



NORTH OCONEE RIVER PROJECT

ARTS ON THE RIVER CELEBRATION

**APRIL 29, 2018
SANDY CREEK PARK
ATHENS, GA**

Mission

1. To draft a law that recognizes the right of the North Oconee River to be healthy and to thrive.
2. To create art that explores our relationship with the North Oconee River as a rights-bearing ecosystem.

Supported in part by **Ideas for Creative Exploration, Watershed UGA**, the **Social Ecology Studio**, and the **Willson Center for Humanities and Arts** at the University of Georgia (UGA).

Additional funding provided by a Student Challenge Grant awarded by the **Alliance for the Arts in Research Universities (a2ru)**. Grant team: **Berea Antaki**, UGA Textiles and Merchandising; **Carla Cao**, UGA Music Composition; **Iva Dimitrova**, UGA Mass Media Arts; **Nima Hamidi**, University of Iowa Music Composition; **Suzie Henderson**, UGA Ecology.

For more information visit:
facebook.com/northoconeeriverproject

About

Beginning in 2006, new, locally enforceable laws, known as “rights of nature” laws began to be passed by communities throughout the U.S. with the help of a public interest law firm called the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (CELDF).

Rights of nature laws have thus far been extremely effective at banning environmentally destructive corporate activity by deeming this activity a violation of the rights of an ecosystem and by allowing residents legal standing in court to enforce those rights on behalf of the ecosystem.

The goal of the North Oconee River Project is to draft a rights of nature law for Athens that, if passed and enforced, would help protect the North Oconee River from further environmental destruction. We are a team of artists and scientists working towards this goal by expanding our role within our disciplines and fostering new, cross-disciplinary modes of thinking, working, and sharing.

Project Team Members

Carla Cao is a composer, environmentalist, and interdisciplinary researcher. She earned a BS in Biology from Florida International University where her focus was botany. For years, she conducted botanical research geared towards the restoration of Everglades National Park. She then earned her BM in Music Composition from New World School of the Arts College. Carla is a MM in Composition student at UGA. She is also a graduate research assistant for Ideas for Creative Exploration, an interdisciplinary initiative for advanced research in the arts at UGA. Her music is informed by experimental arts practices, interdisciplinary research, and her work as a community organizer and environmental activist.

Berea Antaki is a Masters of Science student in Textiles and Merchandising at UGA, where she conducts research on textile sustainability, craft, and natural fibers. She also has experience farming through her previous occupation with Americorps VISTA. Her current research includes the growing rights of the nature movement in Latin America.

Iva Dimitrova graduated from UGA with degrees in Anthropology and Mass Media Arts. She works on documentaries for non-profit organizations and lives in Athens, where she has become deeply invested in the community, having worked with organizations such as the Athens Anti-Discrimination Movement and Athens non-profit Chess and Community.

Suzie Henderson is a senior at UGA studying ecology and horticulture, and is interested specifically in the application of ecological concepts to reshape and restore our damaged landscapes. Through artistic as well as scientific processes, she is active in interdisciplinary approaches to local environmental issues. She believes that people have the power to positively affect their environment by informing decisions that are critical in sustaining the integrity of our ecosystems, especially the wetlands, rivers, and streams that provide freshwater that we and other organisms rely on for life.

Arts on the River Celebration Contributors

Jorge Gomez Abrante
Gabriella Andino
Berea Antaki
Robert Blatt
Jake Blaydes
Carla Cao
Iva Dimitrova
Lindsay Giedl
Suzie Henderson
Dean Rosenthal
Paula Runyon
Taylor Shaw
Olivia Shuler
Chris Taylor
Manfred Werder



Linds&co.

Images by Iva Dimitrova unless otherwise noted.

Artist Statements

Gabriella Andino

Gabriella Andino is a recent graduate of the Lamar Dodd School of Art with a degree in Art History. Their interests span a range of epistemologies and artistic styles with a particular emphasis on cultural development and criticism. Their film project *Separate But Equal* (2018) involves metaphorical research along the constructed borders of humanity and nature. The artist hopes to honor the indigenous Cree people, who first lived along the Oconee River, through this work.

