

Water Quality

With its prime location, nestled among the three rivers, the Etowah, the Oostanaula and the Coosa, it is not surprising that settlers selected Rome to play a major role in the early trading industry. Just as these three merging bodies of water played an important role in Rome's early history, these rivers are vital for present Roman's health, economy, biodiversity and recreational activity. In order to ensure the safety of the water from Rome's three rivers, the water is monitored by the Bruce Hamler Water Treatment Facility. According to the 2009 Water Quality Report, the overall source water susceptibility score of the Oostanaula River was 'Medium,' while the score for the Etowah River was 'Medium/Low.' This rating is not an indicating factor of the present water quality, but rather a method to determine the possibility of contamination that may be used in the future planning of water quality preservation.

Today, Romans are focusing on the protection of these natural treasures by cutting down on pollution and researching major potential threats. One of our river's most harmful threats is called "interbasin transfer," or the process of withdrawing water from one basin and releasing it into a neighboring river. Currently, about 50 MGD, millions of gallons per day, are taken out of the Etowah River and pumped into the Chattahoochee River to serve the Atlanta area; as much as half of that water is never restored. The "interbasin transfer" is not without serious consequences for the life of the Coosa River Basin. Not only does removing millions of gallons of water daily change the natural size and course of the rivers, it greatly harms the existing rare biodiversity. Rome's river basin is the most biologically diverse system of rivers in North America, providing habitat for the highest percent of endemic species of fish in any temperate river system in the entire world. To date, of the 100 different fish species, 12 are endemic, or can only be found in the Coosa River Basin. In addition, there are an amazing number of mussels, snails and crayfish that are endemic. Unfortunately, due to threats like pollution, sedimentation, and the "interbasin transfer" in the Coosa River Basins, 37 snails and mussels have disappeared. Scientists believe this is the largest extinction occurrence in the history of the United States.

Although some of this damage is unfortunately irreversible, there is hope for the Coosa River Basin. As more people become aware of the natural treasures surrounding Rome, more people are making efforts to help restore and protect the river systems. One great milestone occurred in 2002 with the reintroduction of a prehistoric fish called the lake sturgeon. After over a thirty year absence, Georgia's Department of Natural Resources began reintroducing the sturgeon in the Coosa River Basin. With efforts like this, the restoration of the Coosa River Basin seems promising. By preserving our natural treasures, Romans and visitors can continue to drink from the clean water the rivers provide and to enjoy the rare biodiversity that exists only in the Coosa River Basin.

For more valuable information on Rome's river system visit the Coosa River Basin Initiative's website by [click here](#).