**Background** - The Great Lake Allatoona Cleanup (GLAC) 2018, had a record setting 33rd year introducing major innovations that changed its anti-litter volunteer base significantly increasing its anti-littering messaging, and its environmental impact. Since 1986 GLAC has engaged and educated a documented 123,583 volunteers, removed 486.01 tons of litter and 1,257 tires from the lake and shoreline, netting, in the last seven years alone, a documented value to the government of $1,663,209.55 (an average of $237,601.36 annually). These documented numbers equal a reasonable estimated value of over 7 million dollars ($7,000,000) to the tri county community in GLAC’s 33 years of conservation, stewardship and environmental education efforts. The annual cleanup and education event, recognized as the largest “one day” cleanup in the country by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and National Public Lands Day (NPLD), is conducted on Allatoona Lake, one of the country’s most popular lakes, visited by over seven million people annually, having a regional economic impact of $250 million from visitors to the lake. The 12,010-acre lake, with 270 miles of shoreline, lies in the region consisting of NE Cobb, western Bartow and eastern Cherokee counties. The need to remove litter and debris from this well-used recreational attraction was a consequence of its popularity. A study in partnership with Keep America Beautiful and “fishbrain” found that on just one holiday, July 4, more than 66 percent of Americans attend picnics that are often along the shorelines of rivers and lakes, and that the amount of trash improperly disposed of during these celebrations is a significant problem to our waterways. GLAC is driven by a committee of 22 individuals representing the USACE, State and local governments, the Lake Allatoona Association, Keep Bartow Beautiful and various organizations, community leaders and local residents. The annual estimated cost of the one day event, $24,945.23 in 2018, is generously supplemented by in-kind donations from donors that include: Coca Cola Corp., Georgia Power Company, Woods Group, Life University, City of Acworth, Bartow County Government (Keep Bartow Beautiful, Bartow County Solid Waste, Commissioners Office), Waste
Community and Environmental Action - The Great Lake Allatoona Cleanup’s mission statement: *GLAC, and its partners will lead the Allatoona Lake community in environmental stewardship of the watershed* through education has been adopted with a passion by the “all volunteer” GLAC committee. As insiders, Keep Bartow Beautiful can attest that GLAC committee members work tirelessly on outreach, sponsorships, volunteer recruitment, and program development. Throughout the nine months of promotion and organization for the event, continuing into and through the execution of the annual cleanup, GLAC members are constantly assessing litter on the lake shoreline and in the waters. They also provide a strong narrative as advocates of the lake, explaining to the public “why” clean water is important, how litter and other pollution can be prevented and why it is to everyone’s benefit, to not only volunteer to clean up other’s people’s trash but, to change their own behaviors while encouraging a change in the behavior of others. GLAC members reach hundreds, if not thousands through the many news articles that appear in newspapers, magazines, local radio spots, posters in schools, restaurants, businesses and online media.

GLAC primarily promotes the US Army Corps of Engineers’ mission of environmental stewardship. The Great Lake Allatoona Cleanup volunteer event was created by the USACE in 1985 and has been held annually ever since. For the first 25 years it was administered by Allatoona Lake employees with one USACE employee dedicated almost full time to this one very important event. In 2011, due to budget and staff reductions, LAA (Lake Allatoona Association) a nonprofit organization with similar environmental interests, was asked to take charge, signing a memorandum of understanding in 2011 with the USACE, and operating GLAC since 2012. Subsequently, members of Lake Allatoona Association (LAA) filled official roles: Committee Chair, Promotion/Public Relations Chair, Volunteer Coordinator, Finance Budget/Expense Chair and Lake
Warriors Coordinator. Other Committee members serve as the USACE Liaison, Procurement Coordinator, and Volunteer Picnic Logistics Coordinator. Additionally, there are 15 subcommittees that support the GLAC efforts. These volunteer committee members logged an impressive 2,219 hours in just 2018 alone.

