



## **USDA-CSREES 2007 National Water Quality Conference**

### [River Passion: Understanding How Adults Make Sense of Their Love of a River](#)

David Bolling in *How to Save a River: Handbook for Citizen Action* states “choosing to save a river is more often an act of passion than of careful calculation. You make the choice because the river has touched your life in an intimate and irreversible way, because you are unwilling to accept its loss” (1994, p. 5). Exactly how do adults who demonstrate a passion for a river make meaning of their feelings and understand their relationship with a river? This poster details a qualitative study designed to answer this question and its preliminary findings. The researchers believe adults who interact with rivers undergo a unique and personal experience where they construct their meaning of a river. Depending on factors such as the person’s beliefs, usefulness of the engagement, and the river’s attributes, the experience shapes a person’s views, feelings, and thoughts. In the literature, Nel Noddings’ (2003) defines natural caring as a product of a “relation in which we respond as one-caring out of love or natural inclination” (p. 5). As an extension of Noddings’ approach, if an individual’s feelings for a river align with the concept of care, it is highly probable this person envisions a relationship with the river. Through interviews the researchers discover some of the motivating factors or experiences sustaining a human-river relationship. Also, they detail how the themes generated from this pilot project will be used to design a regional Extension watershed stewardship curriculum. Specifically, the data will inform County Extension Agents about ways they can create meaningful human-river relationships with their clientele. During 2007, the researchers will co-construct the curriculum with Georgia County Extension Agents for the purpose of building community agency through water quality awareness and citizen action.

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