COUNTY AGENDA REQUEST

Department:	Environmental Management	Presenter(s):	Vanessa Birrell
Meeting Date:	Thursday, May 14, 2015	Type of Request:	New Business

Wording for the Agenda:

Consideration of staff's recommendation to adopt Resolution 2015-06 in support of the Whitewater Creek Water Trail in Fayette County.

Background/History/Details:

Currently in Georgia there are 14 established water trails and eight under development.

Southern Conservation Trust is proposing that the Whitewater Creek Water Trail begin at the Ridge Nature Area located south of State Route 54 and finishing at Starr's Mill, located north of State Route 85. This proposed water trail will be sponsored, maintained and promoted through a partnership between the City of Fayetteville, Fayette County, and the Southern Conservation Trust who collectively own 34% percent of the property along Whitewater Creek. This water trail will provide publicly accessible areas that paddlers can legally access to safely unload boats and park vehicles. Southern Conservation Trust will work toward property owner education and obtaining easements from landowners along Whitewater Creek.

This projects aligns with the Fayette County Visioning goals and it affords the county an opportunity to be good environmental stewards through collaboration with other county jurisdictions and environmental entities.

What action are you seeking from the Board of Commissioners?

Approval of staff's recommendation to adopt Resolution 2015-06 in support of the Whitewater Creek Water Trail in Fayette County.

If this item requires funding, please describe:

Not Applicable.

Has this request been considered within the past two years?	Yes	If so, when?	April 3, 2015 Retreat
Is Audio-Visual Equipment Required for this Request?*	No	Backup Provided with Request?	Yes

**** All audio-visual material must be submitted to the County Clerk's Office no later than 48 hours prior to the meeting. It is also your department's responsibility to ensure all third-party audio-visual material is submitted at least 48 hours in advance.***

Approved by Finance	Not Applicable	Reviewed by Legal	
Approved by Purchasing	Not Applicable	County Clerk's Approval	Yes
Administrator's Approval			

Staff Notes:

The Whitewater Creek Water Trail was discussed during the April 3, 2015 Board of Commissioners Retreat.

RESOLUTION 2015-06

A RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT THE WHITEWATER CREEK WATER TRAIL
FOR THE COUNTY OF FAYETTE, GA

WHEREAS, the citizens of Fayette County value the natural resources and outdoor recreation opportunities afforded by Whitewater Creek; and

WHEREAS, the citizens value Whitewater Creek for its water quality and habitat protection; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of the County will greatly benefit from the recreational and natural experiences provided by the water trail; and

WHEREAS, providing access to the creek is a desired goal of the County; and

WHEREAS, Fayette County has worked with the Southern Conservation trust to perform a preliminary study to evaluate a water trail along Whitewater Creek; and

WHEREAS, the water trail is consistent with the comprehensive land use plan of Fayette County for recreational facilities for its citizens; and

WHEREAS, the County has previously supported activities that promote recreation on water resources; and

WHEREAS, the Fayette County Board of Commissioners supports the Southern Conservation Trust to work and educate the citizens of Fayette County and to obtain easements with land owners along Whitewater Creek;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of Fayette County, Georgia that Fayette County both affirms and supports the Whitewater Creek Water Trail project, with said project beginning at The Ridge Nature Area located in the City of Fayetteville and ending at Starr's Mill located in Fayette County. Be it further resolved that the Board of Commissioners of Fayette County supports the Whitewater Creek Water Trail project due to its ongoing value and benefit to the citizens of Fayette County and its neighboring counties

So Resolved this 14th Day of May 2015

_____
Charles W. Oddo, Chairman

Attest:

_____
Floyd L. Jones, County Clerk

WHITEWATER CREEK WATER TRAIL

Overview

- Concept/Scope
  - Georgia Water Trails
  - Federal and State Requirements
- Who Owns Whitewater Creek
- County Opportunities
- Funding Sources
- Challenges
- Benefits

What is a Water Trail

A water trail is sponsored, maintained and promoted by a local entity or partnership.