The Great Lake Allatoona Cleanup is registered as a National Public Lands Day event and, in 2013, Governor Nathan Deal issued a proclamation declaring the Great Lake Allatoona Cleanup as the state of Georgia’s signature NLPD event. National Public Lands Day is an initiative of the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF), founded in 1994, that seeks to celebrate our nation’s public lands and the environmental benefits they provide; Its mission: to ensure the wellbeing of earth and its people. GLAC has the privilege of being the largest event that registers with this national program. Other water conservation/quality education partners are Keep Bartow Beautiful (whose staff also serve as committee members), Boy Scout & Girl Scout Councils, Rivers Alive, Bartow County Extension, Bartow Master Gardeners, various stakeholders, water and power companies, city/county/state governments, school systems, school environmental clubs, colleges, universities and technical schools, hospitals, marinas, dumpster companies, landfills, Coca-Cola, department stores, and food distributors. GLAC litter prevention educational initiatives can boast some positive behavioral changes in the way people who enjoy the lake respect the lake by disposing their trash properly. Many studies, including one published by the National Center for Biotechnology Information, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Epub July 18, 2016, have reported that “participants' ecological knowledge, scientific skills, and belief in their ability to address environmental issues increased after training.” Visual surveys, an agenda item for almost every committee meeting, indicate this to be true as the lake is visually cleaner. Other changes of note occurred in 2018 with volunteer behavior. Not only has the once a year event educated and engaged 123,583 volunteers over the last 33 years, but new groups of volunteers such as “Lake
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Warriors”, “Adopt a Mile” (or “Zone Captain”) and “Dive Teams” programs have been added, resulting in year-round cleanup and maintenance efforts under the GLAC banner. From January – September 2018 these new volunteer programs, coordinated by and reporting to GLAC, logged an impressive 1,162 volunteer hours separate from the one-day event. Other changes include the mentoring of other groups (DOW Chemical for instance) who now hold their own employee volunteer cleanups at other times of the year, again reporting results to GLAC.

Execution – After 33 years of continuous cleanups and the resulting impact, it is KBB’s observation that the GLAC Committee is a dynamic organization that has achieved impressive and measurable results. The Committee spends nine months every year in intense preparation for the “one day” signature litter prevention cleanup, completing the following tasks: establishing the annual campaign and materials (posters, patches, caps, youth bracelets, t-shirts for committees and sub-committees, sponsor banners, sponsor awards); spreading promotional materials and information through various media outlets; securing financial and in-kind sponsors; engaging educational partners for the water festival and volunteer luncheon event at Riverside Park; attending other community events in support of the cleanup campaign; organizing a pre-event sponsor appreciation dinner and working the event itself. Volunteer registration for the one-day cleanup occurs online and these numbers are updated and reported at every committee meeting. The registrants are handled by a volunteer coordinator and carefully assigned to one of over a dozen trusted Zone Captains, each of whom oversees one large site with multiple cleanup team options. The zone captains give out cleanup materials and safety instructions. When finished, these volunteers are given a patch that they must have to enter through a guard gate at Riverside Park where they enjoy a “Water Festival” participating in water education activities, enjoying music and lunch. During the October 6, 2018 event, 3,127 volunteers participated, removing 7.11 tons of litter. Over 1,000 of those participants stayed for the after-cleanup picnic festivities and water
quality educational activities. **Litter Prevention** - Bartow County assesses litter through our annual Litter Index, (1.638 for 2018) and measured areas around the lake continue to show the signs of illegal littering, despite regular pickups from Adopt-a-Road programs, county operations, state parks, and D.O.T. operatives. However, the numbers for the lake itself continue to improve gradually over time. In 2016, a downward trend in tonnage was noted over several years, which, while encouraging, caused the committee to take a more aggressive stance to redouble their efforts to remove hard-to-reach trash. In 2017, and again in 2018, more trash and tires were collected than previous years, with 2018’s year-round cleanups by Lake Warriors, Shoreline Adopters, dive team cleanups in the deepest waters, and Dow employees “pop up” cleanup efforts expected to raise overall numbers but improve water quality results Allatoona Lake has a bright future, with GLAC leading the way. **Summation** – The Great Lake Allatoona Cleanup, an annual tri-county event held on one of the USACE’s most visited lakes in the U.S., has a winning team at the helm. The Great Lake Allatoona Planning Committee has set a high bar, not just locally or state-wide, but nationally, in their planning and execution of not just the annual event, but of year-round advocacy and volunteer recruitment for a variety of educational events and cleanup options to suit most every category. More people than ever can now “love the lake,” not just in recreational pursuits, but in real world practical environmental stewardship, volunteer activities, and public education. Their leadership and the respect they have earned from their ongoing efforts, innovative ideas, and dedication to the cause, has earned many new devotees. These new volunteers are ready to join in with long-time supporters to take action, protecting Allatoona Lake and all it means to this region, to shoreline residents, the local communities that depend on the lake for water and recreation, and the millions of visitors who enjoy it each year.