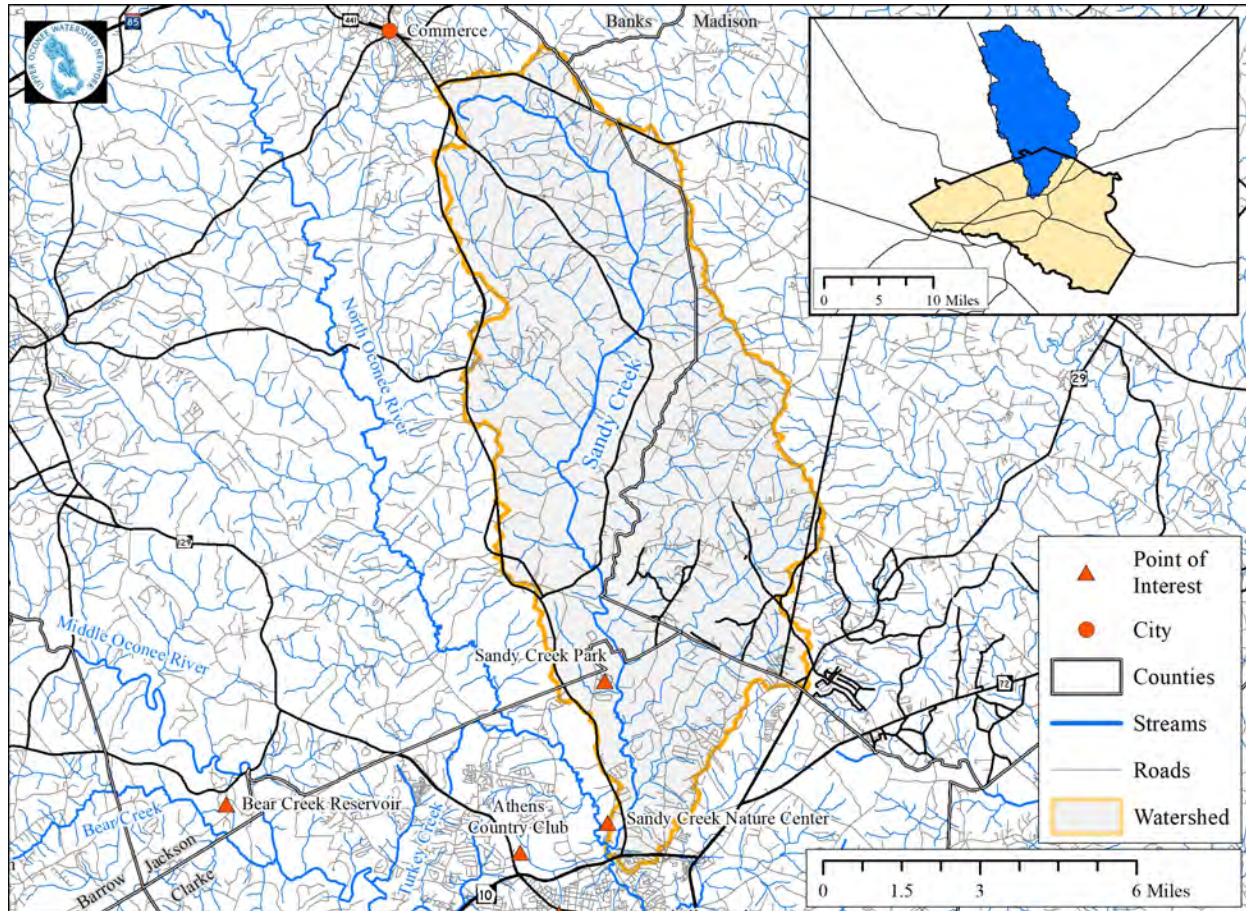


Where's My Creek?



Sandy Creek



Where is Sandy Creek?

Sandy Creek is Athens most pristine waterway. The basin drains much of eastern Jackson County and a portion of western Madison County.

In Athens-Clarke County, Sandy Creek becomes Lake Chapman in Sandy Creek Park. It continues on as Sandy Creek below the dam.