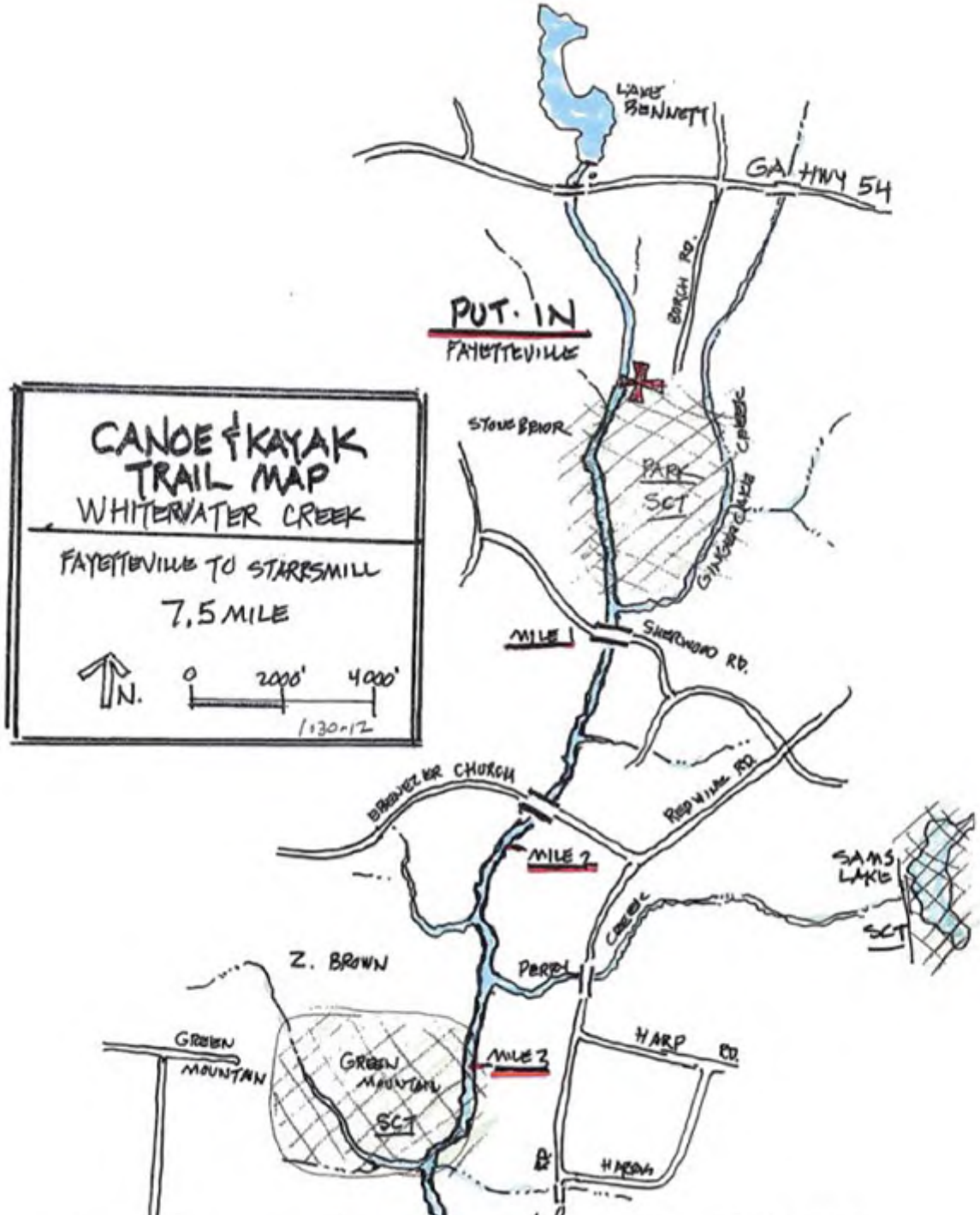
Publicly accessible areas that paddlers can legally access and safely unload boats and park vehicles.

