

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

RIVER BASIN CENTER



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA
River Basin Center

Year highlights

The 18th Biennial Georgia Water Resources Conference

The 2023 Georgia Water Resources Conference (GWRC) on March 30 and 31 was one of the largest on record, with 380 attendees from across the region.

Since its inception in 1989, the conference has fostered open discussion on current water issues among government organizations, universities, private consultancies and NGOs. Between panelists, poster presenters, and oral presentations, 224 people presented at the conference. There were 6 tracks, 35 sessions, and a poster session, which included 48 posters. The 2023 conference saw a 26% increase in registrations since 2019, the last in-person conference, a 20% increase in presentations offered and 30% increase in posters presented.

Almost 30% of our talks and 75% of our posters were presented by students, for a total of 74 presentations by students. 116 students—undergraduate, graduate and a small contingent of high schoolers—attended the 2023 meeting, making up about 29% of our total registrants. About 55% of registrants (more than half of them students) came from the academic sector, nearly 20% represented governmental organizations, about 12% were from the private sector, and a little less than 12% represented NGOs.



Photo by Carissa Bogan



Photo by Gabriel Stephenson

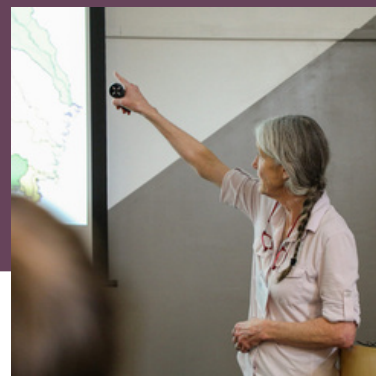


Photo by Gabriel Stephenson

Fall Graduate Poster Contest

Thirty students showcased their research on Friday, Oct. 20, at the first-ever RBC graduate research poster contest, *Confluence*.

Student work spanned a range of policy and aquatic topics, from hydrodynamic models for analyzing land-to-ocean litter transport, to policy solutions addressing cattle's unrestricted access to streams, to research on nonnative catfish species. Posters also ranged widely in their stage of research, with some students highlighting work nearly at its inception and others presenting completed projects. The event garnered interest across campus.

Over a hundred people, including faculty and students from diverse disciplines, attended the event. An interdisciplinary panel awarded **Kaili Gregory**, a Ph.D. student at the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources, first prize for her poster, "Effects of drought, invasive species, and habitat loss on future extinction risk of two species of imperiled freshwater turtle."

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This year we welcomed...



Photo by Andrew Davis Tucker/ UGA

Krista Capps, Associate Director

Earlier this year, associate professor Krista Capps stepped into the role of associate director for the River Basin Center. Capps joins directors of science and policy, Seth Wenger and Sechindra Vallury, respectively. As a rotating position, the associate director will expand the Center's outreach and education programming and support existing initiatives. Capps has been an affiliate of the River Basin Center since her hire at the Odum School of Ecology in 2015.

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John Spencer Research Grant Recipients

These grants were inaugurated in 2016 with a generous donation from Kathelen Amos, John Spencer's mother. Ongoing support for the annual awards comes from donations.



Provided photo

Carolyn Cummins, a Ph.D. student at the Odum School of Ecology, researches the effects of temperature on carbon processing and macroinvertebrate communities in headwater stream ecosystems in the Southern Appalachians. She was awarded full funding for her proposal.

Fabiola Lopez Avila, who is pursuing her master's through the Integrative Conservation and Sustainability program, was awarded full funding for her proposal on how plastics impact freshwater ecosystems.



Provided photo



Provided photo

Shishir Rao, an Integrative Conservation (ICON) and Ecology Ph.D. student, was awarded partial funding for his proposal on hydropower dams in the Western Ghats of India.

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2023 John Spencer Fellow: Carlos Vargas



Photo by Allyson Mann

Vargas, who is pursuing a M.S. in Ecology advised by Amy Rosemond, grew up in Sparta, North Carolina and completed his undergraduate degree at Davidson College.

The John Spencer Fellowship fund honors the legacy of John Kyle Spencer, a master's student at the Odum School of Ecology who passed away in 2016. The fellowship was first established through the generosity of his friends and family.

2023 James E. Butler Fellow: Jonathan Parrish



Photo by Allyson Mann

Parrish, who is pursuing a M.S. in Integrative Conservation and Sustainability advised by Sechindra Vallury, grew up in Kennesaw, Georgia and completed his undergraduate degree at the Odum School of Ecology. Columbus attorney James E. Butler, Jr. established the Butler Fellowships with a \$1 million gift to the Institute of Ecology in 2006. A lifetime of experiences beginning with a love of fishing in Georgia's rivers instilled in James Butler a deep regard for the environment.

The River Basins of Georgia Rollout

Photo by Alan Cressler via Flickr.

The state of Georgia is home to 14 unique river basins that support communities through rich biodiversity, vital ecosystem services, and beautiful natural spaces. In 2023, we created online resources on each watershed, from the Blue Ridge Mountains to the Atlantic coast. Through it, you can explore conservation resources, recreation information and educational materials.

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Tracking RBC External Funding

In 2023, UGA launched a new internal system of tracking credit for external funding to centers and institutes. Previously, the RBC queried its affiliates to self-report the number and amount of grants and contracts associated with the center. We are now moving to the new system, which records external funding expenditures based on % of credit assigned to the RBC (grants and contracts can split credit among multiple centers). These new numbers are not comparable to numbers reported previously.

For 2023, expenditures from external grants and contracts credited to the RBC totaled \$1.16 million.

Affiliate Growth

5

new
affiliates

86

total
affiliates

Across

26

UGA units

Photo by Carissa Bogan