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For Immediate Release

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Scientists Demonstrate Environmentally-Friendly Development Practices in the Etowah River Watershed

The Nature Conservancy, Upper Etowah River Alliance Partner to Create a Public Stormwater Management Demonstration Site in Canton, GA

CANTON, GA — Scientists agree that development — primarily stormwater runoff— is the number one threat to aquatic health in the Etowah River watershed.

Now, The Nature Conservancy and the Upper Etowah River Alliance (UERA), with support from The Coca-Cola Foundation, have constructed a working example of science-based techniques to properly drain and filter stormwater before it reaches **the Etowah River, a drinking water source for local communities including 10 percent of metro-Atlanta's water supply.**

Located at the UERA office in Canton, Georgia, this demonstration site is available for citizens, developers and government personnel to learn from and duplicate.

Featured at the site are an environmentally-friendly porous parking lot and a restored drainage ditch. Crews reshaped the ditch channel, and placed coconut matting and other natural material in the ditch bed to slow water, capture sediment and allow infiltration. In the coming months, invasive plants along the ditch banks will be replaced with native vegetation.

“By incorporating sustainable stormwater management practices into the design of our homes and other buildings, we — as a community — can help ensure our rivers and streams remain free of pollutants and sediments that can harm the health of the river and impact the well-being of the wildlife and people that depend on the Etowah,” said Katie Owens, Upper Coosa River Program director for The Nature Conservancy.

Please Join Us

The public is invited to the Upper Etowah River Alliance office in Canton, Georgia, on **Thursday, June 18 from 6 to 9 p.m.** for a quarterly meeting and open house, including a tour of the stormwater management site.

The office is located at 180 McClure Street, Canton, Georgia.

RSVP to Diane Minick, (770) 704-5479 or dianeminick@msn.com

The demonstration site is the culmination of eight years of work on the part of The Nature Conservancy, UERA and other partners to develop specific policies and ordinances related to stormwater runoff in the Etowah River watershed.

Detailed in a public document known as the [Etowah Habitat Conservation Plan](#), these policies encourage new development to incorporate environmentally-friendly practices—like the ones on display at the UERA office—to mimic the ground’s natural absorption of stormwater, which has been altered by incompatible development practices. Once absorbed, the ground naturally filters pollutants from the water before it reaches the Etowah River.

“The most critical element of the Etowah Habitat Conservation Plan is the stormwater management program,” said Diane Minick, UERA watershed director. “By demonstrating proper stormwater infiltration techniques at the UERA demonstration site, engineers, landscape architects and plan review staff can see the environmental benefits of the system in action.”

About the Etowah River

Spanning more than 400,000, the Etowah River—including some 100 tributaries— flows along the northern edge of metro-Atlanta and drains portions of 11 north Georgia counties. One of the region’s most biologically diverse freshwater systems, the Etowah is home to more imperiled aquatic species, including the federally endangered Etowah darter, than any other rivers system its size in the Southeast. The Etowah darter, while only two to three inches long, is a prime indicator of overall river health.

“If the darters can't survive in the river, then the fish we try to get on our hooks for our dinner plates may die soon after the darters and the cycle will continue up the food chain,” Minick said. “Poor water quality not only affects the web of life in the river system, but may also impact the human communities that depend on it as a drinking water source.”

For information about how you can incorporate better stormwater management practices on your property, call either Katie Owens at (706) 234-1404 or Diane Minick at (770) 704-5479.

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The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 18 million acres in the United States (including more than 275,000 acres in Georgia) and have helped preserve more than 117 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. Visit The Nature Conservancy on the Web at nature.org/georgia.

The Upper Etowah River Alliance (UERA) is a community-based watershed protection group that works in the Etowah basin upstream of Lake Allatoona. Formed in 1997, the UERA provides regional leadership to promote watershed protection strategies throughout the five Upper Etowah counties

(Cherokee, Forsyth, Pickens, Dawson and Lumpkin). Our membership is made up of a diverse group of stakeholders. To learn more, visit <http://etowahriver.org/>.