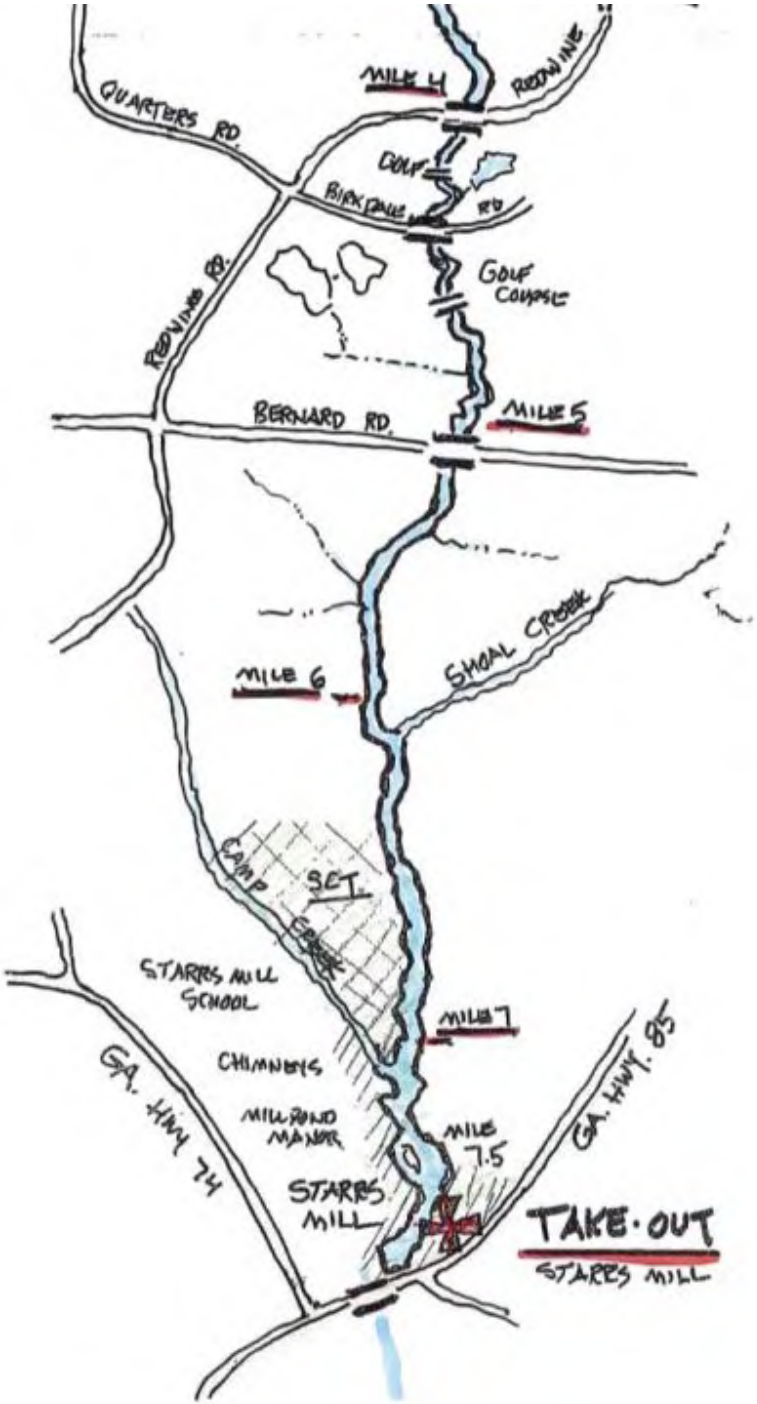
<u>The proposed Whitewater Creek water trail:</u>

Length: ~7.5 miles long

From: The Ridge Nature Area (South of State Route 54)

