

EXCERPT FROM:

**Integrated Policy Framework and Management Objective Three – Meeting
Instream and Offstream Needs**

**A Summary Report of Basin Advisory Committee Responses
Submitted to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division**

**By the Fanning Institute
The University of Georgia
July 24, 2006**

*Note: The full summary report and reports from individual BACs are available for
download at <http://www.gadnr.org/gswp/Documents/bac.html>*

**Management Objective 3: Group Comments on Policies and Practices for Efficient
Surface Storage**

BAC members had the opportunity to discuss surface water storage and the concept of reservoirs as a water management tool. Some BACs devoted more time to this issue than others, depending on whether surface water storage was a significant issue in their area. The following comments are reflective of those given around the state:

- Reservoirs take a long time to develop. The state needs to be working on new reservoirs now!
- Better utilize and manage existing reservoirs.
- Reservoirs are a last resort after conservation and better planning.
- Current facilities (e.g., Lake Lanier) are much more capable of addressing future needs than most people know.
- Any major reservoir has to meet many needs. The public is overly focused on recreational uses as opposed to water supply. No one cares about water supply until there is a crisis of no water.
- Concern was expressed that the framework as it was proposed by Georgia EPD in the meeting packet directs the group toward providing feedback only on a “more reservoirs” policy to the exclusion of all other options.
- The focus is on water supply reservoirs... not necessarily flow regimes. Water supply storage is what is critical here. Con Room EPD Directors Office
- Consider desalinization and inter-basin transfers as viable options.
- Look at the existing state regional reservoir plan to look at potential water storage. Why haven't the suggestions been implemented?

- Consider that downstream flow is an important factor. In particular, consider seasonal factors and the mimicking of natural flows.
- Consider the yield of the stream above the reservoirs.
- Change authorized uses and the laws for reservoirs at the Federal level.
- “Size” is what is missing from this discussion. You need scale for water supply purposes. Only big lakes (4,000+ acres) can have an impact on water supply during a drought.
- We need statutory authorities to subordinate all other uses to drinking water supply needs and instream flow needs.
- We need to maximize the potential of existing storage first. We should be looking at the potential for water storage in existing plans and understand why those plans have or have not been implemented. What are the other options beyond reservoirs?
- Until we turn off the water, people don’t care. The political process that drives these things is much more focused on recreation.
- Each reservoir is one in a system... you need a more systematic look. Tools to assess impacts already exist. We’ve got plenty of models already.
- Reservoirs should be a last resort. Prioritize – drinking first, recreation last, etc.
- Consider a trading system on a watershed basis.
- How will the resources be allocated? How will the basin be divided? These points must be clarified.
- Be more specific about which regions of the state are/are not good reservoir sites. For example, reservoirs are not practical below the Fall Line.
- Explain how reservoirs significantly alter flow regimes. Provide some type of incentive or disincentive for building reservoirs at better or worse sites.
- EPD should separate the actions required before a reservoir can be considered: Such as conservation efforts, conservation pricing, data on instream and offstream needs must be gathered, etc. The reservoir should be the last resort. But, once a reservoir is truly needed, there needs to be help from the state level.

- EPD should create a guidebook or other tool kit for reservoir development that includes all of the relevant regulations and activities in one central place. A “how to” guide.
- There should be some state-level coordination and planning for reservoir development, along with some help with funding.
- When a municipality can demonstrate that it’s exhausted all options short of a reservoir, there should be a streamlined process to expedite that. Presently it takes ten years to build a reservoir.
- Again, localities should be encouraged to articulate their need for a reservoir only after other avenues for water have been exhausted and conservation has been maximized. This includes public education efforts and data gathering.
- There need to be incentives and funding for local data gathering OR data can/should be gathered at the state level in order to keep it uniform. Locals might be able to help with the funding of such data gathering.
- State-local collaboration for reservoirs is crucial.
- Looking at reservoirs should happen only after conservation (reduction of demand) is fully explored. We appreciate the attention to cumulative impacts; we need to start gathering data now.”
- Benchmark of efficiency – who sets it?
- Reservoirs should be prohibited in high quality habitat as defined in the State Wildlife Action Plan – tie incentives into SWAP.
- Encourage more efficient use of existing and new storage water maximum return to basin of origin. Water Conservation Plan and implementation must be a permit condition
- I’m not sure I understand why reservoirs should be a last resort. I’m not disputing that it should or should not; I just said that it doesn’t make sense to me.
- I think we make broad swath judgments that reservoirs have negative impacts on ecosystem and sometimes that is the case; then again there are very positive benefits from reservoirs that meet the demands of the population of people.
- As a bass fisherman, I have a very hard time to saying no to reservoirs, but I am very concerned about the future if we go to a CUB concept, reservoirs are going to be the easiest way of conserving water for a community. Everyone wants one, but it’s not efficient for everyone to have one. I want very strict rules and

regulations placed upon where they're placed, how big they are, and they should definitely be required to show a need.

