



- ▶ Highlights of Georgia's Water Plan
PAGE 2



- ▶ GWPPC's Role in developing Water Plan
PAGE 3



- ▶ Looking to the Future
PAGE 3



WaterTalk

February 2008

NEW STATEWIDE WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR GEORGIA

"Georgia just made history."



Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle congratulating the Georgia Senate on its vote to adopt a resolution ratifying the statewide water plan, January 18, 2008

In the opening week of the 2008 session, both the Georgia Senate and House of Representatives quickly moved to adopt resolutions that ratify the Georgia Comprehensive Statewide Water Management

Plan. Both the House and the Senate voted in support of the plan on January 18.

The water plan was mandated in the 2003 legislative session by the Comprehensive Statewide Water Management Planning Act, also known as House Bill 237. The plan was developed over the past three years under the oversight of the Georgia Water Council, which was created by HB 237. Development of the plan was led by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, which coordinated an extensive public involvement process that engaged citizens and organizations with concerns about water from across the state.

The draft plan was developed with the input of 12 committees including Technical Advisory

Committees, Basin Advisory Committees, and a Statewide Advisory Committee. These committees met over 50 times to discuss the development of the draft plan. Forty public meetings, town hall meetings, and public hearings were held to discuss and take comment on the plan at various times in the process and in locations across the state. Three public comment periods were offered during the final year of plan development, and an interactive website was available to those wishing to submit public comments. The public was also given the opportunity to comment at Water Council meetings. Public comments were reviewed, discussed, and addressed by staff designated by Water Council members.



WHY GEORGIA NEEDS A WATER PLAN

Georgia needs a water plan because healthy water resources are central to our quality of life, environment, and economic prosperity. Our economy depends on a clean reliable water supply. As we have learned in the past year, our state needs to be better prepared for drought conditions. Continued growth in Georgia will place greater demands on water resources and increase conflicts over water resources. Therefore, Georgia needs a proactive and comprehensive approach to water resource management to ensure that we can meet current and future water needs and minimize conflicts among users and with neighboring states.

WHAT THE WATER PLAN DOES

The new statewide water plan creates a science-based approach to water planning for Georgia that will improve how we manage our water resources. First, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division will lead an effort to assess our water systems and forecast water use needs. In doing so, we will answer important questions about our water resources: What do we have? What will we need? Next, the water plan creates a new regional water planning process that will result in the development of regional plans for meeting water needs while protecting natural systems. The plan seeks to balance economic and environmental needs to provide for growth, prosperity, and quality of life. It also seeks to facilitate the resolution of potential conflicts over water resources.



WATER PLAN HIGHLIGHTS



- ▶ All provisions of the plan are consistent with current laws
- ▶ The plan integrates water quantity and water quality management in a comprehensive approach.
- ▶ Implementation of the plan will be administered regionally to provide an adaptable process that can accommodate conditions that vary across the state.
- ▶ The boundaries for regional water planning are based on watershed lines with accommodation made for political jurisdictional boundaries.
- ▶ The regional planning process will be administered by regional planning councils that will be appointed by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Speaker of the House. At least eight members of each council will be local government officials.
- ▶ The plan does not alter existing North Georgia Metropolitan Water Planning District law, but the Metro District will be subject to the new regional planning requirements.
- ▶ The water plan will be enforceable through water withdrawal and discharge permits and Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority loan eligibility.
- ▶ The plan provides new protections to donor basins in proposed intra and inter basin transfers.
- ▶ The plan supports a balanced approach that incorporates assessment, regional planning, water conservation, and the development of new water supplies.



GWPPC'S ROLE IN DEVELOPING THE WATER PLAN



Georgia Water Planning & Policy Center



"Georgia manages water resources in a sustainable manner to support the state's economy, to protect public health and natural systems, and to enhance the quality of life for all citizens."

- *Comprehensive Statewide Water Management Planning Act*



Over the past six months, the Georgia Water Planning and Policy Center has served in a technical support capacity to the legislative members of the Water Council as they worked with the Water Council to finalize the draft plan. In this capacity, the Georgia Water Planning and Policy Center provided analysis and recommendations and served as the legislative members' designee in staff level meetings concerning the water plan. Water Council member designees reviewed hundreds of pages of public comments on the draft water plan and suggested plan revisions to the Water Council based on the public comments. Through this assignment, the GWPPC played a central role in facilitating the plan's adoption by the Water Council and approval by the General Assembly.

The Georgia Water Council, which oversaw the development of the new statewide water plan, had four ex-officio members from the General Assembly. These members are pictured to the right.



Senator Ross Tolleson
Chair, Senate Natural Resources & Environment Committee



Senator John Bulloch
Chair, Senate Agriculture & Consumer Affairs Committee



Rep. Lynn Smith
Chair, House Natural Resources & Environment Committee

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The passage of the water plan by the Georgia Water Council and the General Assembly marks a new beginning for water resource policy in Georgia. The adoption of the plan is only the start. In the coming months, we will begin the hard work of putting the plan into action. Over the next three years, we can expect to see a high level of activity on water issues in this state. This year, we can expect a continued focus on responding to the severe drought conditions in this state, but with the new water plan, we can expect that Georgia will be working to address its longer term water needs as well.



Rep. Tom McCall
Chair, House Agriculture & Consumer Affairs Committee

GWPPC TO PRESENT PROJECTS AT USDA NATIONAL WATER CONFERENCE



GWPPC Executive Director Doug Wilson

In February, GWPPC researchers will present three papers at the USDA National Water Conference in Sparks, Nevada. Papers will include:

Water Scarcity and Permit Questions: Georgia Farmers at Risk?

Presented by Doug Wilson

Economic Implications of Drought Management for Southwest Georgia Agriculture

Presented by Mark H. Masters

Protecting Water Quality with Incentives for Litter Transfer in Georgia: Learning From Experience

Presented by Kristin Rowles



Water Talk is a publication produced by the Georgia Water Planning and Policy Center, a consortium of Albany State and Georgia Southern Universities, with research and academic programs focused on water planning and policy issues in Georgia. The primary purpose of Water Talk is to address questions in a manner that contributes to the clarification of issues that are of interest to stakeholders in the state.

All research is available upon request by calling the Georgia Water Planning & Policy Center or by following the "Research" link on our website. You will find all contact information listed in the section below.



PLANNING & POLICY
C E N T E R

More information is available at
www.h2opolicycenter.org
or by contacting:

Georgia Water Planning & Policy Center
Doug Wilson, Executive Director
P.O. Box 345, Albany GA 31702
Phone: (229) 430-2900, Fax (229) 878-1998

Or any collaborating center:

Coastal Rivers Water Planning & Policy Center
Georgia Southern University - (912) 486-7979

Flint River Water Planning & Policy Center
Albany State University - (229) 430-2900