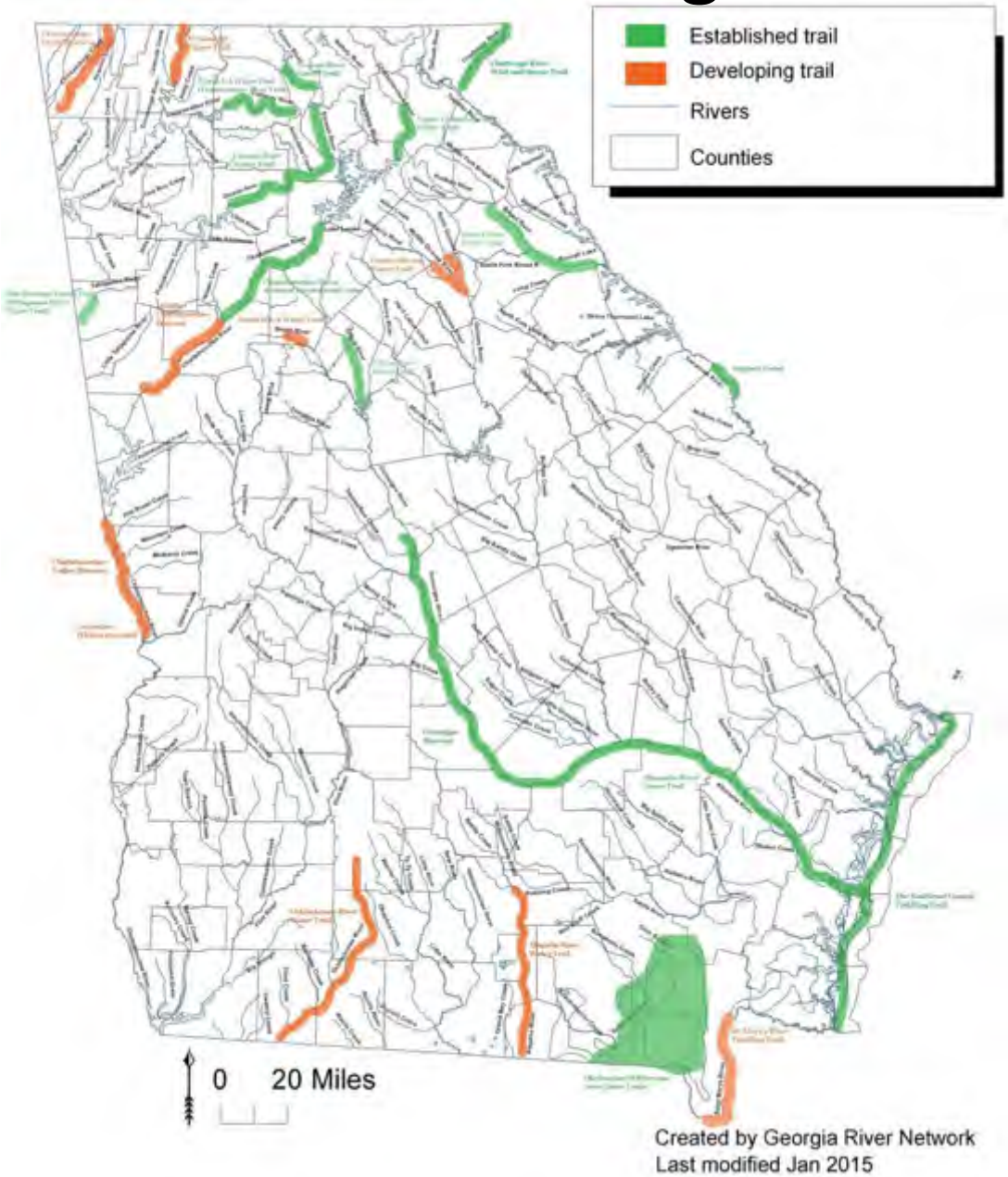
To: Starr's Mill (North of State Route 85)


CANOE & KAYAK
TRAIL MAP
WHITEWATER CREEK
FAYETTEVILLE TO STARRSMILL
7.5 MILE
N.
0
2000'
4000'
1130-12
LAKE BENNETT
GA HWY 54
BIRCH RD.
PUT-IN
FAYETTEVILLE
STONEBRIAR
PARK
SCT
GINGER CREEK
MILE 1
SHERWOOD RD.
EBENEZER CHURCH
REDWINE RD.
MILE 2
SAMS LAKE
SCT
Z. BROWN
PERRY
GREEN MOUNTAIN
GREEN MOUNTAIN
SCT
MILE 3
HARP RD.
HARP


MILE 4
REDWINE
QUARTERS RD.
GOLF
BIRKDALE RD
GOLF COURSE
REDWINE RD.
BERNARD RD.
MILE 5
SHOAL CREEK
MILE 6
CAMP CREEK
SET
STARRS MILL SCHOOL
MILE 7
CHIMNEYS
MILLPOND MANOR
MILE 7.5
STARRS MILL
GA. HWY. 74
GA. HWY. 85
TAKE-OUT
STARRS MILL

