



Map Courtesy of Jeanne Epstein

## Oconee River Basin



Photo Courtesy of Dana Poole

The name of the river is derived from an early Creek Indian settlement in northeast Baldwin County called Oconee Old Town. Oconee is the Creek word for “the place of springs” or “the water eyes of the hills.” The Upper reach was also known as Etoho, and the Middle Oconee River was known as Ithlobee.

### Hydrologic Unit Codes (HUCs) of the Oconee River Basin in Georgia

03070101 Oconee River Above Lake Sinclair Dam

03070102 Oconee River Below Lake Sinclair Dam

### Quick Facts about the River

- The Oconee’s headwaters are in Hall County. The Middle Oconee and North Oconee flow 55-65 miles before joining below Athens to form the Oconee River.<sup>i</sup> The Oconee River then flows freely for about 20 miles until it joins the northern end of Lake Oconee, which is formed by Wallace Dam. Lake Sinclair is below Wallace Dam and is formed by Sinclair Dam. The Oconee River below Sinclair Dam flows freely, with the exception of one abandoned diversion dam near Milledgeville, for about 143 miles to its confluence with the Ocmulgee to form the Altamaha River.
- The Altamaha River was declared the 7<sup>th</sup> most endangered river in the United States in 2002 due to the loss of water flow that has resulted from reservoirs and power plants.
- The Oconee River basin drains a total of 5,330 square miles.
- The Upper Oconee contains 10,973 acres of lakes.
- Land use in the upper portion of the basin is primarily rural.
- Poultry farming, dairy farms, and grazing for beef production are found in the watershed.
- The Oconee provides drinking water through 14 surface water intakes: North Oconee River, Sandy Creek, (2) Middle Oconee River, Curry Creek, Barber Creek, Bear Creek, Apalachee River, Oconee River/Lake Oconee, Hard Labor Creek, Jacks Creek, Mulberry River, Cedar Creek (Barrow Co.), Maseys Lake
- The Oconee River basin supports a diverse and rich mix of terrestrial and aquatic habitats and is home to a number of federally and state-protected species. The Altamaha Shiner and the Robust Redhorse have State Endangered status.

## **Environmental Concerns**

### **Impoundments**

The Upper Oconee contains 5,467 impoundments which cover 175km squared in the entire watershed. The Oconee River basin contains three major surface water reservoirs, Lake Sinclair, Bear Creek Reservoir and Lake Oconee. Lake Oconee and Lake Sinclair are Georgia Power Company facilities designed and operated for the production of hydroelectric power.

### **Fishing Advisories**

Fish consumption advisories are issued by the Environmental Protection Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources for the Oconee River. Current advisories can be found on the web at <http://georgiawildlife.dnr.state.ga.us>.

## **Tourist Sites / Significant Parks Pertaining to River**

- River Rendezvous, sponsored by Upper Oconee Watershed Network, is an “annual watershed-wide monitoring event that provides a ‘snapshot’ of water quality for streams and rivers throughout the Upper Oconee.”
- Hard Labor Creek State Park and Fort Yargo State Park are on the Apalachee River which flows into the Oconee. See [www.gaparks.org](http://www.gaparks.org) for more information.

## **How to Get Involved**

### **Friends of the Apalachee**

Violet Dawe  
PO Box 155  
High Shoals, GA 30645  
Phone: 706-769-7805  
[dldawe@vet.uga.edu](mailto:dldawe@vet.uga.edu)

### **Greene County Citizens Coalition, Inc.**

1081 Katherine Lane  
Greensboro, GA 30642  
Phone: 706-474-4100  
Fax: 706-467-3093  
[ndavid@msn.com](mailto:ndavid@msn.com)

### **Lake Oconee Property Owners' Association**

Janet Pearson  
PO Box 4046  
Eatonton, GA 31024  
Phone: 706 485-4090  
Fax: 706 485-1188  
[jcp@mindspring.com](mailto:jcp@mindspring.com)  
<http://www.geocities.com/lopoa2000>

### **Save Lake Oconee's Waters (SLOW)**

Les Reed  
1040 Sword Hilt Road  
Greensboro, GA 30642  
Phone: 706-467-3682  
Fax: 706-467-3880  
[lesreed@negia.net](mailto:lesreed@negia.net)  
<http://www.lauramoore.com/slow/index.html>

### **UGA Fisheries Society**

D.B. Warnell School of Forest  
Resources, University of Georgia  
Athens, GA 30602-2152  
Fax: 706-542-8356  
[ugafish@uga.edu](mailto:ugafish@uga.edu)  
[www.uga.edu/ugafish](http://www.uga.edu/ugafish)

### **Upper Oconee Watershed Network (UOWN)**

P.O. Box 531  
Athens, GA 30603  
[upperoconee@yahoo.com](mailto:upperoconee@yahoo.com)  
[www.uown.org](http://www.uown.org)