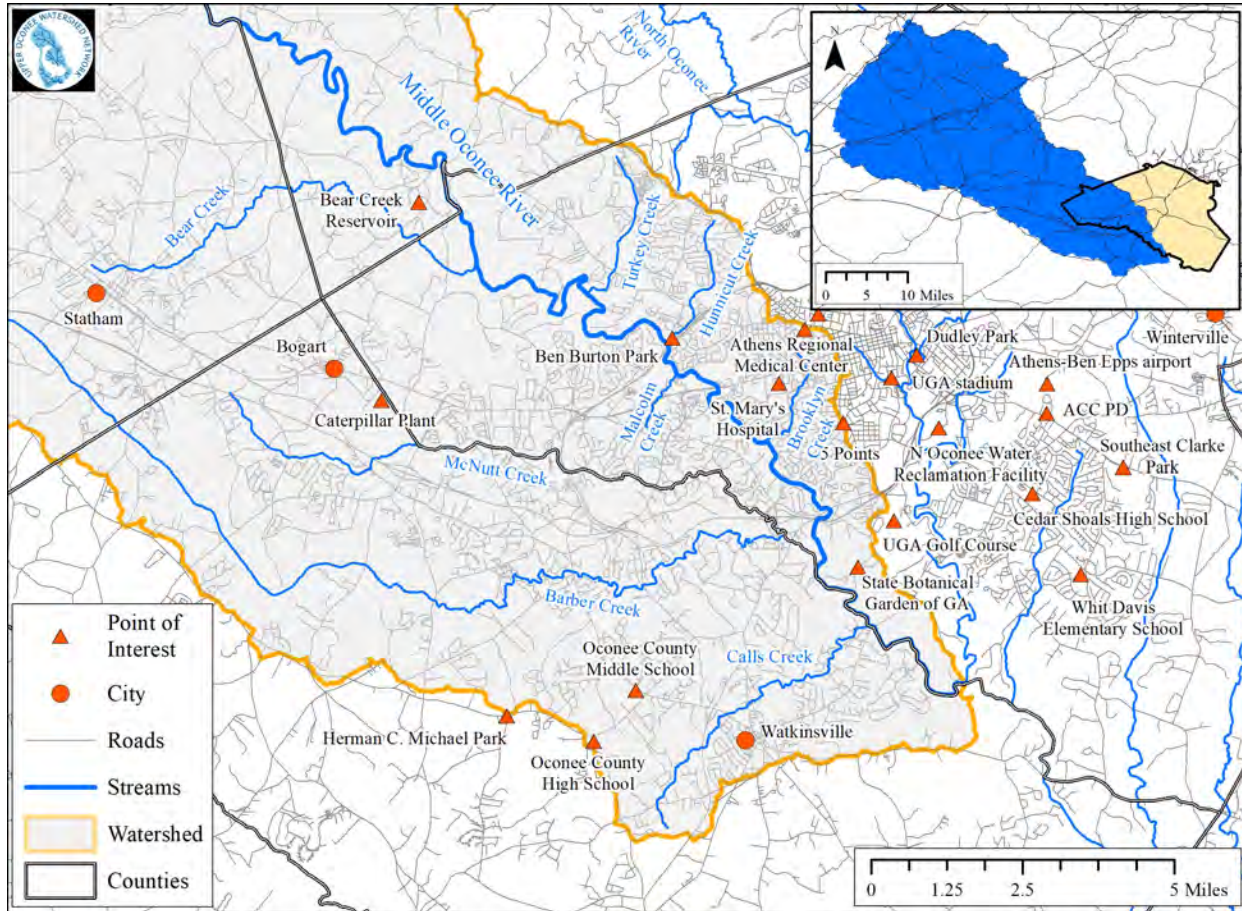


Where's My Creek?



Middle Oconee River



Where is the Middle Oconee River?

The drainage area of the Middle Oconee River watershed is 473 square miles, with 82 percent located outside of ACC to the northwest. The portion of the watershed that is located in the western part of Athens-Clarke County is 9 square miles in size.

Land cover in the watershed is primarily split between forest and developed land, with about 10 percent impervious cover. The upper margins the Middle Oconee River (upstream of Ben Burton Park) contain forested wetlands with historic settlement sites.

The Middle Oconee River demarcates part of the border between Clarke and Oconee counties, and forms the western edge of the State Botanical Garden of Georgia, a notable environmental resource. The river is crossed by Loop 10 and Malcom Bridge Road.

Why Care?

The Middle Oconee River has the designated use of drinking water from the upstream end down to McNutt Creek, and fishing below McNutt Creek. The river does not meet its designated use due to sediment and fecal coliform bacteria throughout the watershed.

Athens withdraws drinking water from the Middle Oconee.

Watershed Issues!



Impervious Surfaces

Due to development, there are areas of impervious surface where water cannot soak into the ground. This can cause increased runoff which leads to erosion and sediment buildup in the creek.



