



July 20 Press Conference Will Address Illegal Closure of Dekalb County Park

A press conference will be held at the South River Trail Intrenchment Creek Park trailhead on West Side Place on Wednesday, July 20, at 4 pm.

The conference is being organized by Dekalb community residents in response to the placement of concrete barriers and “Private Property - No Trespassing” signs at the entrance to the public park. These signs were placed at the park entrance on the morning of July 16. Several groups will be attending, including South River Watershed Alliance (SRWA), South River Forest Coalition (SRFC), Community Movement Builders, the Southern Center for Human Rights, and the Georgia Human Rights Clinic.

Intrenchment Creek Park is one of Dekalb County’s largest and most forested public parks, boasting 163 acres of mostly wooded area that includes the PATH trail and unpaved hiking trails as well as Intrenchment Creek.

A 40-acre parcel of the park, including the access area at the trailhead, is subject to a controversial land swap arranged between Dekalb County and the private corporation Blackhall Studios in 2021. Opponents to the swap say it sets a dangerous precedent for loss of public lands to private businesses, and four Dekalb County residents, alongside SRWA and SRFC, are plaintiffs in an ongoing lawsuit contesting the legality of the deal.

But with the closure of the public entrance, Blackhall seems to be taking legal matters into its own hands. An email inquiry to Dekalb County Assistant Chief of Police K.D. Banks confirmed that the barriers and signs were placed in response to a private request, stating via email that the enclosed area is privately owned. That claim, however, is yet to be decided in court.

An [article](#) on the closure has been published by Atlanta Community Press Collective. In a statement published in that article, Dr. Jacqueline Echols, president of the South River Watershed Alliance, says, "While we wait for this egregious wrong to be made right, the diverse leadership of the two largest and most diverse municipalities in the state stand as the most flagrant violators of the human rights of

marginalized and vulnerable communities to enjoy a safe, prosperous, and healthy living environment."

At the press conference, coalition members will speak about the importance of the park and the need for it to remain open to the public.