Jake Blaydes

Jake Blaydes is a second year horticulture major at the UGA. In addition to botany, Jake enjoys practicing creative writing, French horn playing, and acting. As a Boy Scout, he is partial to the way in which Georgia river ecology defines his culture and heritage.

Carla Cao

Kayaking through Sound is a composition that treats the kayak and paddle as the instrument and the paddler as the performer. Throughout the piece, the kayak as the instrument is played through the natural act of paddling. The piece can be performed with a kayak and paddle that has not been altered, and with all the natural sounds of paddling and of the environment fully constituting the sounds of the piece. In this realization, pitched bells are attached to paddles that are activated and generate tones when the paddles make contact with the water. It is, therefore, our human interaction and, by extension our relationship with water, that generates the pitches in this piece.

Given the multiplicity of pitched and non-pitched sounds, *Kayaking through Sound* recognizes that, like the composer, the paddlers also make compositional choices by choosing what sounds (or even non-sounds) they will perceive to be part of the piece and by using the paddle and their bodies in whatever way they like to generate sounds or influence how sounds are generated. With this in mind, there is not the piece but only personal, unique experiences that take place in a context I have helped facilitate. This composition is one of several of mine that is concerned with promoting biophilia in people through musical and relationship-building experiences with nature.



Image: Rinne Allen

Lindsay Giedl

Linds&co. is an Athens-based collective of movement artists exploring social political issues and improvisation through dance. *A Woven Peace* shows the dynamics of movement through the medium of natural spaces, upbeat music, as well as the deep understanding of the human race in juxtaposition with nature.

Paula Runyon

This project deals with the overlapping of textiles and politics specifically in relation to flags as political craft objects. For this event we wanted to explore the duality of flags as objects that act as both cultural signifiers of land ownership and symbols of pride in an identity. The idea that a flag can denote ownership of land by one group of people is held so strongly as a truth in our society. We want to challenge and discuss the idea that land can be owned, purchased and controlled by groups of people and unpack the reasons why this idea has been and still is problematic. By taking the cultural symbol of a flag and deliberately employing its dual purposes we endorse the idea that the land owns itself and has pride in its identity as an ecosystem. We hope to foster a paradigm shift at the community level and encourage land users to view themselves not as superiors to the land but as equal beings with great appreciation and gratitude for the river's presence.

Taylor Shaw

As an artist I rely on the nostalgic relics of Americana. The DIY aesthetic and doctrines of yesteryear's miniature golf sculptures. Bringing play and levity to actively engage people with art. Placing art in settings where one might not normally see it. Breaking down the exclusionary practices of the white wall gallery in an effort to involve the community with something familiar and slightly askew. If art isn't for the people, then who is it for?

Olivia Shuler

Today, we can walk into a department store or craft store and see every type, color, and pattern of fabric, but fabric was once a conversation between people and the natural ecosystems they inhabited. My piece is a cotton quilt that will rejoin the conversation with the river's ecosystem, letting the river speak for itself through the process of dyeing/staining unbleached white cotton with the river water, mud, minerals, and plants. The quilting shows a map contrasting the manmade roadways of Athens with the natural path of the North Oconee River. My goal is to evoke in viewers a sense of deepened connection to the environment in their "backyard" and appreciation for the simpler visual language that it speaks.

Chris Taylor, 34 North

I am a textile and land artist finding grace in the unseen, and exploring the carnivalesque properties of a post-modern, techno-based life. My work strives to bring not only order to chaos, a tangle of vines, limbs, yarn or fabric, but to discover the joy of surprise. To find and experience a moment of reflection, mindfulness, or contemplation.



Olivia Shuler

Image: Rinne Allen

Stroud Elementary Day of Service

By Suzie Henderson

Situated in the headwaters of the Trail Creek Watershed, Stroud Elementary School is nestled in a unique location for learning about the North Oconee River. A small, soon-to-be-named tributary flows right beside the school, receiving a significant volume of the runoff from the Piggly Wiggly park lot upstream during heavy rains. A forest with a winding nature trail obscures and protects the stream, home to both native and exotic species.

I had the privilege and pleasure to visit Stroud Elementary to teach students ranging from grades 2-5, many of them members of the award-winning Problem Solving Team led by teacher Leslie Brown and assisted by UGA student Liz French.