Nutrient Pollution

The Middle Oconee has elevated levels of nutrients, specifically nitrogen, which can be caused by overuse of fertilizer, stormwater runoff, and sewage discharges. This can cause algal blooms and deplete oxygen in the water.



Buffer Zone Reduction

It is unlawful to remove vegetation within 75 feet of a stream in Athens-Clarke County. Riparian buffers stabilize soil, filter runoff, and slow down rushing water before it enters the stream. Buffers in the Middle Oconee watershed have been impacted by development.



Poo-lution

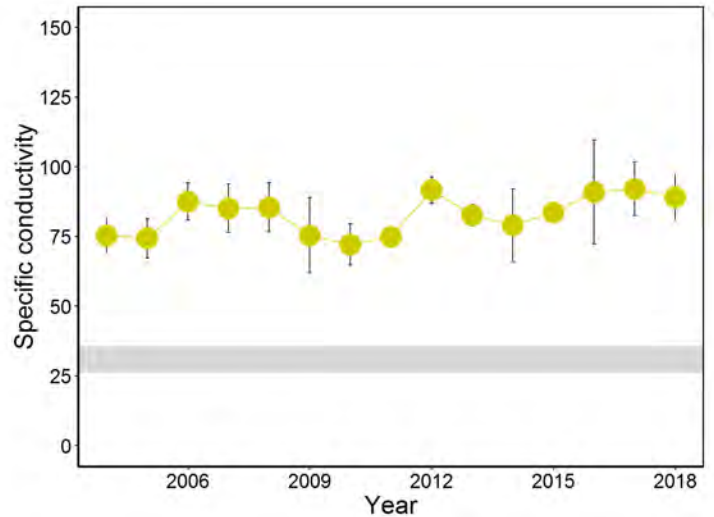
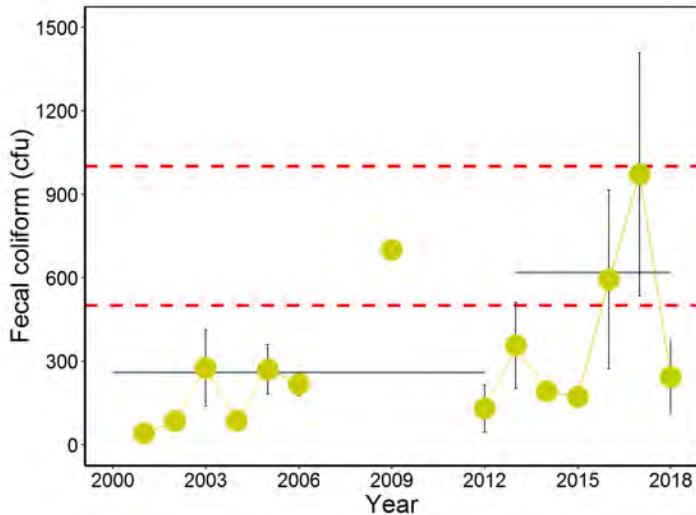
The Middle Oconee has levels of fecal coliforms (poop) that, at times, exceed established limits. This is due to leaking sewer pipes, sewer overflows, and animal waste.



Overloaded with Sediments

Most of the Middle Oconee river bed is filled with sand and sediments which leads to poor stream health and reduced diversity of aquatic life.

Water Quality in the Middle Oconee River



Fecal coliform bacteria are an indicator of pollution from human and animal waste. *E. coli* is a species of coliform bacteria. The dashed red line at 500 cfu demarks threshold for recreational activity (not recommend above). The higher threshold indicates major contamination.

Specific conductivity is a measurement of dissolved solids in water. Regular monitoring helps determine baseline levels. Fluctuations in these levels are an indicator of pollution. The grey shading indicates baseline level of a typical minimally impacted stream in our region.

In the graphs above, each point represents the average concentration within a year. The vertical bars indicate the variation in that measurement. The horizontal lines show the average concentration during the previous 5 years and the historical average.



How You Can Help



Reduce fertilizer application. Contact the UGA Cooperative Extension Office for a soil test kit to determine soil fertility in your lawn or garden.

Pick up your pet's waste to prevent fecal coliforms from ending up in your creek.



Plant native vegetation in riparian buffers along stream banks to help remove pollutants and reduce erosion.

Use permeable pavement to allow infiltration of water when it rains.



Disconnect roof downspouts from drainage systems to reduce the amount of concentrated stormwater runoff leaving your property.

Harvest rainwater to reduce runoff and use it to water your plants and garden.



Create rain gardens with plants and sandy soils to drain stormwater and filter nutrients and other pollutants.

Pick up trash from your neighborhood and the stream.



Become a UOWN member today!

The Upper Oconee Watershed Network is dedicated to protecting water resources and improving stream health in your watershed through community-based advocacy, monitoring, education, and recreation.



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