

Lake Allatoona Backwater

Length: 8 Miles (Boling Park to Knox Bridge) Class: I Time: 4-7 hours

Minimum Level: This section can be run at any time of the year. It begins in Canton still on flowing river, but ends in the backwaters of Lake Allatoona. Water levels on Allatoona vary according to the season and rainfall. Peak levels generally occur in the late spring and early summer, topping out at about 840 feet above MSL. From mid-summer to early winter the lake is drawn down to about 823 feet MSL to accommodate heavy rainfall in the winter and early spring. Full pool is 840 feet.

River Gauge: Allatoona Dam Lake Elevations can be found at <http://water.sam.usace.army.mil/actmain.htm#data>

River levels in Canton can be found at http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ga/nwis/uv?site_no=02392000

Launch Site: There is no developed boat launch in Boling Park, but boats can be launched down the steep river bank near the riverside picnic tables located between the soccer fields and the tennis courts.

Directions: The launch is located off Ga. 20 in Canton. From Exit 16 on I-575, go west on Ga. 20 0.7 mile. Turn right at light (Marietta Hwy/Ga. 140) cross over Etowah River and and turn left into Boling Park.

Take Out Site: The take out is located at the Corps of Engineer's Knox Bridge Boat Landing with ramp and parking area.

Directions: From entrance to Boling Park, turn right on Ga. 140/Ga. 20 and proceed 0.8 mile and bear right on Ga. 20. Continue 3.8 mile to Knox Bridge Boat Landing.

Description: A river dies here. Allatoona Dam, some 25 miles downstream from the launch site, transforms the free-flowing Etowah into expansive Lake Allatoona which has a life of its own. For about six miles, a noticeable current persists; that current ceases altogether at Shoal Creek. However, the backwaters of Allatoona provide access to some unique natural and historic features, including the wetlands at the mouth of Jug Creek and Donalson Furnace on Shoal Creek.

Outfitters:
Lilydipper Outfitters in Canton is the nearest canoe/kayak outfitter.

Points of Interest:

Mile 91.7—(34°14'15.55"N 84°32'15.88"W)—Jug Creek Wetlands—On river right where Jug Creek empties into the river is an extensive bottomland wetlands area. When water levels are appropriate, an adventure through this swampy realm is worth the side trip.

Mile 92.8—(34°13'43.86"N 84°33'2.23"W)—Shoal Creek Donalson Furnace—A venture up Shoal Creek will lead you to the remains of the Donalson Furnace, a Civil War era iron furnace. The furnace was built by Judge Joseph Donaldson, one of the founders of Canton and the first to build a ferry across the Etowah in Canton. Reportedly, Donalson built the furnace during the war in order to protect his sons from conscription into the Confederate Army. The construction of the iron furnace was a critical part of the war effort and would have exempted his sons from military service. Lending credence to this theory is the fact that the furnace was never fired and there was no evidence of iron or slag found in the area. However, other accounts of Donalson's war efforts suggest he was an ardent supporter of the war effort. He was among the largest slaveholders in the county and outfitted an entire company of soldiers in 1861.

Mile 93.5—(34°13'35.97"N 84°33'26.05"W)—Lake Allatoona—About six miles below Boling Park, you will encounter the first backwater sloughs of Lake Allatoona. The river's current slackens and the river itself spreads over

former bottomlands. Some 20 miles downstream, Allatoona Dam blocks the river's path, creating the 12,000-acre impoundment. Completed in 1950 at a cost of \$31.5 million, Allatoona Dam's original primary purpose was to save the city of Rome downstream from routine flooding. Now, some six decades later, the federal impoundment does much more. The powerhouse at the dam produces enough electricity to power 17,000 homes annually and the recreation/tourism industry that hosts some six million lake visitors each year generates an estimated \$250 million annually. The lake also enables one of the biggest controversies in Georgia's water management policy—an interbasin water transfer from the Etowah to the Chattahoochee basin. Each day, the Cobb-Marietta Water Authority withdraws millions of gallons from Lake Allatoona and pumps it to water users in the Chattahoochee basin. Much of that withdrawal is never returned to the Etowah, depriving the lake and downstream communities of the benefit of that water. In part, it was the threat of water transfers to Atlanta, out of the Coosa River Basin which flows into Alabama, that prompted the State of Alabama to file suit to stop Atlanta's play for more water in 1990. That lawsuit evolved into a "water war" that 22 years later remained unresolved. The lake itself has long suffered from poor water quality as a result of rapid land development and stormwater runoff in the lake's 1,110-square mile watershed. Nutrients, primarily phosphorus, have resulted in algal blooms on the lake that can lead to fish kills.

Mile 94.4—(34°13'51.70"N 84°34'17.25"W)—Georgia National Cemetery—On river right here overlooking the Etowah is the 775-acre Georgia National Cemetery, dedicated in June 2006 and the second national cemetery in Georgia. The Georgia National Cemetery opened for burials on April 24, 2006. It includes sites for 33,000 full-casket graves, 3,000 in-ground sites for cremation remains and 3,000 columbaria niches for cremation remains. The property was donated by the late Scott Hudgens, a well-known Atlanta land developer who was a World War II veteran himself.

Mile 95.5—(34°12'59.32"N 84°33'52.58"W)—Blankenship Sand Co.— Blankenship Sand Company operates a sand dredge in the stretch of lake above and below Knox Bridge. The company also operates a dredge upstream near East Cherokee Drive. Here they suck sand from the river bottom, helping to prevent the lake from filling with sediment—a process that is inevitable over the coming millenniums. Each year, Mr. Blankenship and his crew remove about 100,000 tons of sand from the river—enough to fill 4,000 tractor trailers. That 100,000 tons of sand represents 15 million gallons of storage capacity on the lake. Sand dredges are common on all Georgia rivers, but Blankenship is the only operator on the length of the Etowah.