We introduced the eager students to ecology and the importance of protecting waterways at the local watershed level. Fellow ecology student Carolyn Cummins, NORP team member Carla Cao, and I led a series of three lessons that began with geography of the North Oconee watershed within the context of larger river networks such as the Altamaha River.



The next lesson focused on biodiversity in stream ecosystems and approaches to restoring ecological integrity of river systems starting with smaller headwater tributaries like the one at Stroud. That day, the Southeastern Conservation Corps spoke to the students as they took a brief respite from the tough work of removing invasives from the forest adjacent to Stroud.

The third lesson built on the concepts the students had learned and experienced, and presented watershed protection through the framework of the rights of nature. They expressed the rights they believed rivers possessed: the right to be seen, to be clean, to have space, and to flow freely, to name a few. As a group, the students then completed a work of art made from yarn that was braided and tied to represent a web of interconnected waterways. Watching the children excitedly tie knots and teaching each other to braid filled me with hope that people can work together on these messy situations that can also be enjoyable if we do it together. Creating art was a memorable way to sum up the main objective of the lessons: to gain an awareness and appreciation for the complexity and interconnectedness of local water ecosystems like our very own North Oconee River.



occupied spaces (2)

for any number of insertion vibration transducers,

natural cavities, speakers, and performers

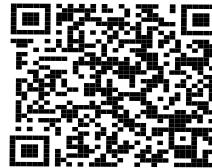
insert a vibration transducer into a cavity

(e.g. tree trunk, shoreline, patch of grass, etc...)

connect the microphone to a speaker

simulate and respond to the sounds you hear

end after a while



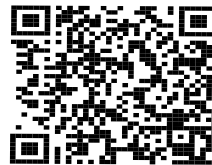
Boards and Ukes (number 8)

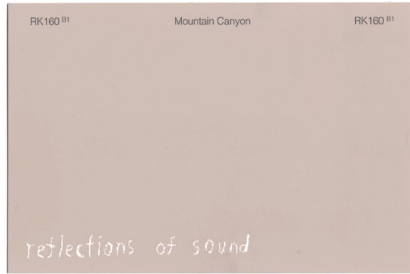
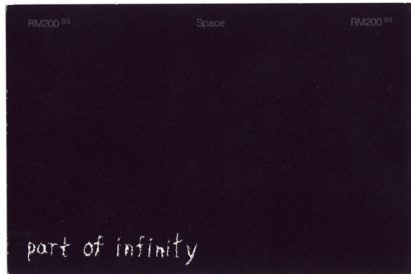
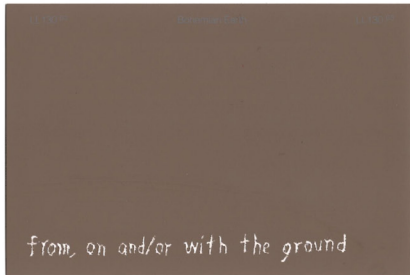
for people skateboarding and playing ukulele

travel through an environment

tune your strings to the environment

retune as the environment changes





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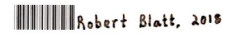
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Space
RM200[®]



KILZ
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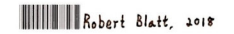
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Darkening Sky
RK1230[®]



KILZ
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Colección de Color

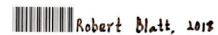
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Mountain Canyon
RK160[®]



KILZ
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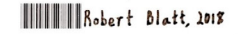
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Bohemian Earth
LL130[®]



spinne spider
luft air
eukalyptus eucalyptus
wespe wasp
blütenblätter petals
regen rain

Anna Ruby

By Jake Blaydes

After the Civil War, Captain J. H. Nichols began purchasing land throughout the Nacoochee Valley. According to folklore, after the deaths of his wife and child, Nichols "discovered" a set of falls while horseback riding and named them for his remaining daughter.

Nature's pilgrims journey hence--
This blanket of green vibrance
Secure with gargantuan boulder guards,
Gifted with solemn soldier trees.

Following the fleeing wooden stream,
Sunlight stirs sight, I see
Radiance that whispers jubilation:
The breath she takes given to me.

Every drop upon my surface
Sinking Emersonian solace;
Within the sounds of plopping rain
Her boiling waters call to me.

The centrifuge of this complex--
The Union of two webs of streams--
Falling freely in cool embrace
Birthing the warmth of life in this place.

