



September 30, 2024

To whom it may concern,

My name is Bruno Giri and I am the volunteer chairperson for the Upper Oconee Watershed Network (UOWN), which is based in Athens but operates throughout the watershed. This includes Jackson County. We are extremely concerned about the potential environmental impact of the proposed quarry in South Jackson on the streams and rivers of the Upper Oconee watershed. We are particularly concerned about the impact on the ecologically-sensitive groundwater recharge area.

The Upper Oconee Watershed Network has been active for 25 years in Athens-Clarke County (ACC), determining the health of the watershed, including the Middle Oconee River, the North Oconee River, and their tributaries. The methods used to assess stream quality have been the Georgia Adopt-a-Stream protocol. Over the past 25 years, thousands of community members have volunteered their time to collect biological and chemical data from these streams to keep track of their health and condition through time. In 2016, we analyzed the 15-year record of biological scores that UOWN had collected on nine ACC streams since 2001 and presented these data in a peer-reviewed conference proceedings of the Georgia Water Resources Conference.

We discovered that three out of nine streams in Athens-Clarke County had negative trends in stream health through time (2001-2016), indicating that measures that are supposed to ensure the biological health of our rivers were not sufficiently protective. We also found that streams in the North Oconee watershed had lower stream quality than those in the Middle Oconee watershed, indicating that current or historical factors in the North Oconee watershed have resulted in streams that are in fair to poor condition compared to those in the Middle Oconee watershed which range generally from 'good to excellent'. These results indicate that the streams in the North Oconee are particularly in need of protection and restoration.

We believe that the North Oconee River, which is already impacted from urbanization and industrial impacts, is particularly vulnerable to further environmental impact that would result from construction of a quarry nearby. We therefore encourage you to vote against the development of a quarry in South Jackson County. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Bruno Giri

Upper Oconee Watershed Network Board of Directors

P.O. Box 531, Athens, Georgia 30603
www.UOWN.org