



Rivers Alive

Annual Report
2024

PREPARED BY:
EMILY SKIBINSKI



Tara
McCullen



Rivers
Alive Chair

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

2024 was another successful year for Rivers Alive! On behalf of our board and staff, I would like to extend a deep and heartfelt thank you to our volunteers, organizers, and sponsors. Your dedication, time, energy, and support make such a difference to the beauty and well-being of our state. We cannot do what we do without you!

Our 2024 theme was the ABC's of Waterway Cleanups, with 101 cleanup events and 2,444 bags of trash collected. Our 5,813 volunteers donated 17,989 volunteer hours, cleaned 579 miles, and collected 333,073 pounds of trash! Although these numbers are impressive and demonstrate an incredibly positive impact to our state waterways, we are still struggling to get our cleanup numbers to the level they were before the pandemic. The last several years have been challenging, so we sincerely appreciate all of you who consistently support our mission year after year, and we look forward to continuing to grow our impact in the years to come.

We are gearing up for another successful year in 2025, and we can't wait to see you on the river!

**SINCERELY,
TARA MCCULLEN**

OUR MISSION

Create awareness of, and involvement in, the protection of Georgia's water resources through waterway cleanups.



“This is just one of 5 sites GIPL and our World River Day group was able to clean up this year. This site in particular was selected by the West Atlanta Watershed Alliance and is in a neighborhood with a lot of history. The site has ongoing needs, but we were able to pull hundreds of pounds of pollution from the site in just a few hours! Leading up to the event we had folks from Fulton County explain the importance of these clean ups and the Adopt-A-Stream program. These clean ups bring together a community of different faiths and backgrounds to give the rest of the strange and wonderful creatures of this planet access to cleaner water and I hope that it inspired our volunteers to make this an ongoing effort in their lives.”

-Ayesha Abid, GA Interfaith Power and Light Clyde Shepherd Clean up

“Our Rivers Alive clean-up was a success thanks to strong community participation, effective organization, and a shared commitment to environmental stewardship. Volunteers from diverse backgrounds united to preserve our waterways, and the event's clear coordination maximized our impact. Educational resources raised awareness about clean water and conservation, while the visible results removing trash from reservoirs demonstrated our positive impact and inspired ongoing community engagement in future efforts.”

-Lindsey Sanders, HCWA River Clean-Up



ABCs OF CLEANUP

Appliances
Removed

36



Bottles
Removed

11,860



Cigarettes
Removed

4,169



Dedication

"This year many of the boy scouts in attendance had primitive camped the night before and didn't get much sleep. In spite of the lack of sleep, they showed up in full force for the clean-up and put in a several hours of litter collection."

-Will England, Ball Ground Cleanup

Education

"As a high school teacher, I can teach about watersheds and ecosystems all day but getting the kids outside to see it and experience it first hand is the best education they can get!"

-Tabitha Potter, Alcovy River cleanup at Archer HS

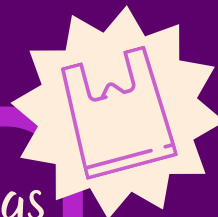
Foam Items
Removed

4,543



Grocery Bags
Removed

2,721



Hours
Volunteered

17,714



Inspiration

"These clean ups bring together a community of different faiths and backgrounds to give the rest of the strange and wonderful creatures of this planet access to cleaner water and I hope that it inspired our volunteers to make this an ongoing effort in their lives."

-Ayesha Abid WAWA Cleanup

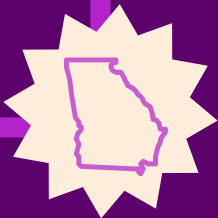
Join

"This year was our 30th annual Conasauga River Watershed cleanup. What keeps us going year after year is the strength of our partnerships. What makes this effort worthwhile is to join with cheerful and hard-working volunteers, many first-timers, as well as those who have participated in nearly all the cleanups since the beginning."

-John Lughart, Conasauga River Watershed Cleanup

Keep Georgia
Beautiful
Events

34



Plastic Lids
Removed

820



Metal
Items
Removed

6,454



Nets
Removed

56



Organization

"Our team is passionate about making a difference in our community. We've worked tirelessly to organize impactful clean-ups, educate the public about water conservation, and restore vital habitats. Our dedication to clean water and environmental stewardship has made a real impact. We're committed to inspiring others to join us in protecting our precious water resources for generations to come."