Stones/Water/Time/Breath

Site-specific: outside, by the water, any body of water, like: a pond, the ocean, a lake, a stream, a river ...

Materials: Stones. As many or as few as desired.
Maybe they are already there.

How to Perform:

Arrive, set a start time, start.

1. Use the stones as elements or implements to make percussive sounds on the water.
2. Play the water with the stones.
3. Play singly, together, rhythmically, with solos, triplets, common rhythms, irregular rhythms, cycles, patterns, with no rhythms.
4. There can be pauses.
5. No speaking.

When you feel the performance has ended,
end the performance.

Composed by Dean Rosenthal

at Turkeyland Cove, Martha's Vineyard
on May 12, 2012

Register your performance: stones@stonespiece.com

www.stonespiece.com



Image: Rinne Allen



Preface to the Athens-Clarke County Community Bill of Rights and Rights of Nature Ordinance

By Carla Cao and Suzie Henderson

We the People of Athens-Clarke County, needing clean waterways to sustain the health of our families, homesteads, and businesses, herein move to exercise our right to govern the disposition of our natural environment. The waterways of Athens-Clarke County, including the **North Oconee River**, are being increasingly threatened by discharges stemming from industrial, agricultural, and commercial land uses that cause soil erosion and runoff of polluted sediment. We aim to protect our local waterways that support plant and animal life but cannot bear unsustainable practices without suffering growing devastation. We invite all concerned residents to join this effort.

The local ordinance proposed herein supplements the merits and corrects the flaws of established laws, such as the **Clean Water Act** of 1972 and the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (**NPDES**), which were adopted in part to protect rivers from hazardous inputs such as pesticides, herbicides, and industrial discharges. Unfortunately, regulators hampered by budgetary constraints, ideological motives, and conflicts of interest have been unable and unwilling to prevent ongoing neglect and violation of the **NPDES** permit system. For example, one of the world's largest makers of chicken products operates a processing plant next to our beloved North Oconee

River. Sadly, the Pilgrim's Pride Corporation operates with state-issued stormwater permits that do not adequately prevent untreated, hazardous runoff contaminated with bacteria-laden chicken parts, feces, and organic as well as chemical pollutants. Moreover, the deteriorating health of our streams and rivers is compounded by runoff from other large-scale activities such as construction and agribusiness.

The **North Oconee River Project**, organized by a community concerned with the health of its people and waterways, has reached out to neighboring communities across the nation seeking knowledge and guidance about a new and promising legal effort called **rights of nature** laws. Since 2006 in communities throughout America, including large cities like Pittsburgh, PA, people from all walks of life; students, parents, workers, teachers, lawyers, retirees, and others have learned that by researching, drafting, passing and ensuring enforcement of local ordinances they can effectively protect the health and well-being of their environments. Courts across the U.S. have recognized that natural entities, such as rivers, have the right to exist and flourish, to enjoy legal representation, to exercise due process of law, and to benefit exclusively from all proceeds awarded by the courts for their protection, preservation, and restoration. The following ordinance is a preliminary draft that will be revised and improved before we move to get it on the ballot. We invite everyone in the community interested in caring for the health of our waterways to join us in this growing vital effort.

Excerpts from the Athens-Clarke County Community Bill of Rights and Rights of Nature Ordinance

“Rights of Residents and Water Ecosystems” Ordinance

Purpose

A. Our community finds that illicit point and nonpoint source discharges into our local waterways are economically and environmentally unsustainable, in that they damage our public health, our property values, our roads, our bridges, and our natural environment while failing to provide real benefits to the people of this community; and...

B. The Constitution of the State of Georgia states:

“All government, of right, originates with the people, is founded upon their will only, and is instituted solely for the good of the whole. Public officers are the trustees and servants of the people and are at all times amenable to them.”
Ga. Const. Art. 1, Sec 2, Paragraph I.

“The people of this state have the inherent right of regulating their internal government. Government is instituted for the protection, security, and benefit of the people; and at times they have the right to alter or reform the same whenever the public good may require it.” Ga. Const. Art. 1, Sec 2, Paragraph II.

