

# COOSA



## RIVERKEEPER®

### Issue 15: Winter 2019

Trispot Darter: *threatened!*

Introducing Citizen Science Initiative

2019 Temp Track Season

2018 Financials

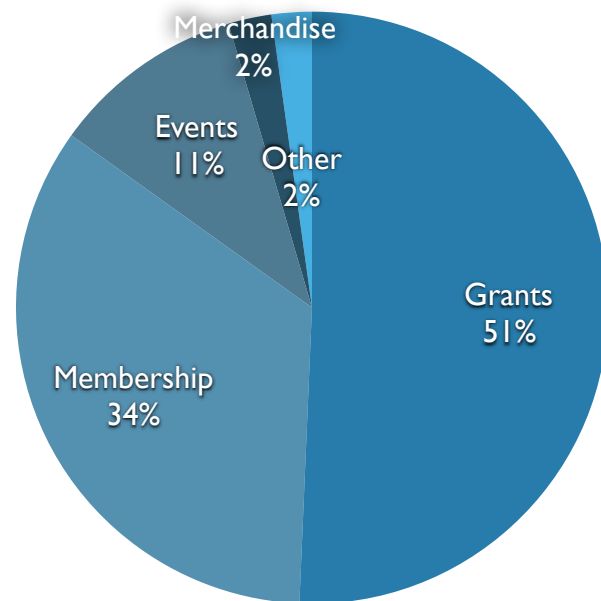


Photo © A. Odrezin

## 2018 FINANCIALS

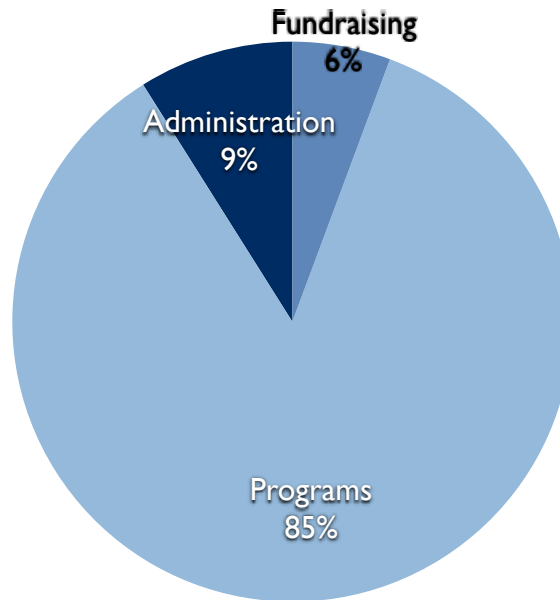
### INCOME

We were grateful to see an overall increase in funding in 2018, thanks to folks like you who invest in our work to protect, restore, and promote the Coosa!



### EXPENSE

Our programs continue to grow with your support! We use your donations to collect meaningful data that improves water quality and protects public health in the Coosa Valley of Alabama.



Visit [CoosaRiver.org](https://CoosaRiver.org) to see our full financial disclosures!

# KNOW BEFORE YOU GO.

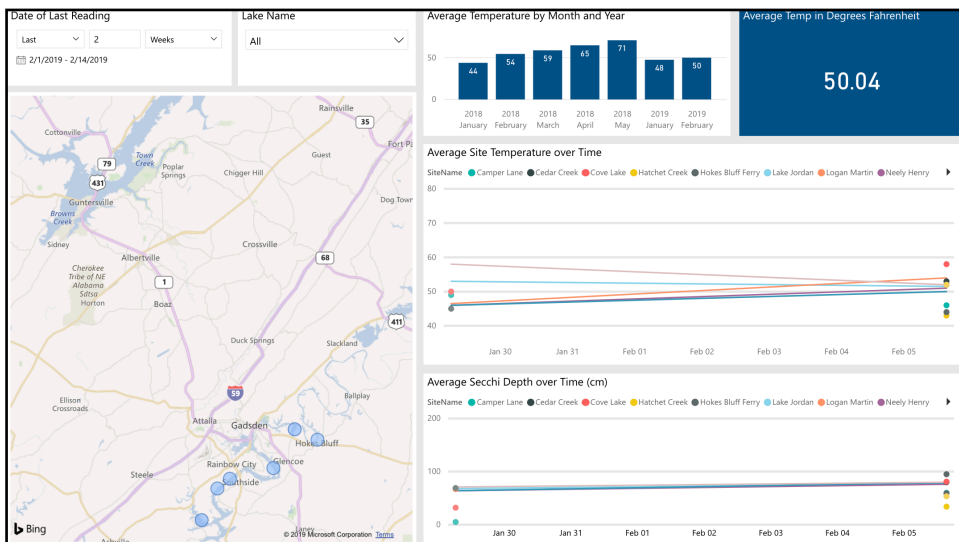
## TRACK THE SPAWN. CATCH MORE BASS.



