

The Metropolitan River Protection Act and Amending the Chattahoochee Corridor Plan



Metropolitan River Protection Act (MRPA)

- Act adopted by Georgia General Assembly in 1973
- To protect the land and water resources of the Chattahoochee River
- Created the Chattahoochee River Corridor

Chattahoochee River Corridor

- Extends 2000 feet on both sides of the River and its impoundments
- Initially extended from Buford Dam to Peachtree Creek
- Expanded to the downstream limits of Fulton and Douglas County in 1998
- Total length is 84 miles

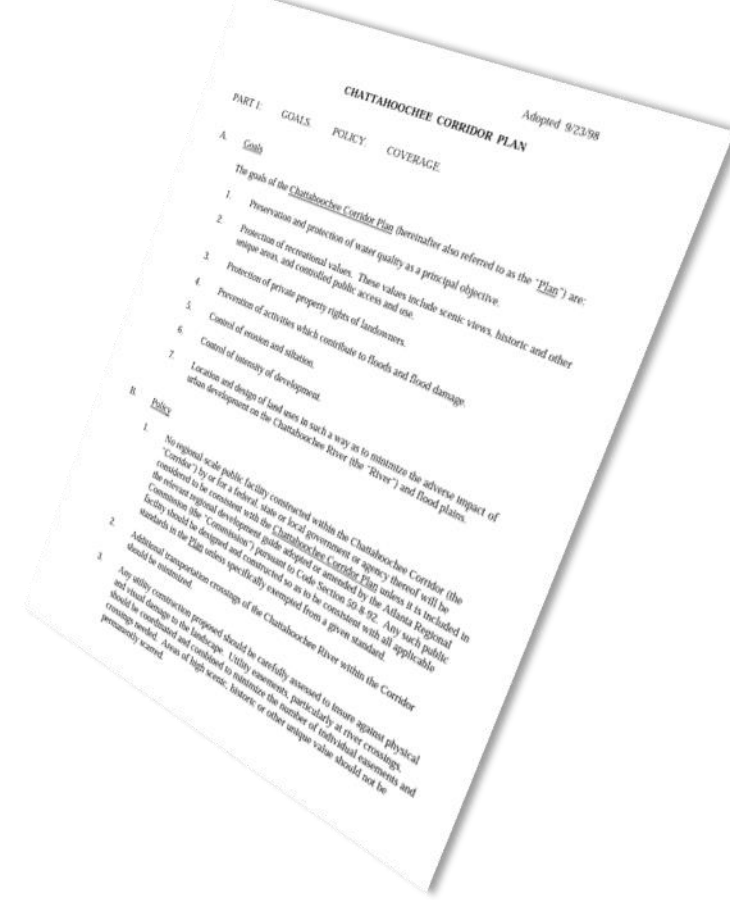
Chattahoochee Corridor Plan

Plan developed by ARC as required by the Act

Includes three sets of Standards:

- **Vulnerability Standards:** Apply to all land in the Corridor
- **Floodplain Standards:** Requirements in the river floodplain only
- **Buffer Zone Standards:** Along the river and some streams

