

WATER

The Challenge

The Chattahoochee River is the smallest river in the nation serving as the major water source for a region our size, and North Georgia is 99 percent dependent on surface water. These factors combined with previous severe droughts, mismanagement of Lake Lanier by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and now a federal court ruling have produced a water crisis in our region.

History of MAC Leadership

The Metro Atlanta Chamber (MAC) has long been involved in water policy:

- MAC's **Clean Water Initiative** resulted in the creation of the **Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District** in 2001. The district has raised more than \$10 million, and created a plan to manage water quality and supply through the year 2030. Local governments within the district -- which includes 15 counties and about 100 cities -- must follow this plan to obtain state permits to withdraw water or discharge treated wastewater.
- MAC's public-private **Quality Growth Task Force** resulted in the creation of the **Livable Communities Coalition, Inc.**, a nonprofit launched in September 2005 to advocate for sustainable growth.
- In February 2008, Governor Sonny Perdue signed into law Georgia's first-ever **statewide water management plan**. This plan strikes a good balance between economic sustainability and environmental preservation, thanks in part to the effective advocacy of the Georgia Water Alliance, an **ad-hoc coalition of 40+ statewide water users** that MAC has led.
- Following a federal court judge's ruling in July 2009, we led business leaders, conservationists, state and local government and elected officials through the Governor's **Water Contingency Task Force** to address the gap in water supply absent congressional authorization by 2012.
- Based on the recommendations of the task force and the support of MAC, the General Assembly passed the Water Stewardship Act of 2010, which mandates high-efficiency fixtures, creates a standardized leak-detection program, requires sub-metering of multi-tenant buildings, restricts watering of landscapes and increases incentives for conservation. The bill **sets Georgia as a national leader on water efficiency and conservation** and demonstrates our commitment to water stewardship.

2011 Call to Action

- We support the work of the Governor's Water Contingency Planning Task Force and the implementation of an action-driven **"3 Cs"** contingency plan focused on increasing **conservation** efforts, **capturing** our excess rainfall and implementing **control** measures to efficiently manage our water resources. However, with the passage of the conservation-based Water Stewardship Act in 2010, and with less than two years remaining under Judge Magnuson's ruling, **immediate emphasis** must be placed on capturing and controlling water resources, including developing a **"Plan B" for water supply**.
- We support current law and the DNR permitting process for managing interbasin water transfers. Georgia will **need all water management options in the future**, and any further restrictions should be based on facts, DNR recommendations, and the state and regional water planning efforts.
- We **support restoring funds** in water planning grants originally passed in the 2008 budget **to expedite reservoir development** and other water management tools recommended by the task force.
- We **support an appropriation of \$250,000 in state matching funds for the Metro North Georgia Water Planning District**, ensuring long-term water management planning continues for a vital economic region.

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