Get hooked on [Temp Track](#), one of the many useful features offered through our [Fish Guide](#) program. This year, **Temp Track** features **specific information on water temperatures**, fish spawn behaviors, and patterns to look out for while you're dropping your line along the banks of the Coosa. Plus, we offer information on **lake levels**, **dam operating schedules**, **public boat ramps**, and **fish consumption advisories**.

Be sure to **check out the new dashboard on our website!** It is designed to make it easy for you to track average temperature readings taken by citizen scientists near you... from Rome, GA to Wetumpka. **We can't wait to see what you reel in this Spring!**

*Our New Dashboard designed by Alden Systems!*



40-55°

PRE-SPAWN

THE PRE-SPAWN FEEDING TIME IS HOW BASS MAKE IT THROUGH THE SPAWN (PERIOD WHERE THEY LAY EGGS), WHERE THEY MAY NOT EAT FOR UP TO 14 DAYS.

55-65°

SPAWN

AT THIS TIME, MALE FISH WILL FIND A SUITABLE NESTING AREA AND PREPARE IT FOR MATING. THEN THE MALE BASS CIRCLES THE HUMBLE HOME SLOWLY AND WAITS FOR A MATE.

65+°

POST-SPAWN

WHEN THE BASS HAVE ACCOMPLISHED THEIR "GOALS" OF THE SPAWN, THEY HEAD BACK OUT TO DEEPER WATERS ON THE MAIN CHANNEL TO ENJOY THE SUMMER.



Pre-Spawn >)))> Spawn >)))> Post Spawn

[CoosaRiver.org/FishGuide/TempTrack](https://CoosaRiver.org/FishGuide/TempTrack)



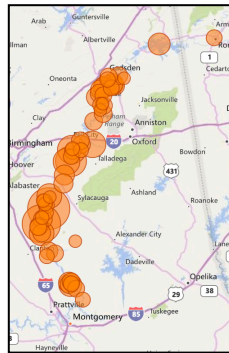
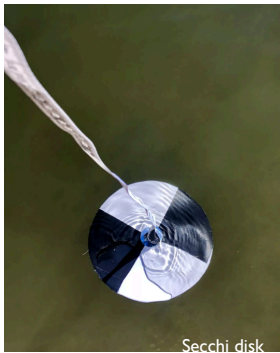
# INTRODUCING CSI: CITIZEN SCIENCE INITIATIVE

*As a river flows, small indicators of an unhealthy waterways pass us by without a clue.*

**Help us solve the watersheds threats through regular data collection from your dock, pier, or backyard.**

With 220 miles of river to patrol and a staff of three, we need help from folks like you to collect data from your dock. Data collected by Citizen Scientists provide us with information that we can turn into insight, future restoration projects, program plans & ultimately improvement of the health of the river. River conditions constantly change and we need your help to monitor them.

**Our Citizen Scientists are helping fuel each of our programs with year-round data, which supports our mission to protect, promote & restore the Coosa River!**



## **What are the qualifications to be a CSI Agent?**

1. You must have regular access to a dock on a major tributary/creek to the Coosa or one of her lakes where you can take temperature & turbidity readings.
2. Access to a smart phone capable of downloading apps.
3. A passion for keeping our waterways swimmable, drinkable & fishable!

## **WHAT DO CSI MEMBERS DO?**

In just 5 minutes a week, our CSI Scientists contribute water quality data and observations that benefit our creeks, streams & lakes. **Consistent data collection is our greatest defense against the issues that threatens the river.**

*Here are some of the ways the data impacts our river:*

### **TEMPERATURE:** *our Citizen Scientists reel in fishermen by taking regular temperature readings*



- Fishermen can use this information to better understand the changing river conditions during the spawning season.
- We can use the data to [track average water temperatures](#) through the years to determine how seasonality may affect our waterways.