- Where does water conservation fit in there? While you increase your demands for storage, you also have to increase conservation efforts.
- Allison Keifer's research seemed to show that there were some reservoirs that would not be needed as originally projected. That should be looked at.
- We need to fully evaluate the impact of changing the authorized purposes, and support those.
- Need to do more to work on coordinated management of the entire system.
- You need to look at farm ponds, and you need to differentiate between farm pond water usage and storage needs vs. amenity or lagoon system that are used for dewatering.
- One thing I don't see is reference to some of the work that has been done in the past. Need to look at other research that has been done, and utilize other resources that have already gone into this. This is not a new issue.
- This is an excellent example of why we need education and to begin making people aware that water costs will be going up.
- We need to stop excavating ponds just to lower the water table so that houses can be built. We need state protection for depressional wetlands. It might go back to the Corps after the Supreme Courts recent rulings.
- We need to think of reservoirs as more than just a water source. They are a tool to manage upstream and downstream water. Reservoirs do not create a new source of water; it just creates a time shift in the time of use of the water.

Information Strategies

- Does anyone from EPD look at where reservoirs might go, or is it just case-by-case based on request?
- Who makes strategy determinations? U. of GA? Dept. of Agriculture? Washington?

11

- Reservoirs maintain stream flow but eliminate peaks and valleys of flow. Some species rely on peaks and valleys in flow.
- Good! Don't forget about existing tools.

Instream Flow Protection

- We need good data to underwrite the criteria.

- There are gaps in the data and the data sharing.
- Modeling is very expensive. Who pays for it? The cost may prompt needs reassessment.
- We need to set new time tables for study of various basins. We have been saying year after year we must do this, but no time-line for a water management plan has been set.
- Flow variability and natural flow should be an integral part of planning.
- Ensure sufficient time to conduct sub-basin data gathering.
- We are concerned that the in-stream flow policies are not being addressed in this third objective effectively.
- Research on in-stream flow standards need to be studied more, and a timeline needs to be established for this, as well as funding mechanisms.

Reservoir Planning and Development

- Reservoir planning and development implies a pro reservoir position. We should be looking at everything that can be done to forestall the construction of a new reservoir.
- If reservoirs are required, think of regional reservoirs rather than individual reservoirs.
- Whatever agency is going to take this on will need a whole, fully staffed, fully funded division to deal with them [reservoirs].
- There should be fewer restrictions on site selection.
- We should pull together what is in-place rather than reinventing.
- Economic growth may render not feasible selection of sites for distant future use because of rising property values.
- We should evaluate alternatives to reservoir storage. Desalination may not be a viable alternative.
- Aquifer recharge areas must be protected in reservoir planning.
- Consider 303D streams as a factor in siting ponds and impoundments.
- Encourage efficient use of alternatives to reservoirs.

- Desalination on the coast could have impact on north Georgia because it would reduce downstream needs from aquifers and streams.
- Bold steps are needed now for planning to meet needs 50 years from now.
- State permitting plans need to be aligned with Corps of Engineers.
- There are costs of building reservoirs that don't show up on the balance sheet, i.e. destruction of habitat.
- Building off-stream reservoirs can create habitat; contribute to the environment.
- Conservation could, in fact, be a major contributor to furthering our water supply.
- Educating the people is the key to conservation.
- Agricultural permits need to be examined. In Floyd County there are many agricultural permits that are not used, but that water cannot be used for other purposes. Those who have agricultural permits should use them or lose them.
- Identify need for water at local level, plan on regional level—thus the state needs a study to determine where to build large reservoirs.
- *Enact state-level mechanisms to guide reservoir site selection*
 - Define need locally with regional implementation. Land use is highly politicized and goes beyond EPD; is not an EPD function.
- *Provide incentives for projects designed to protect streams that currently provide high quality habitat for aquatic biota and for projects that include protection or restoration of these streams in their mitigation plans.*
 - Do not build where there's high quality habitat.
 - Incentives for restoration are desired.
 - Include funding for instream flow studies.
- *Encourage more efficient use of existing and new storage*
 - Delete – this should already be done before considering a reservoir.
- *Establish a pre-application or scoping process for state-level screening of feasibility and compliance early in the reservoir development process. This will help ensure practices for determining need, assessing cumulative impacts, etc. have been implemented.*
 - Yes; need commitment to staffing program; define criteria and streamline process.

- *Provide targeted state funding for reservoirs identified in sub-state plans developed following guidance in the 2008 Comprehensive State-wide Water Management Plan.*
 - Yes, yes, yes.