All land-disturbing activity subject to review under these standards



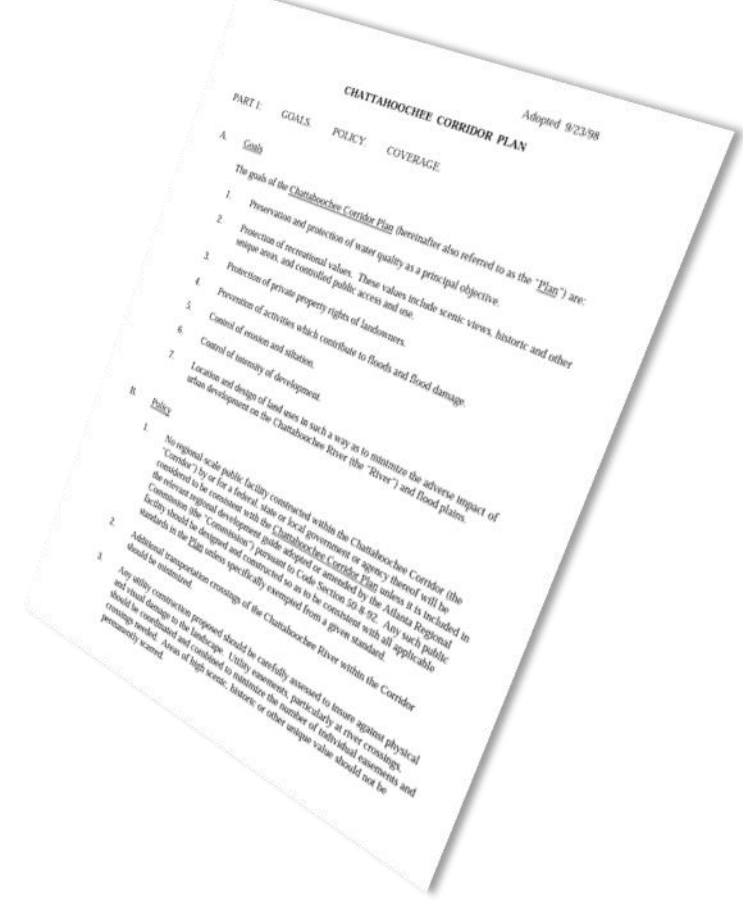
Chattahoochee Corridor Plan

Vulnerability Standards:

- ▶ Limit land disturbance
- ▶ Limit impervious surface
- ▶ Based on vulnerability of the land to development

Vulnerability based on factors such as:

- ▶ Soil erodibility
- ▶ Slope
- ▶ Vegetation
- ▶ Hydrology





Standard Buffers on the River

- 50-foot undisturbed buffer
- 150-foot impervious surface setback
- Public access allowed in both buffer and setback
- Public Access applies to trails

Pre-Act Impervious in Buffers

- Is treated as consistent with the Plan regardless of use
- Can be reused for trails
- Has been done successfully already
 - Cobb Riverlands Trail Proposal





Plan also Provides for an Extended Buffer

- Optional 500-foot buffer along the entire river frontage of submitted review property
- At the discretion of the property owner
- Allows development at higher density elsewhere on property
- Only utility line easements are allowed in 500-foot buffer



Riverlands and Local Trail Proposals are Increasing

- Some proposed routes would cross these 500-foot buffers
- Specific situation on Bull Sluice Lake in Sandy Springs
- Existing development needs to maintain buffer
- Only practical route is through buffer





Staff Opinion and Recommendation

- Limited, publicly owned and sponsored trails would not have a negative impact on the buffers or on the resources of the River
- Will require amending the Corridor Plan
- Staff proposes amending the Corridor Plan to allow publicly owned and sponsored trails in 500-foot buffers
- Also proposing other amendments



Additional Proposed Plan Updates

- ▮ Streambank restoration using bioengineering techniques
- ▮ Invasive species removal

Streambank Restoration

- Restores bank stability and vegetation
- Not specifically allowed in 50-foot buffer
- Currently treated as emergency maintenance
- New language would allow bank restoration in buffers using bioengineering techniques



A photograph of a stream with a rocky bed and grassy banks. The stream flows from the background towards the foreground. The banks are covered with green grass and some small plants. The water is clear and reflects the surrounding greenery. The background shows a dense forest of trees.

