

History of the Formation of the Satilla Riverkeeper

In 2000, a passionate Satilla River loving group of individuals, including James Holland, Jack Sandow, Dr. Guy Moorman, Chip Sasser, Richard Sasser, Larry Purdom and Charles Lagoueyte saw that their beloved river was being threatened by a multitude of polluters and joined forces to do something about it. They felt that the Satilla was a beautiful but forgotten river. Some of these individuals had worked diligently on solid-waste issues in Waycross, bringing a lot of press and pressure on waste generators to slow down or stop the tremendous amount of garbage and trash washing into the river. The momentum was slowly building to do great things for the Satilla.

In 2002, the Brantley Enterprise announced that a titanium mine was going to be permitted in the Satilla River basin. Individuals, including Satilla River resident Gloria Taylor, began petitioning this project. This soon spurred a news article in the Georgia Times Union. This group became more and more organized, calling itself Save Our Satilla (SOS), and subsequently began reaching out to other environmental groups in the area, including Center for Sustainable Coast, Sierra Club and their many river loving friends. As they continued to push for their cause, this gained the attention of the AJC and a front page article on the issue was published.

A steering committee of SOS was created and included Gloria Taylor (Chair), David Dockery (Vice Chair), Rosemary Griggs, Cynthia Gwinn, Charlie Summerlin, Ron Easton, Mike Lee, Jack Sandow, Patti Sandow, R.D. Gibson, Lois Groszmann, and Doug Tarver. These individuals were from all over the watershed, a true grassroots group, and they decided that they must take responsibility for the whole watershed. SOS had a solid presence in the community and in the state. But, something else was needed to bring the Satilla into the forefront of people's minds, and a funding mechanism was needed to push the River's agenda forward.

An opportunity arose during the opposition to the titanium mine. SOS, the Altamaha Riverkeeper, The Center for Sustainable Coast, and the Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club filed an appeal of the state permits for the mine and a settlement was reached. Don Stack, a very able environmental attorney, performed admirably. The settlement helps ensure that the mining process is inspected, and that stronger measures to make sure the land is harmed as little as possible are in place. The owners of the mine agreed to be a good environmental partner, assuring that strong "Best Management Practices" (BMPs) are followed. And in 2003 they put their money where their words were by providing funding to start a Satilla Riverkeeper organization.

The Satilla Riverkeeper organization became a fully licensed 501© 3 organization in July of 2004. The first director and Riverkeeper, Gordon Rogers, was hired in September of 2004. Gordon was a child of the Satilla. He had caught his first fish in her waters, canoed her streams as a youth, conducted scientific research in her estuaries, and had lived near her for the better part of a decade. Gordon even would take his family, including his young children, fishing and swimming there. Gordon would soon make the Satilla Riverkeeper organization a thriving and common place name in environmental activism in the Satilla watershed, serving as a watchdog for pollution problems on the river.

Satilla Riverkeeper, an official effort dedicated to the expensive and time-consuming business of conserving and restoring our precious river, still remains strong today. Satilla Riverkeeper is a grassroots organization, but membership must be paid for, because effective, professional keeping is expensive. We hope that you will join us in our efforts to PROTECT, RESTORE and EDUCATE about our beautiful Satilla!