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## Ocmulgee Comes to Me

The sun brightens, and the river gleams. It flows freely, complementing the forests and trees. The call of the bald eagle suddenly calls you back to life. This glory of the Ocmulgee River is widely prominent in the communities of northern Georgia. From drinking water to recreational use, the river supplies Georgians of this region an opportunity to live and enjoy.

The Upper Ocmulgee River allows communities to thrive and be clean. This includes the counties of Clayton, DeKalb, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, and Rockdale. Statistics show that the average metro-Atlantan citizen uses around 50 gallons of water per day. The water is used to bathe, drink, wash clothes and dishes, and flush toilets. Surface water sources like rivers, lakes, and streams provide metro-Atlantans valuable water. Droughts and floods can benefit or harm the ecosystem.

The historical context of the Ocmulgee River starts with the settlement of Native Americans. Its history dates to the Paleoindian period. Later, the Mississippians settled at the Ocmulgee River basin and thrived. Centuries later, Americans would colonize and grow in this area. Eventually, the original inhabitants were forced off their land. Even though the river's Native people have disappeared, modern day Americans still benefit from the river.

The river's impact lies within its biological factors and human influences. The river houses several species that are threatened. It is important to help protect these organisms because they balance the ecosystem and may impact the water's health. Sewage and inadequate stormwater controls may pollute the river basin and cause limitations in providing enough water. It is key to observe and fix these factors to maintain the river's health before the river's wildlife and water is destroyed.

Growing up in Clayton County, I remember floating in pools and admiring the local nature reserve. Water was how I had joy and play in my childhood. Without the river basin, my childhood activities would've never taken place nor appealed to my playful mind. The water was like a mother or friend that appears in your early memories. In my county, water is a factor that started businesses, centers, and schools. Additionally, many cities in my county are located near the river. Educating the youth and adults will implement their love and understanding for the protection of water sources for future generations.

Considering the impact of water by community members, it is important to inform citizens of the greatness of water. To encourage community members to participate in learning about the Ocmulgee River basin, begin to educate the youth who are flexible and more influenced. To educate the entirety of adults it is important to give flyers, meetings, or volunteering opportunities. Learning about my river basin makes me a better steward of water resources as I can determine how to use water more efficiently. I can educate others and help my community thrive while using the water smartly to improve the future ahead.