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Chatt-Bend hosts orienteering championship, river cleanup

FROM STAFF REPORTS

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Competitors from as far away as Japan and Canada joined those from more than a dozen states for the U.S. Individual Orienteering Championships at Chattahoochee Bend State Park Saturday.

"I'm here to win," said Susan Goodwin of New Hampshire, striding alongside an entry road with compass and map in hand.

Goodwin was one of about 400 participants in the event, sponsored by the Georgia Orienteering Club. Sprint and trail orienteering began at the University of West Georgia on Friday, and long and middle competition continues through today at Chattahoochee Bend, where final awards will be presented beginning at 1:30 p.m.

The event also bears on world rankings.

"It's unbelievable," Friends of Chattahoochee Bend State Park president Glenn Flake said of the event.

Orienteering originated in Scandinavia, and the Georgia Orienteering Club was formed in 1980. Participants follow extremely detailed maps showing topography and terrain to reach a series of control points in the correct order, and the competitor reaching the finish in the shortest time wins.

Competitors wear a device on their fingers which they scan at each control point, allowing information to be transmitted instantly to the finish area. Seven people pursuing different courses are started every two minutes, staggering starts to keep them from following each other. Participants of all ages and fitness levels compete in orienteering events.

Friends of Chattahoochee Bend were out in full force, supporting the orienteering championships by helping with parking and partnering with the Coweta County Convention and Visitor's Bureau to promote the area. In addition, 20 Friends were on the Chattahoochee in kayaks and canoes for the group's inaugural river cleanup.

"Sweeping the Hooch" is a joint venture of Rivers Alive and the Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeepers Association. Last year, 600 volunteers at 21 sites removed 3.3 tons of trash from 48 miles of the Chattahoochee. Flake said Friends would weigh the amount of trash collected from their area Saturday to add to the total.

For information on Friends of Chattahoochee Bend State Park, visit www.bendfriend.org . For information on orienteering, visit www.gaorienteering.org or www.usorienteering.org .

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