



Sally Sierer Bethea is the retired founding director of Chattahoochee Riverkeeper. She also served as executive director and riverkeeper for two decades and continues to assist Chattahoochee Riverkeeper as a senior advisor. Bethea also publishes a monthly column, *Above the Waterline*, in *Atlanta Intown*. She lives and writes in midtown Atlanta.

Bard Wisley



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Keeping the Chattahoochee

Reviving and Defending a Great Southern River

SALLY SIERER BETHEA

"Sally Sierer Bethea is a force of nature. Here the river activist, who made the Chattahoochee run cleaner, decides to deepen her relationship to the watershed. On foot, slowly, paying close attention, she travels repeatedly over the course of a year through a forest to the river. These explorations recall her two decades of stunning success—a courageous and unstoppable defender of nature looking forward, looking back. Impressive all around, this beacon of a book inspires, enlivens, and offers hope."
—**Janisse Ray**, author of *Wild Spectacle: Seeking Wonders in a World beyond Humans*

"For over a decade, Sally Bethea rocked the city with her fearless and principled leadership of Chattahoochee Riverkeeper and insistence that the city and the people of Atlanta take notice, and then action, to correct pollution in the river. She taught me, and many others who were skeptical, the importance of civic advocacy in solving what seem like intractable problems. Sally offers the experience we need to preserve and protect the planet." —**Shirley Franklin**, former mayor of the City of Atlanta

"For all who love rivers, it would be an extremely special day to walk with Sally Bethea along the rapids of the Chattahoochee and hear about two decades of pathbreaking progress in conservation there. Now, thanks to this memoir, we get to do exactly that. Come along and learn about the enlightened and courageous efforts undertaken by this dedicated riverkeeper. Her success can inform us all regarding what must be done for our waters and for the communities that depend upon them."
—**Tim Palmer**, author of *Lifelines: The Case for River Conservation*

Sally Sierer Bethea was one of the first women in America to become a "riverkeeper"—a vocal defender of a specific waterway who holds polluters accountable. In *Keeping the Chattahoochee*, she tells stories that range from joyous and funny to frustrating—even alarming—to illustrate what it takes to save an endangered river. Her tales are triggered by the regular walks she takes through a forest to the Chattahoochee over the course of a year, finding solace and kinship in nature.

For two decades, Bethea worked to restore the neglected Chattahoochee, which provides drinking water and recreation to millions of people, habitat for wildlife, and water for industries and farms as it cuts through the heart of the Deep South. Pairing natural and political history with reflective writing, she draws readers into her watershed and her memories. Bethea's passion for the natural world—and for defending it with a strong, informed voice—animates this instructive memoir. Offering lessons on how to fight for our fundamental right to clean water, Bethea and her colleagues take on powerful corporate and government polluters. They strengthen environmental policies and educate children, reviving the great river from a century of misuse.



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