

Third Level Re-watered (February 13, 2012)

(February 13, 2012) The long-awaited rewatering of a portion of the Augusta Canal's third level took place Friday, February 10. The channel, which runs from mid-block of Seventh Street and past the new Augusta Judicial Center to Twelfth Street, took approximately 12 hours to completely fill. Canal officials intend to maintain water in the third level from now on.

The rewatering is possible due to the Canal Authority's installation last year of a specially designed automated bladder dam at the junction of the Canal's second and third levels behind Elliott's Funeral Home. The dam, which can be inflated or deflated as conditions require, will maintain a full pool of fresh water flowing through the third level at all times.

The Canal's third level had been the site of a coal gas plant during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The manufacturing processes caused significant contamination of the nearby soil. An extensive environmental remediation project undertaken by Atlanta Gas Light Company from 2001 to 2007 removed the contamination and lined this portion of the canal with concrete. However, since the third level was designed to discharge excess water back into the Savannah River, there was no way to maintain a full pool of water in the third level. Eventually, engineers came up with the bladder dam solution, which pools enough water into the channel from water coming from the second level of the canal to ensure adequate flows to not only maintain the pool at the desired level but also to keep it from becoming stagnant.

The Augusta Canal Authority began the dam project in 2010, at a cost of \$397,454, funded by SPLOST. The Authority also is currently designing a multiuse trail along the third level which will include a walking trail, benches and interpretive signs explaining Atlanta Gas Light's role in the third level clean-up and other significant historic sites and events.