-Karen Bell, Liberty County Rivers Alive



FORT MOORE HELP THE HOOCH

TOTAL POUNDS
OF TRASH
COLLECTED
2,020



Our event took place at multiple sites in Fort Moore, including an island in the Chattahoochee River that is maintained by our Cultural Resource Department. The island unfortunately sees a lot of trash buildup, especially since Hurricane Helene caused the river to completely overtop the island, depositing more trash inland. During our bi-annual tribal consultation, local tribe representatives were very pleased with our efforts and appreciated the emphasis on land stewardship and conservation to their ancestral lands by the Fort Moore community. We also cleaned some of our recreational areas that people use for fishing and camping to ensure those spots are kept pristine for people to enjoy.



Help the Hooch is a way to engage our Fort Moore families and work together with a boots on the ground activity. Working together helps build stronger bonds and lets people know we are here. We can talk to people from our residential areas about things they can do to prevent pollution and they can see first-hand the effects of littering and improper waste handling and disposal. People can have fun and have an excuse to get outdoors, take a break from work, feel good about what they are doing, and know that every bag they pickup is making a difference and helps fight against the pollution of our beautiful environment at Fort Moore. We can connect to the people we serve and be on the same level, all as just people doing a good thing.

**MOST INTERESTING ITEM:
CORALINE DOLL**

Help the Hooch keeps our recreational areas clean and ready to be enjoyed, and aids in preventing our wildlife from being impacted by our waste. A local news station even wrote a short article about our students from Stowers Elementary who cleaned up about 80 pounds of trash!

— ANTHONY HARRINGTON

KWRB BAY GALL CREEK

TOTAL POUNDS
OF TRASH
COLLECTED
2,000



VOLUNTEER
HOURS
114



Keep Warner Robins Beautiful (KWRB) has been a steadfast champion of cleanup initiatives through its active participation in multiple Rivers Alive events and community-driven environmental programs throughout the year. This year, KWRB organized two highly impactful clean-ups that mobilized volunteers from diverse backgrounds including students, local businesses, and civic organizations.



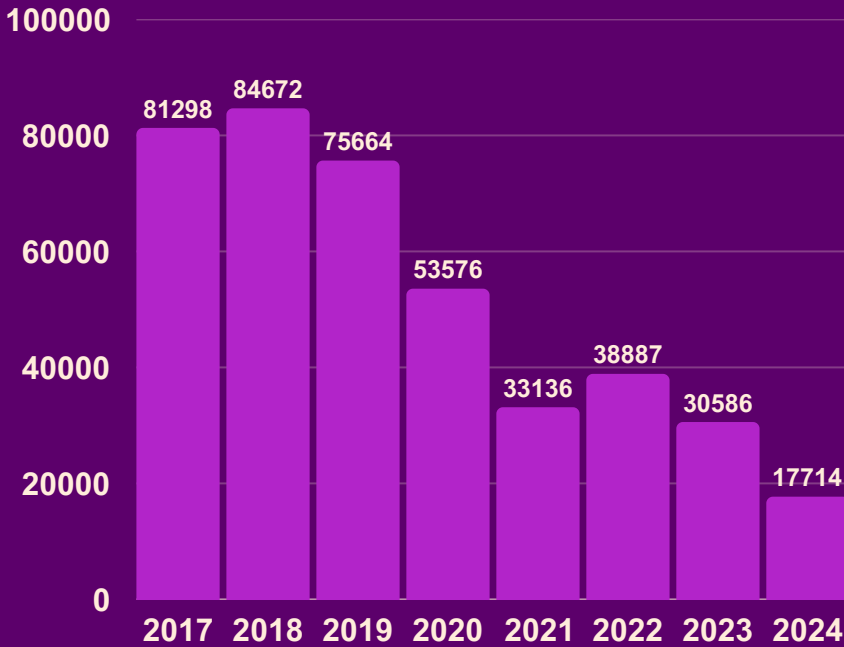
Keep Warner Robins Beautiful's cleanup of the two miles of Bay Gall Creek was a transformative effort that significantly benefited both the environment and the community. Volunteers worked diligently to remove trash, debris, and invasive materials, collecting thirty (40 gallon) bags of waste from the creek and its surrounding areas. This effort not only restored the natural beauty and health of Bay Gall Creek but also worked to improve/restore water flow when the creek fills back up, reduced potential flooding risks, and enhanced wildlife habitats. Beyond the clean-up, KWRB consistently educates the public about sustainable practices through workshops, social media campaigns, and collaborations with local schools. Our efforts extend to planting riparian buffers, reducing urban runoff, and advocating for eco-friendly policies. By fostering a sense of shared responsibility for our waterways, KWRB embodies the spirit of Rivers Alive and strives to leave a lasting legacy for future generations.

