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Paddle Georgia 2017 To Venture on Etowah River June 17-23

A week-long canoe/kayak adventure from Dawsonville to Rome

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Jan. 25, 2017 The country's largest week-long canoe/kayak camping adventure this year strokes through the 163-mile-long Etowah River that flows from the north Georgia mountains to northwest Georgia's Rome.

Registration for Paddle Georgia, the annual event organized by Georgia River Network (GRN) opens Jan. 31 at www.garivers.org/paddle_georgia, and organizers expect the 450 spaces available for the trip to go quickly.

Registration is on a first-come, first serve basis until the event sells out. Paddle Georgia runs from June 17-23 and will cover 125 miles of the river over the course of seven days from near Dawsonville to downtown Rome.

"This will be the 13th Paddle Georgia event since 2005, and we've found that north Georgia rivers that flow through metro Atlanta are among our most popular trips," said Joe Cook, Paddle Georgia coordinator. "Aside from that, the Etowah is arguably the best family paddling river in the state. It's a beautiful river, rich in history and though there are small shoals and rapids, it's a great river for novice paddlers."

This will be Paddle Georgia's second adventure on the Etowah; the group also paddled the river in 2006.

Registration fees are \$425 for adults, \$230 for children 8-17 and \$30 for children 7 and under. A very limited number of spaces are available for "Paddle Georgia Lite," an abbreviated version of the trip that includes just the first two days. Registration fees for Paddle Georgia Lite are \$120, \$70 and \$15. Additional registration information is available at www.garivers.org/paddle_georgia.

The event, billed as an environmental education adventure for the whole family, is designed to connect people with Georgia's rivers. In addition to paddling about 17 miles each day, participants will learn about the river through nightly programs about the river's ecology and cultural history and special tours of historic sites and industrial facilities.

It also serves as a fundraiser for Georgia River Network and local watershed groups working to protect the river. Since the inaugural Paddle Georgia in 2005, GRN has introduced more than 4,000 paddlers to more than 1200 miles of water trails on 13 Georgia rivers. Along the way the event has generated more than \$400,000 for river protection. Coosa River Basin Initiative based in Rome and Upper Etowah River Alliance based in Canton will be the local groups benefitting from this year's event.

Paddle Georgia 2017 will introduce paddlers to one of the most biologically diverse rivers of its size in the country. It is home to three federally protected fish species, and it is also a place where paddlers can literally reach out and touch history. The river is home to more Native American fish weirs than any other Georgia river. These rock dams, built by the region's first inhabitants, were used to catch fish and date back 500 to 1000 years.

The route will take paddlers through Dawson, Forsyth and Cherokee counties before bypassing Lake Allatoona. The final three days of the trip will take paddlers through Bartow and Floyd counties and will include a stop at the Etowah Indian Mounds Historic Site.

A street party in downtown Cartersville and a River's End Celebration in Rome are also planned.

Sponsors of the event include Columbia, Cedar Creek Park and Outdoor Center, CYA Insurance Agency, Oglethorpe Power, Cary S. Baxter CPA, LLC, Troncalli Subaru, R. Terry Park CPA, China Clay Producers Association and the Georgia Mining Association. Partners include American Canoe Association, Café Campesino, Coosa River Basin Initiative, Upper Etowah River Alliance, Georgia Canoe Association, Georgia Adopt-A-Stream and Project WET.

Georgia River Network is a non-profit 501c3 organization working to ensure a clean water legacy by engaging and empowering Georgians to protect and restore our rivers from the mountains to the coast.

Those interested in participating can get more information at the Paddle Georgia website at http://www.garivers.org/paddle_georgia or by contacting Joe Cook at 706-409-0128 or joecookpg@gmail.com, or contacting Dana Skelton at 706-549-4508 or info@garivers.org.

Photos of past events are available upon request. If you would like to arrange a photo shoot or interview on the river, please contact Joe Cook or Dana Skelton.

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