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GEORGIA ARCHIVES PRESENTS
2025 April History Symposium: *Georgia's Waterways*
April 11–12, 2025

The Georgia Archives is proud to present the 2025 April History Symposium: *Georgia's Waterways*, a two-day event exploring the historical, cultural, and environmental significance of Georgia's rivers, lakes, and coastal waters. From the earliest Indigenous settlements to modern conservation efforts, Georgia's waterways have influenced the state's economy, transportation, and way of life.

This year's symposium will highlight the essential role these waterways have played in the state's development—serving as trade routes, sources of sustenance and recreation, and battlegrounds for political and environmental struggles. Understanding this history is crucial in addressing today's challenges, from water rights disputes to conservation efforts and climate resilience. By examining the past, we gain a deeper perspective on the policies, industries, and communities that depend on Georgia's waterways today.

Join us on April 11–12, 2025 for presentations and discussions that connect history with the present to foster a greater appreciation for the waters that continue to shape Georgia's future.

To view and share the event flyer, please click [here](#).

The symposium is free and open to the public, with no registration required. It will take place in person at the Georgia Archives, located at 5800 Jonesboro Road, Morrow, GA 30252.

This event is sponsored in part by the [Clayton County Tourism Authority](#) and the [Friends of Georgia Archives and History \(FOGAH\)](#).

Schedule

Day 1 – Friday, April 11, 2025

12 PM – 1 PM (April Lunch & Learn, part of the April History Symposium)

Session 1 – Keynote Address, “Keeping the Chattahoochee” by Sally Bethea, author and retired founding director of Chattahoochee Riverkeeper

Sally Bethea will share insights from her decades of advocacy to restore and protect the Chattahoochee River. With more than 40 years of experience in environmental policy and nonprofit leadership, she has served on national, regional, and local boards, taught water resources planning at Georgia Tech, and currently writes the “Above the Waterline” column for *Atlanta INtown*. She will also discuss her environmental memoir, *Keeping the Chattahoochee*, published by the University of Georgia Press in 2023 and recognized as one of the [2024 Books All Georgians Should Read](#).

1:20 PM – 2:20 PM

Session 2 – “Clayton County Recycles Water” by Danielle Bunch, Conservation Supervisor, Clayton County Water Authority (CCWA)

Clayton County Water Authority’s water reuse system recycles treated wastewater safely and efficiently. Danielle Bunch, CCWA’s Conservation Supervisor, will highlight the company’s efforts to ensure Clayton County has clean drinking water year-round, even in drought conditions. The 583-acre, human-designed treatment wetlands are CCWA’s response to increasingly unpredictable weather patterns and an ever-increasing population in Clayton County. The constructed wetlands also provide hundreds of acres of habitat for waterfowl, wading birds, otters, mink, turtles, and other wildlife. They are home to nesting Bald Eagles and Ospreys, a stopover for migrating birds such as Sandhill Cranes, and a wintering ground for birds such as Sora, American Coots, and Green-winged Teal. By blending innovative water management with ecological stewardship, CCWA’s water reuse system ensures a sustainable future for both the community and local wildlife.

Day 2 – Saturday, April 12, 2025

9:30 AM – 10:30 AM

Session 1 – “Signs of Water and Traces of Life on the Georgia Coast” by Dr. Anthony Martin, author and Professor, Emory University

Water is essential for supporting and influencing the vast diversity of life along the Georgia coast, particularly in its estuaries and barrier islands. Animal interactions with these environments are often recorded as traces in their sediments, shells, and wood, leaving impressions both ephemeral and lasting. Among the most common traces are tracks, burrows, borings, trails, and nests, all of which are exceedingly abundant in coastal ecosystems. In this talk, Dr. Martin will show how such life traces can be used as indicators of freshwater, saltwater, drought, tidal exchanges, storm surges, and rising sea level, thus expanding our awareness of water as a factor in these environments.

10:45 AM – 11:45 AM

Session 2 – “The Political Movement That Saved Georgia’s Coast and Rivers Which Created It” by Paul Bolster, author of *Saving the Georgia Coast*

Join author, and former state representative, Paul Bolster as he explores the political movement that helped protect Georgia’s coast and the vital role its rivers played in shaping that effort. Drawing from his research and his book, *Saving the Georgia Coast*, Bolster will discuss the early environmental advocacy efforts that led to long-term conservation policies, setting the stage for modern waterway protections. His talk will provide

valuable insight into how legislative action and public support have influenced the preservation of Georgia's natural landscapes.

1:15 PM – 2:15 PM

Session 3 – “From Shell Middens to Shipwrecks: Exploring Georgia's Maritime Cultural Landscape” by Dr. T. Kurt Knoerl, Associate Professor, Georgia Southern University

Humans have been using Georgia's waterways for thousands of years. The state's barrier islands, coastal wetlands, and inland rivers and lakes contain evidence of past human activity. Viewed together, these archaeological sites make up the state's maritime cultural landscape. Since arriving at Georgia Southern University in 2017, Dr. T. Kurt Knoerl has explored this landscape. His talk will highlight a wide variety of projects, including sunken pleasure craft, canoes, oyster processing plants, and more.

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Session 4 – “Poleboats to Ramblin' Rafts: Three Centuries of River Use in Georgia” by Joe Cook, Paddle Georgia Coordinator and Guidebook Author

Trace the journey of pole boaters, raft hands, steamboat pilots, and modern-day whitewater thrill-seekers to understand how Georgia's laws have evolved to facilitate the "highest and best" use of Georgia's rivers throughout the state's history, from the 1800s to the present.

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The Georgia Archives, a unit of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, identifies, collects, manages, preserves, and provides access to records about Georgia and its people. It also assists state and local government agencies with records management. This work is done within the framework of the University System of Georgia's mission to create a more highly educated Georgia.

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