



Keeping Watch Over Our Waters

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For Immediate Release

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River Groups Call for Metro District to Get Serious About Water Conservation

Atlanta, GA., January 14, 2009 – River advocacy groups around the state rallied in downtown Atlanta today to voice concerns over state-mandated regional water plans put forth by the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District (Metro District) and to raise awareness about the threats posed to their rivers by the draft plan. Representatives from Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper (UCR), Coosa River Basin Initiative, Flint Riverkeeper, Georgia River Network, and Georgia Canoeing Association carried umbrellas and signs stating: “Metro District Water Conservation Plan = More Rain” in reference to the plan’s weak conservation goals.

The Metro District’s draft plan actually **weakens water conservation goals**, abandoning its earlier pledge to achieve 20% water savings by 2030, and settling for a meager 13% water savings by 2035. In contrast, **the river groups are calling for 20% in water savings by 2020.**

“We know that the most efficient and cost effective way to ensure that we have enough clean water for our region and downstream users is to enact real water efficiency measures now,” said Sally Bethea of UCR. “The metro district is wasting money, wasting water, and wasting time!”

The Metro District, which governs regional and watershed planning across the 15-county metro Atlanta region (Metro District), presented the draft plan for managing our water supply in December of 2008 and is **taking public comments through January 31.** While this plan is a blueprint for water management in metro Atlanta, it indirectly impacts communities across the state.

“We can do better than this,” said April Ingle, Executive Director of the Georgia River Network. “Metro areas across the country have met their increasing water demands by investing in water efficiency and saved taxpayers millions of dollars in the process; the Metro District can and should provide this same kind of leadership.” (*See fact sheet*)

The groups also called for **greater accountability in the plan** – which currently includes few metrics to reflect progress and is based on incomplete and questionable data. In addition, the river advocates criticized the draft plan for the following:

- **Failing to ensure a clean water supply** for drinking, fishing, and recreation. The plan ignores the fact that we have hundreds of more miles of impaired streams today than we did five years ago and that current protections are clearly inadequate.
- **Relying almost entirely on expensive solutions** – the construction of additional reservoirs and the transfer of water from one river basin to another – rather than focusing on proven water efficiency programs which would save us money.

(more)

- **Providing no “plan B” for Lake Lanier water supply**—ignoring the fact that future federal court decisions may reduce the amount of water the Metro District can take legally from Lanier.

Advocates gathered at the corner of Courtland and Edgewood in downtown Atlanta to hold a press conference after the Metro District concluded its final of three public meetings on the draft plan this morning at the Loudermilk Center.

For more information on the Metro District Water Plans see <http://www.ucriverkeeper.org/policy3.htm>.

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