### **WATER CLARITY:** *we're in the business of keeping our waterways blue*



- Using a secchi disks, Citizen Scientists monitor water clarity.
- The Coosa receives a substantial amount sediment and fertilizer run off from near by farms and animal operations. This causes an excess nutrient problem and gives algae an optimal growing habitat.
- Algae sucks up all the available oxygen, resulting in fish kills and can produce harmful toxins, like cyanobacteria, which can make for dangerous swimming conditions.

### **FIELD NOTES:** *pictures are worth a thousand words*



- While our Citizen Scientists are out collecting data, they are also encouraged to submit observations.
- They are trained to note water levels, water color, and fishy situations. This information is vital in keeping up-to-date records on the water—rivers are constantly changing!

**LEARN MORE at [CoosaRiver.org/CitizenScience](https://CoosaRiver.org/CitizenScience)**

# RIVERKEEPER SETS SAIL

Dear Supporters,

It is bittersweet that I announce my resignation as your Coosa Riverkeeper. As my nine-year stint comes towards a close in June, I've reflected on the many amazing moments and experiences since I first hatched the plan to start Coosa Riverkeeper in January 2010.

My wife Misha and I have both been overwhelmed with an intense desire to travel around the world by sailboat after many years of sailing on Logan Martin and the Caribbean, and later this year we will make that dream a reality. Setting a target date of June allows myself enough time to train and prepare your next Riverkeeper, as well as take care of personal preparations before setting off on the adventure of a lifetime.

I would never have even considered leaving Coosa Riverkeeper for this journey but for the fact that our organization is in such a great place in its own life right now. Things are going amazingly well thanks to your support. There is a balance of creative ideas and strategic thinking happening at Coosa Riverkeeper that enables us to execute amazing programs like Swim Guide and Fish Guide. Justinn and Karli are both strong, passionate, intelligent women with amazing vision for making positive change for this river and our community. And you, our members, make it possible for us to employ such remarkable people. You can trust the future of Coosa Riverkeeper in the hands of these two ladies. *I know I do!*

Thank you so much for all of your support over these many years and making my vision of Coosa Riverkeeper become our vision of Coosa Riverkeeper. I look forward to joining you on the other side as one of hundreds of dues-paying members!

-Frank Chitwood,  
Founding Riverkeeper



Frank and his wife, Misha, on a recent sailing trip in the British Virgin Islands.

**P.S. Support our Riverkeeper transition by [clicking here!](#)**

# TRISPOT DARTER: *threatened!*

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service recently announced a proposal to **protect the trispot darter under the Endangered Species Act as a “Threatened” species**. This cute little fish, growing to only a little over one inch long, is currently **known to occur in only 20% of its historical range**, which is the Middle and Upper Coosa Basins. That's like if all the world's humans vanished from all but one continent!

The trispot darter had not been seen in Alabama for decades until 2008 when it was spotted in Little Canoe Creek which is near Springville. Protection for the trispot darter is long overdue, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service notoriously misses deadlines for listing threatened or endangered species. A lawsuit filed by Center for Biological Diversity and others prompted the Service to pick up the pace on the trispot darter and other species.



State and federal biologists identifying fish species in Big Canoe Creek

One thing that is really interesting and unique about the trispot darter is where they breed... They move up creeks into very small seepages and intermittent drainages, places that in the summer probably don't even have water. This is also what makes them especially susceptible to all the increase in residential and commercial development in the Springville area.

## The major threats to this darter and many other species like it are:

- **Habitat connectivity:** every culvert that is not properly submerged is a blockade to fish passage and these fish like to get to the REALLY skinny waters
- **Habitat alteration:** every wooded area near Springville that is converted to a subdivision is one less potential spawning habitat for this darter
- **Sedimentation:** all that mud washing downstream in a big rain really hurts fish
- **Loss of riparian vegetation:** livestock farms where cattle have access to the creek are detrimental to the habitat of the darter.

Listing the trispot darter as Threatened will give the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service a little more power to protect the species. But ultimately, it's still going to take buy in from our community. **We have to do things to ensure that, as our community grows, we are responsible with our development.**