

Regional Water Planning Summary

State Water Plan

The Georgia Comprehensive State-wide Water Management Plan (State Water Plan) was adopted by the General Assembly in 2008. The State Water Plan provides for:

- **Resource Assessments**

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) will conduct water resource assessments to determine a sound scientific understanding of the condition of the water resources, in terms of the quantity of surface water and groundwater available to support current and future instream and offstream uses and the capacity of the surface water resources to assimilate pollution.

- **Forecasting**

Forecasts of future population expectations, water demands, wastewater returns, land surface types and distribution and employment characteristics will be developed. Water use will be developed for: 1) domestic/ commercial water use; 2) industrial water use; 3) energy water use; and 4) agricultural water use.

- **Regional Water Planning**

Regional water planning councils will prepare recommended Water Development and Conservation Plans. These regional plans shall promote the sustainable use of Georgia's waters, through the selection of an array of management practices, to support the state's economy, to protect public health and natural systems, and to enhance the quality of life for all citizens. The plans shall identify steps, which will be taken to ensure that the forecasted needs can be met. Implementation of the State Water Plan requires that EPD provide the regional water planning councils with technical assistance, such as contractor support, resource assessments, forecasts and guidance. After the Water Development and Conservation Plans are adopted, EPD permits and Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority (GEFA) grants and loans for water projects will be guided by the Plan.

Regional Water Planning Councils

The regional water planning councils (Councils) represent regions in Georgia as designated in the water plan and adjusted by approved petition. Each Council consists of individuals appointed by the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Speaker of

the House. The Metropolitan North Georgia Regional Water Planning District is a separate water planning entity that will participate in the planning process consistent with the State Water Plan and its enabling legislation.

The operation of each council will be defined in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the council, EPD, and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). These agreements will establish how each council conducts its affairs including the procedures for decision-making such as voting mechanisms and provisions for advisory bodies including one of local elected officials in the region who will provide input on regional population, economic and employment forecasts and on plan elements that impact the fiscal responsibilities of local governments.

Water Development and Conservation Plans

The role of the regional planning councils is to draft recommended Water Development and Conservation Plans. EPD will provide technical assistance to the regional planning councils in preparation of Water Development and Conservation Plans. EPD will also contract for services needed to support the preparation of the plans. Regional planning councils will direct contractors' activities, including identification of water quantity and water quality management objectives and recommendation of appropriate management practices to meet those objectives.

Water Development and Conservation Plans will describe the water resources, water users, local governments and education partners in each region. The plans will include forecasts through 2050 of population, and domestic and commercial water use, as well as a comparison of these forecasts with the water resource assessments for each region. Based on these comparisons, the Water Development and Conservation Plans will recommend regionally-appropriate management practices. The plans will also outline additional data and information needs and determine benchmarks for assessing the effectiveness of each plan.

Water Development and Conservation Plans must be based on the best available science; therefore, each council will receive, from EPD, the results of water resource assessments that estimate how much water is available from the water resources on which the region relies. Assessments will also estimate the capacity of the surface water resources to assimilate pollution.

Additionally, each council will receive population and economic projections, as well as forecasts of agricultural and energy sector water use. EPD and its contractors will assist the Councils with converting population and economic

projections into domestic and commercial water use forecasts through the year 2050.

Each council will use the water use forecasts along with the water resource assessments and regional environmental and hydrologic background information to develop a shared vision for the region's future. If "gaps" between available water and future (or current) demands are identified, the councils will determine which water and land use management practices should be employed to ensure there is sufficient water and assimilative capacity to meet future needs. EPD will use computer models to test the ability of the recommended practices to close any identified "gaps."

All of the water planning regions border other regions or share surface or groundwater resources with other regions; therefore, each regional planning council will interact extensively with adjacent, upstream and/or downstream councils to guarantee that the recommended practices do not negatively impact water users in other Regions. Through an iterative process of recommendation and testing, the councils will arrive at a set of management practices that they understand to meet the Region's future needs while supporting the region's (and state's) economy, protecting the public health and natural systems, and enhancing the quality of life for all citizens.

Each council will submit a draft Water Development and Conservation Plan to the Director of EPD, who will adopt the plan or suggest changes so that it can be adopted. The Water Development and Conservation Plans are to be finalized and adopted by June 30, 2011.

After a Water Development and Conservation Plan is adopted for a region, all EPD permits and Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority (GEFA) grants and loans for water projects must be guided by the Plan.

For More Information

For more information on the State Water Plan visit www.georgiawaterplanning.org or contact Arnettia Murphy, arnettia_murphy@dnr.state.ga.us, 404-656-4157.

Final Delineation of Water Planning Regions