Definitions

A. “Corporations,” for purposes of this ordinance, shall include any corporation, limited partnership, limited liability partnership, business trust, or limited liability company organized under the laws of any state of the United States or under the laws of any country, and any other business entity that possesses State-conferred limited liability attributes for its owners, directors, officers, and/or managers.

B. “Water Ecosystem,” the term shall include, but not be limited to, wetlands, streams, rivers, aquifers, and other water systems, as well as all organisms that inhabit these water systems.

Statements of Law: Rights of Athens-Clarke County Residents and the Water Ecosystems

A. People as Sovereign. The unified government of Athens-Clarke County shall be the governing authority responsible to, and governed by, the residents of the County. Use of “Athens-Clarke County” Municipal Corporation by the sovereign people of the County to make law shall not be construed to limit or surrender the sovereign authority or immunities of the people to a municipal corporation that is subordinate to them in all respects at all times. The people at all times enjoy and retain an inalienable and inalienable right to self-governance in the community where they reside.

B. Right to Self-Government. All residents of Athens-Clarke County possess the fundamental and inalienable right to a form of governance where they live which recognizes that all power is inherent in the people, that all free governments are founded on the people’s authority and consent, and that corporate entities and their directors and managers shall not enjoy special privileges or powers under the law which make community majorities subordinate to them.

C. Right to Water. All residents, natural communities and ecosystems in Athens-Clarke County possess a fundamental and inalienable right to sustainably access, use, consume, and preserve water drawn from natural water cycles that provide water necessary to sustain life within the County.

D. Rights of Water Ecosystems. Water ecosystems, including, but not limited to, wetlands, streams, rivers, aquifers, and other water systems, possess inalienable and fundamental rights to exist and flourish within Athens-Clarke County. All residents of the County shall possess legal standing to enforce those rights on behalf of those water ecosystems.

Statements of Law: Prohibitions and Corporate Legal Privileges

A. Corporate Powers Shall Be Subordinate to People’s Rights

1. Corporations which violate this Ordinance, or which seek to violate this Ordinance, shall not be deemed to be “persons,” nor possess any other legal rights, privileges, powers, or protections which would interfere with the rights or prohibitions enumerated by this Ordinance.

“Rights, privileges, powers, or protections” shall include the power to assert state or federal preemptive laws in an attempt to overturn this Ordinance, and the power to assert that the people of this municipality lack the authority to adopt this Ordinance.

2. All laws adopted by the legislature of the State of Georgia, and rules adopted by any State agency, shall be the law of Athens-Clarke County only to the extent that they do not violate the rights or prohibitions of this Ordinance.

Enforcement

A. Any corporation that violates any prohibition of this Ordinance shall be guilty of an offense and, upon conviction thereof, shall be sentenced to pay the maximum fine allowable under State law for that violation. Each day or portion thereof, and violation of each section of this Ordinance shall count as separate violations.

B. The County, or any resident of the County, may enforce the rights and prohibitions of this Ordinance through an action brought in any court possessing jurisdiction over activities occurring within the County. In such an action, the County or the resident shall be entitled to recover all costs of litigation, including, without limitation, expert and attorney's fees.

C. Any action brought by either a resident of the County or by the County to enforce or defend the rights of ecosystems or natural communities secured by this Ordinance shall bring that action in the name of the ecosystem or natural community in a court possessing jurisdiction over activities occurring within the County. Damages shall be measured by the cost of restoring the ecosystem or natural community to its state before the injury, and shall be paid to the County to be used exclusively for the full and complete restoration of the ecosystem or natural community.

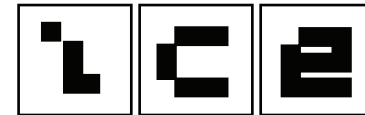
Thank you!

a²RU

ALLIANCE FOR THE ARTS
IN RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

The Athens-Clarke County Community Bill of Rights and Rights of Nature Ordinance was drafted with the assistance of professor Laurie Fowler's Environmental Law Practicum student body at the University of Georgia, including Benjamin Wilde (Environmental Law), Suzie Henderson (Ecology), and Frannie Ogbozor (Environmental Law), UGA students Julia Mueller (Environmental Law) and Carla Cao (Music Composition), and national educator in the Community Rights Movement, Paul Cienfuegos.

Updated 5-3-18



Willson Center
for humanities & arts