—TIFFANY BOWEN



2024 DATA

VOLUNTEER HOURS

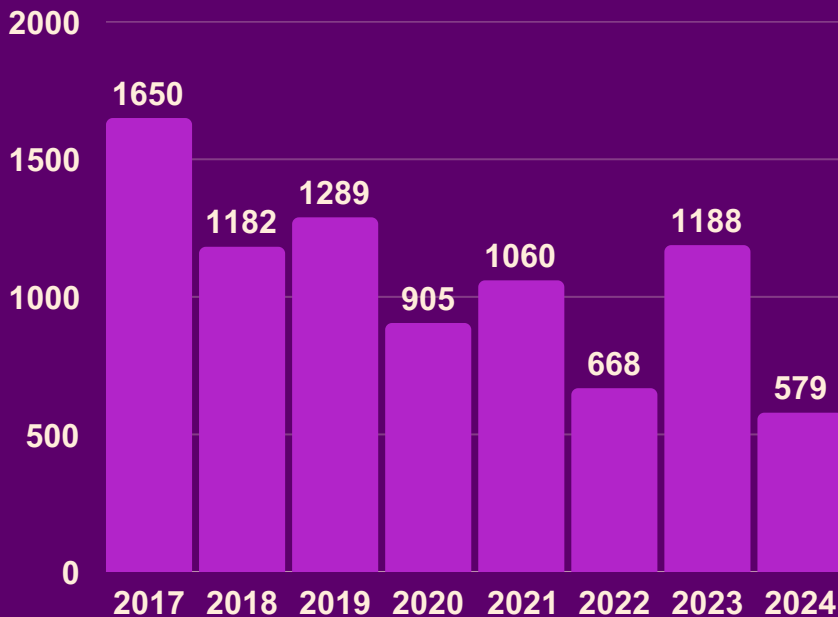


Percentage of Trash Collected that was Single-use:
69%

Odd Items Collected:

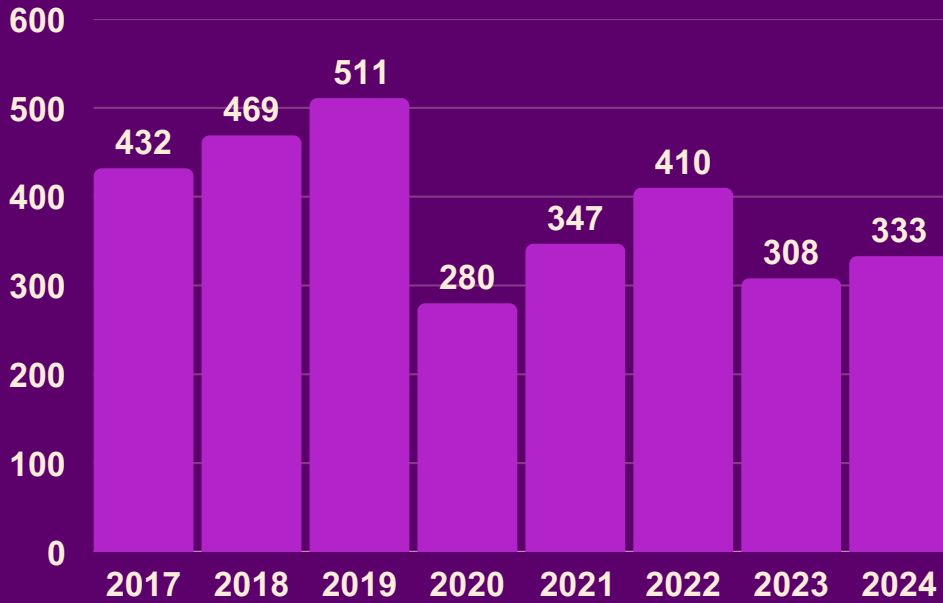
- Baby doll
- Couch
- Dog statue
- “No Trash Allowed” sign
- Piano
- Refrigerator
- 30 identical shoes
- Musical Instruments