What are the Current/Developing Water Trails in Georgia:

Georgia Water Trails



Established Water Trails

- Altamaha River Canoe Trail
- Broad River Water Trail
- Augusta Canal
- Chattahoochee River National Recreational Area
- Chattooga National Wild and Scenic River
- Etowah River Water Trail
- Headwaters North Georgia Water Trail
- Ocmulgee River Water Trail
- Okefenokee Wilderness Area Canoe Trails
- Tallapoosa River Canoe Trail
- Toccoa River Canoe Trail
- Southeast Coast Saltwater Paddling Trail
- Upper Chattahoochee River Water Trail
- Yellow River Water Trail

Trails Under Development

- Alapaha River Water Trail
- Columbus Whitewater Park
- Conasauga Canoe Trail
- Middle Chattahoochee Blueway
- Ochlockonee River Water Trail
- Oconee River Water Trails
- South River Water Trail
- St. Mary's River Paddling Trail

What are the Requirements for a Water Trail in Georgia

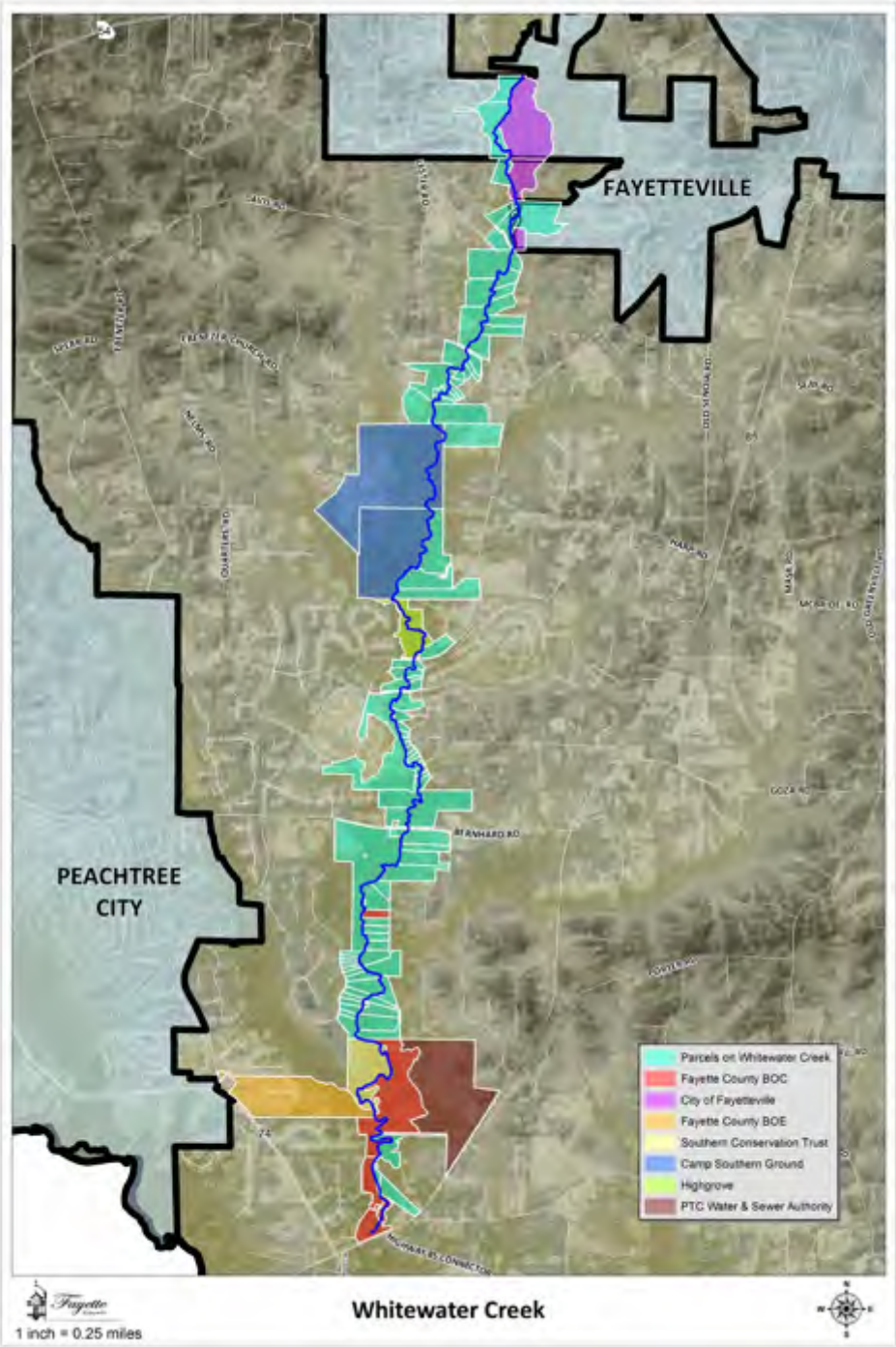
- **Established Trails Must Meet the Following Criteria[1]:**
  - Trail is sponsored, maintained and promoted by a local entity or partnership.
  - Publicly accessible areas that paddlers can legally access and safely unload boats and park vehicles.
  - River access sites are appropriately spaced apart on the river so that they may be reasonably paddled in a few hours or a full day.
  - Depending on the length of the trail, water access to public overnight camping sites.
  - Information about the water trail provided to paddlers through a website and maps created by the sponsoring entity
  - Signage/ kiosks placed at all water trail access points that include: river etiquette information, paddling safety information, and a map of the water trail.