Bioengineering Techniques

- Plantings used in restoring and stabilizing bank
 - Root systems stabilize stream bank, but other materials may also be required
- Georgia EPD Streambank and Shoreline Restoration Guidance Document
 - Level 1 and Level 2 Practices
 - Guidance for acceptable techniques
- Require approval from all permitting authorities and local government



Invasive Species Removal

- Necessary for healthy buffers and woodlands
- No provision to allow buffer or disturbance exceptions for invasives removal
- Would allow removal and revegetation
 - Native species
 - Planting plans
- Require approval from local government, other agencies with jurisdiction

Part II.A. of ARC MRPA Rules and Regulations

Includes Process for Amending the Plan

The amendment process requires the following:

- Consult with interest groups in the Chattahoochee Corridor
- Consult with and seek the assistance of the staff of each local governing authority where the land to be affected lies
- Hold a public hearing on the proposed revision in each county in which any land to be affected lies
- Cause notice of the time and place of each such public hearing to be published once a week for two weeks prior to the hearing(s) in one or more newspapers of general circulation in each county in which land to be affected lies
- Adopt the revision at a regular or special meeting of the Commission

All Local Jurisdictions in the Corridor Are Affected

Counties:

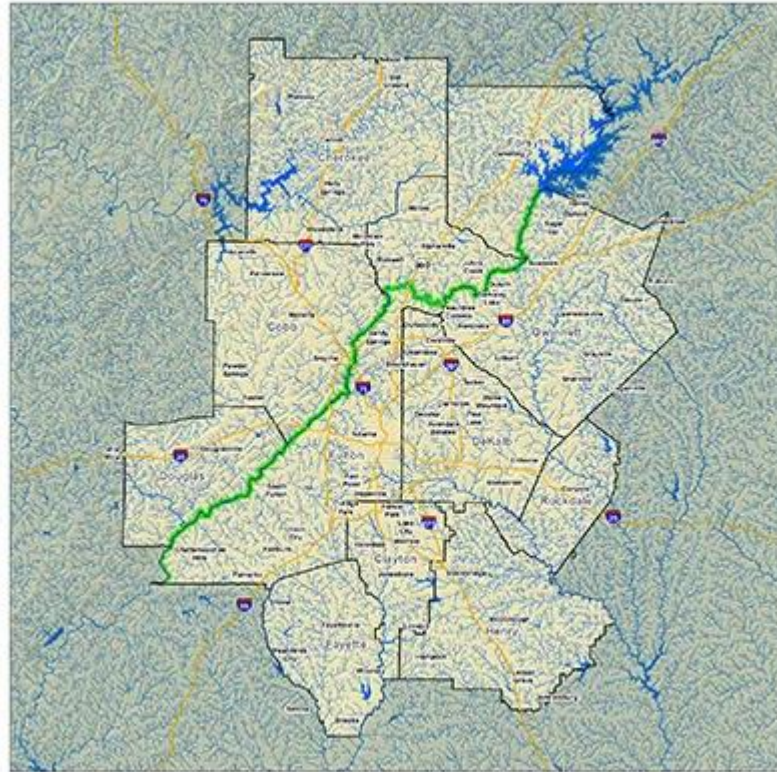
Cobb

Douglas

Forsyth

Fulton

Gwinnett



Cities:

Atlanta

Mableton

Berkeley Lake

Peachtree Corners

Chattahoochee Hills

Roswell

South Fulton

Douglasville

Smyrna

Duluth

Sugar Hill

Johns Creek

Suwanee

Sandy Springs

Possible Updates Being Researched

- Synthetic turf
- Permeable paving
- Not proposing to add to Plan at this time



Researching Synthetic Turf

- Can be highly permeable
 - With correct substrate
- Researching parameters to ensure permeability
- Will still be considered land disturbance





Also Researching Permeable Paving

- Plan does not provide any credit for its use
- Defines impervious as “any paved hardened or structural surface regardless of material”
- Reviewing options and standards for application

In Summary

Proposing following Amendments to the Chattahoochee Corridor Plan:

- Allowing public trails and paths in the 500-foot buffer
- Add language to allow streambank restoration in buffers and to not count against land disturbance limits if design and permitting conditions are met
- Add language to allow removal of invasive species and revegetation with native plants in buffers and to not count against land disturbance limits if approval conditions are met

Researching but not proposing amendments at this time:

- Synthetic Turf
- Permeable Paving