Nine square miles of land drain into Sandy Creek in Athens-Clarke County.

The Cook's Trail follows the creek for 4.1 miles from Sandy Creek Park to Sandy Creek Nature Center. The trail wanders through floodplains, hardwood forests, and historic cotton terraces. Just before its confluence with the North Oconee, is the old water treatment plant from where Athens used to obtain its water. One can see the abandoned facility from the Greenway.

Why Care?

Runoff carries pollutants from parking lots, roads and other impervious surfaces into Sandy Creek, which flows into the North Oconee River. Ninety-eight percent of Athens residents obtain their drinking water from the water treatment plant on the North Oconee. Sandy Creek enters the North Oconee 0.6 miles upstream of the plant's water intake pipes.

Watershed Issues!



Impervious Surfaces

Due to development, there are large 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

Sandy Creek has elevated levels of nutrients, specifically nitrogen, which can be caused by overuse of fertilizer, storm-water 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 Sandy Creek watershed have been impacted by development.



Poo-lution

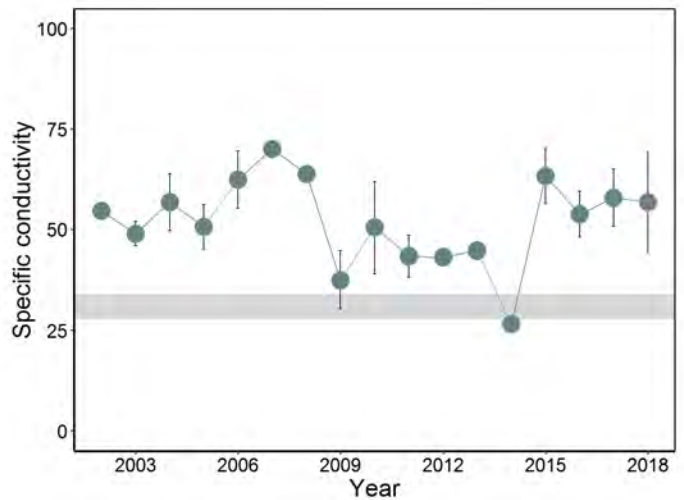
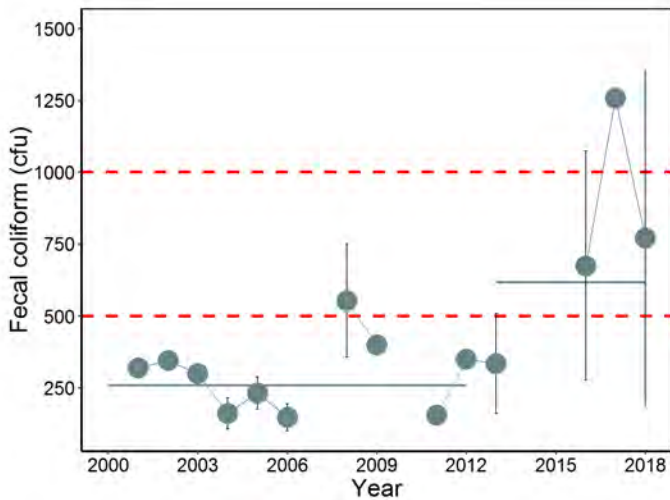
Sandy Creek has high levels of fecal coliforms (poop). This is due to leaking sewer pipes, sewer overflows, and animal waste.



Overloaded with Sediments

Most of Sandy Creek's stream bed is filled with sand and sediments which leads to poor stream health and reduced diversity of aquatic life.

Water Quality in Sandy Creek



Fecal coliform bacteria are an indicator of pollution from human and animal waste. E. coli is a species of coliform bacteria. The horizontal lines show the average concentration during the previous 5 years. The dashed lines represent limits at which it is unsafe to recreate in the water (>500) or a significant pollution problem (>1000).

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.



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.



Follow Us On
Facebook



Follow Us On Twitter
@UpperOconee



Go To Our Website
www.UOWN.org