



**SAVANNAH RIVERKEEPER®**  
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John Sawyer, Director  
City of Savannah Public Works & Water Resources  
P.O. Box 1027  
Savannah, GA 31402

May 29, 2018

Dear Mr. Sawyer,

In 2016, Savannah Riverkeeper became the non-federal sponsor of the "Savannah River Below Augusta Restoration Feasibility Study". Slated for completion by 2019, it will provide the blueprint for embarking on this massive project. It has taken wide-reaching cooperation to reach this point. Savannah Riverkeeper is actively working with partners including agencies both federal and state from Georgia and South Carolina, local municipalities like City of Augusta Utilities, Georgia Ports Authority, non-governmental organizations and for-profit businesses. As a 501c3 nonprofit organization working to respect, protect, and improve the Savannah River Basin, we will serve in a leadership role on the restoration board, guiding those involved to begin work on the oxbow reintroduction plan.

Savannah Riverkeeper is requesting \$360,000 from City of Savannah Water and Sewer to fund the study, as discussed. These funds will be used to:

- Assess the federal navigation project to determine if modification of the project is warranted to add aquatic ecosystem restoration as a project purpose.
- Examine all existing man-made cutoffs created in the mid-1900s to improve navigation, safety, and efficiency between Augusta and Savannah to determine which cutoff locations would be best suited to restore.
- Evaluate and compare an array of alternatives to identify the ecological benefits and costs for restoring the cutoffs on the Savannah River below Augusta.

A total \$13.5 million has been dedicated to this project through the Savannah Harbor expansion settlement agreement, but the release of those funds will not occur for a number of years. After inner harbor dredging is completed, \$13.5 million will become available from Georgia Ports Authority to fund the on-the-ground restoration. There is an additional \$15 million from the settlement agreement going to conservation that can be leveraged as well, bringing total restoration funds available \$28.5 million.

The feasibility study is underway, however, a cost of \$1.5 million in matching non-federal funds will have to be compiled by state and local agencies and non-governmental organizations. We are actively seeking partnership opportunities to raise the needed funds. Timing for the completion of that study is crucial, and we hope the City of Savannah will see this need and help the project come to fruition for the best interest of the city's drinking water, the health of this valuable natural resource and the good of the citizens.

Thank you and please reach out to me directly if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Tonya Bonitatibus  
Executive Director / Riverkeeper  
Savannah Riverkeeper