

Kayaking Down the Chattahoochee

Imagine you are kayaking down the glistening Chattahoochee River. The sun is pouring down, and your head is beating like a bass drum as you paddle across the blue and green river. You clench and unclench your hands as you set your paddle down. You block the sun with your hand as you look out to see dragonflies dancing on the shore and a family of azaleas stretching towards the light. You make a sharp right, and water splashes all over your kayak and brand new shorts.

This same clear water that splashed onto your kayak once was used to feed baby dinosaurs. The amount of water never changes throughout the years, it only gets recycled - in Georgia that is through 50 waste treatment plans and multiple municipal stormwater systems.

But what if one day, the Chattahoochee and Flint River dry up? The whole state of Georgia would be impacted. The Chattahoochee River alone provides water for $\frac{1}{3}$ of the state. That's over 1.3 million people! Georgia's clean and abundant water supply is essential for metro Atlanta.

Think about your relationship with water. You use it to shower, flush, gardening, your grass and even to clean your car. Now expand that to the whole economy. Without a consistent water supply, our whole economy would fall. The Chattahoochee River supplies 70 percent of metro Atlanta's drinking water. That is equivalent to 300 million gallons of water per day. If our water supply gets cut off, households won't get the water they need, hospitals would not be able to treat patients, and businesses would crash, throwing the whole economy off balance.

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According to 2020 population estimates, metro Atlanta's population is at 4.6 million. As metro Atlanta is growing faster than ever, a resilient water supply is essential.

The Flint River provides gallons of water for irrigating our crops in Coastal Georgia. Those crops supply food to our local grocery stores and the rest of the nation. Without a clean water supply, the crops would rot in the fields, resulting in diseases and other health issues. The Flint River has been fundamental in the growth of the cotton industry as well as the peanut, soybean, and wheat industry. So next time you spread peanut butter over your toast, stop and think about the gallons of water it took to produce that peanut, and where all that water came from. The Flint River is only one of the unique resources of Georgia's water.

As you paddle down the Chattahoochee and pass through the various communities, remember the importance of a clean and abundant water supply. Think about the sparkling water trickling down the mountains, falling from waterfalls, and flowing through rivers. But most of all, think about what you can do to keep it clean and pure for future generations to use.