunteers, led by Eric Fleming, supported the project efforts. Over 22 work days, 330 on-river hours were logged with another 90 hours logged in vehicle shuttle hours. Bags of garbage were removed each day with a total estimated weight of approximately 400 pounds. Several tires, shopping carts, and other odd debris were removed from the creeks.

Teams of three or four worked efficiently and on occasion were able to clean multiple sections in the same day. TVCC purchased a much-needed new chainsaw with the grant funds to support the project work

this year. Additional grant funds were used for various protective gear for the volunteers, saw maintenance, and trash disposal fees.

The highlight of the work effort was when the newly opened section of the Sequatchie River caught the attention of the local community leaders in Dunlap, Tennessee, a community about an hour north of Chattanooga. On August 12, a TVCC partner organization, Outdoor Chattanooga, with support from the National Park Service, organized a paddle trip down the newly cleaned and maintained section for 40 civic and business leaders in the Sequatchie Valley. TVCC's project leader, Eric Fleming, was a key presenter and helped support the trip. He encouraged these leaders to improve the access points to the river which would help increase tourism to the area. The group was very enthusiastic as they experienced the scenic beauty of the Sequatchie. There was considerable agreement to take action to make things happen that would improve access and usability.



Upper Oconee Water Trails



The [Upper Oconee Watershed Network](#) (UOWN) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Athens, Georgia. It was formed in January 2000 in response to citizen concern about the region's rapid growth and its impact to local streams and rivers. Their mission is to protect water resources in the Upper Oconee watershed and improve stream health through community-based advocacy, monitoring, education, and recreation.

In 2011, UOWN received seed money from the Georgia River Network to develop a water trail on the Oconee River. UOWN created a subcommittee, the Upper Oconee Water Trail (UOWT), to guide this effort. The committee includes stakeholders from community organizations dedicated to providing ecological and economic benefits to the region. One lesson learned through the effort is that when paddlers are put on the water, they become stewards of the watershed. The UOWN's river cleanup efforts have evolved from this citizen initiative.



About the Project

Over the last three years, UOWT has partnered with Keep Athens-Clarke County Beautiful to complete cleanups on the North and Middle Oconee Rivers. Volunteers are secured through Rivers Alive, an annual community event that places cleanup teams along streams and river corridors, but not actually on the river. This community event is part of a larger statewide campaign conducted every fall to clean and preserve over 70,000 miles of Georgia rivers and streams.

To enhance the efforts of the community, the Water Trail's goal has been to place people on the water as part of this effort. In 2017 the organization sponsored one team on the North Oconee River. Athens Clarke County (ACC) Department of Leisure Services provided boats and support staff to enable this effort. Last year they organized three teams, securing additional boats from local outfitters along with continued support from ACC Leisure Services. Members of the water trail committee serve as site leaders for these teams. This year's event,



scheduled for the first Saturday in October, organized five teams to cover approximately 25 river miles on both sections of the Oconee River in our community.

As volunteers are on the river, instead of alongside of it, the teams are highly successful in removing trash that is difficult to access from the shore. On average, the River's Alive Project locally removes 3 tons of trash, 1 ton of recycling, and 150 tires annually. Three hundred volunteers support this effort. Water teams typically average 15-20 paddlers in number and are the most sought-after slots in the Rivers Alive effort.

During recent paddling trips, volunteers have noticed an increase in single-use bags wrapped around limbs high in the riparian buffer due flooding events that occur episodically on the waterways. These bags are impossible to remove with grab poles, the traditional tool of choice used in river cleanups. In order to facilitate the removal of these bags, Water Trails volunteers have utilized the CFS grant monies to purchase a battery-operated pole saw.



Vermont River Conservancy



Since 1995, working in cooperation with state and federal agencies, municipalities and other conservation organizations, the [Vermont River Conservancy](#) has completed over 70 projects around the state. Popular local swimming holes, breathtaking gorges and waterfalls, fishing and boating accesses, paddlers' trails and meandering river corridors have all been protected for future generations to enjoy.

About the Project

The town of Johnson is a gateway community to the Lamoille River, one of the finest paddling rivers in Vermont. However, access is currently limited. To address this, the VRC has entered into an agreement with a landowner to construct and maintain a new public hand-carry launch.



The access is just above one of the more scenic stretches of the river, which includes a rapid called Ithiel Falls, a side hike up the Long Trail to Prospect Rock, and several swimming beaches and islands to explore.

The VRC scheduled a volunteer workday in June to develop the access point. Due to steep, muddy banks, the volunteers installed a set of cribbed, timber steps and a seasonally removable floating dock. Signage provides guidance to regarding public access, parking locations, and river etiquette.

ACA/LL Bean Funds were directed entirely toward the material costs of the project (lumber, dock floats, signs, hardware, dock anchors).

This project is part of a grassroots initiative to develop and steward a water trail along its 80-mile length of the river the [Lamoille River Paddlers' Trail](#). The VRC seeks to promote non-motorized recreation use compatible with the river valley's unique cultural and ecological values.



*The ACA thanks L.L. Bean for its many years of support
for the Club-Fostered Stewardship Program.*

*Working together, we have made the
world a better place to paddle,
and a better place to live.*