MILES CLEANED



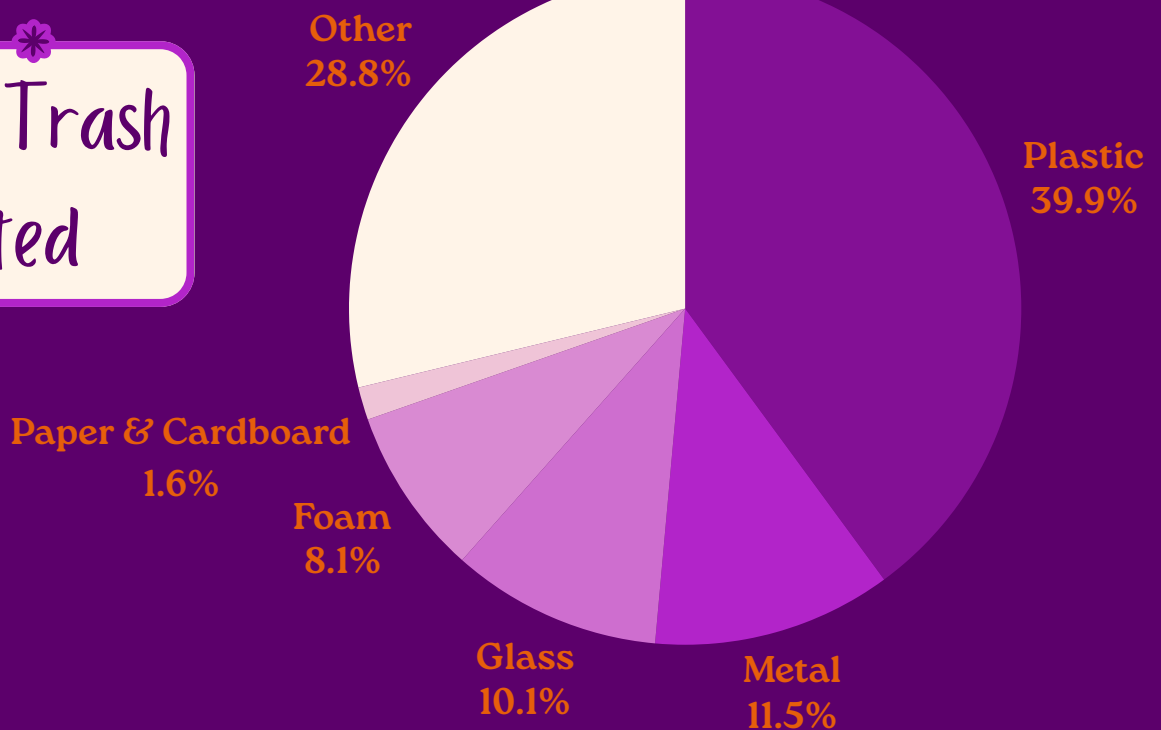
2024 DATA

THOUSANDS OF POUNDS OF TRASH CLEANED



Number of Clean-up Events Held:
101

Types of Trash Collected





COMMITTEE REPORTS

Education & Messaging:

For our 26th year we chose purple, symbolic of protection and healing, for the annual t-shirt color. The ABCs of a Waterway Cleanup, the 2024 Rivers Alive theme, honors the shared values and purpose our volunteers bring to protecting Georgia's rivers, lakes, streams, and beaches. Many of our participants and organizers are likely unaware that Georgia's state-wide waterway cleanup program is unique. The cultural practice that we have created in our state of coming together as an activated community every fall to pick-up litter and educate about the importance of clean water is exceptional and truly worthy of celebrating. Thank you for helping!

Event Coordination & Outreach:

Organizers from around Georgia could continue to use the redesigned Rivers Alive website introduced in 2023. The website was more user-friendly and provided all the information needed to clean it successfully. Organizers were provided with cleanup materials, including sign-in sheets, volunteer waiver forms, promotional materials, field data forms, T-shirts, and COVID-19 cleanup guidelines. The 2024 Annual Awards Ceremony Luncheon, a highly significant event, was held in person at the Park Tavern. This event, which recognized and celebrated cleanup groups, volunteers, and partners contributing to the Rivers Alive cleanup in 2023, underscored the collective impact of our efforts.

Fundraising:

State-level donations were used to provide Rivers Alive t-shirts to all of the Fall 2024 registered cleanups. Local sponsors also provided extra trash bags, gloves, first aid kits and other materials. Additionally, some groups procured contributions of food and other refreshments for their hard working volunteers. While Rivers Alive is unable to assure every volunteer gets a T-shirt, we are striving to get the shirts to as many volunteers as possible.





THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



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To learn more or volunteer as an
organizer, participant, or sponsor,
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RIVERS
ALIVE



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DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DIVISION

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