1- http://www.garivers.org/gwtc/georgia-water-trails.html

Federal and State Requirements

- Army Corp of Engineers
  - Nationwide permit to construct dock
  - OK to clear vegetation along river
- Georgia Environmental Protection Division
  - Buffer variance where needed

So Who Owns Whitewater Creek



Whitewater Creek Property Owners

- 93 Property owners
- Fayette County Board of Commissioner's
- City of Fayetteville
- Fayette County Board of Education
- Southern Conservation Trust
  - Camp Southern Ground Easement
  - Highgrove
- Peachtree City Water and Sewer Authority
  - Possible Educational Site

Whitewater Creek Property Owners

Owner/Dedicated Easements*	Percentage
Southern Conservation Trust	16%
Fayette County Board of Commissioners	14%
Providence United Methodist Church	6%
Highgrove Home Owners Association	5%
Sequoia Golf, Whitewater Creek	5%
City of Fayetteville	4%
Other Property Owners	50%
Total	100%

* Top 6 property/easement owners based on stream length

Fayette County Opportunities

- Support Southern Conservation Trust with property owner outreach campaign
- Can partner with Southern Conservation Trust and others to build Environmental Resource Education Center

Environmental Resource Education Center

Possible Exhibits

- Water Conservation
- Fayette Water Ways
- Interactive Nature trail(s) identifying wildlife and natural vegetation
- Georgia Native Animals/Birds Sanctuary
- Water as a Resource
- Historical Sites in Fayette County
  - Starr's Mill
  - Court House etc.
- Protected wildlife and vegetation located in our watershed
- Interactive Self-Guided tours
- Watershed in Fayette County Video

Possible Environmental Education Funding Sources

- Local
  - Southern Conservation Trust
  - Fayetteville
  - Fayette County
  - Fayette County Board of Education
  - Other
- Grants
  - Five Star
  - 319(h) Grant
  - Other
- SPLOST

Challenges

Challenges

- Property Owner Education
- Southern Conservation Trust will work towards obtaining easements from every landowner
  - Problem Properties
  - Reluctant Property Owners

Benefits[2]

- Recreation
- Conservation
  - Canoe trails help create environmental stewards
  - Wildlife
- Economics
  - Increased Spending at local businesses
  - New businesses developed to support the trail

2 - National Park Services, Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance Program *Benefits of Water Trails*
http://www.garivers.org/files/CG_Benefits%20of%20Water%20Trails.pdf

Staff's Recommendation

- **<u>Support Southern Conservation Trusts Concept</u>**
  - The projects aligns with Fayette County Visioning
    - Education
    - Economy
    - Community
    - Place
  - Its is a multijurisdictional project
  - Inexpensive relative to other recreation projects
  - County owns approximately 14% of Whitewater Creek
  - Allows the county to be good environmental stewards though collaboration