

# The “Atlanta” Water Crisis

When Growth, Politics, and  
Drought Collide



In an age when man has forgotten his origins and is blind even to his most essential needs for survival, water along with other resources has become the victim of his indifference.

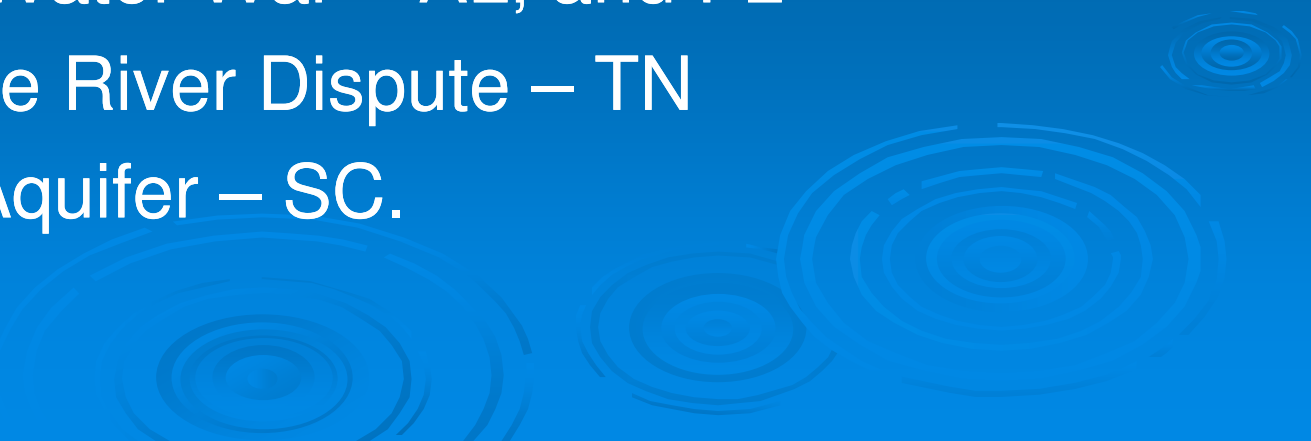
Rachel Carson



# How Do You Tell The Story

- Corps Drains Lake Lanier Like a Bath Tub!
- GA EPD Says 90 Days of Drinking Water Left in Lanier.
- Climatologist Says Drought of the Century No End in Sight!
- Judge To Decide If Atlanta Has Any Rights to Lanier.
- Local Utilities Say: Let Your Lawn Die.
- Cost of Georgia's Drought: Pike Nursery Declares Chapter 11.

# What's with Georgia

- Political Division in the State(s)
  - 2 Georgia's
    - Metro Atlanta
    - Rest of Georgia
  - Disputes with 4 of our 5 Neighbors
    - Tri-State Water War – AL, and FL
    - Tennessee River Dispute – TN
    - Floridan Aquifer – SC.
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# Metro North GA Water Planning District

- Created by the GA Legislature in 2001.
- Tasked with Ensuring the Supply and Quality of Atlanta's Water as the Region Grows.
- 15 Counties Considered Metro Atlanta
- More than 60 Local Governments and Providers.
- 3 Plans: Watershed, Wastewater, Water Supply and Conservation.
- Plans finalized in 2003.
- Updated Every 5 Years.
- Compliance Audited by EPD.
- Permits are Subject to Compliance.
- Update began in 2007 – Approved by the Board May 2009.

# Tri-State Water Wars

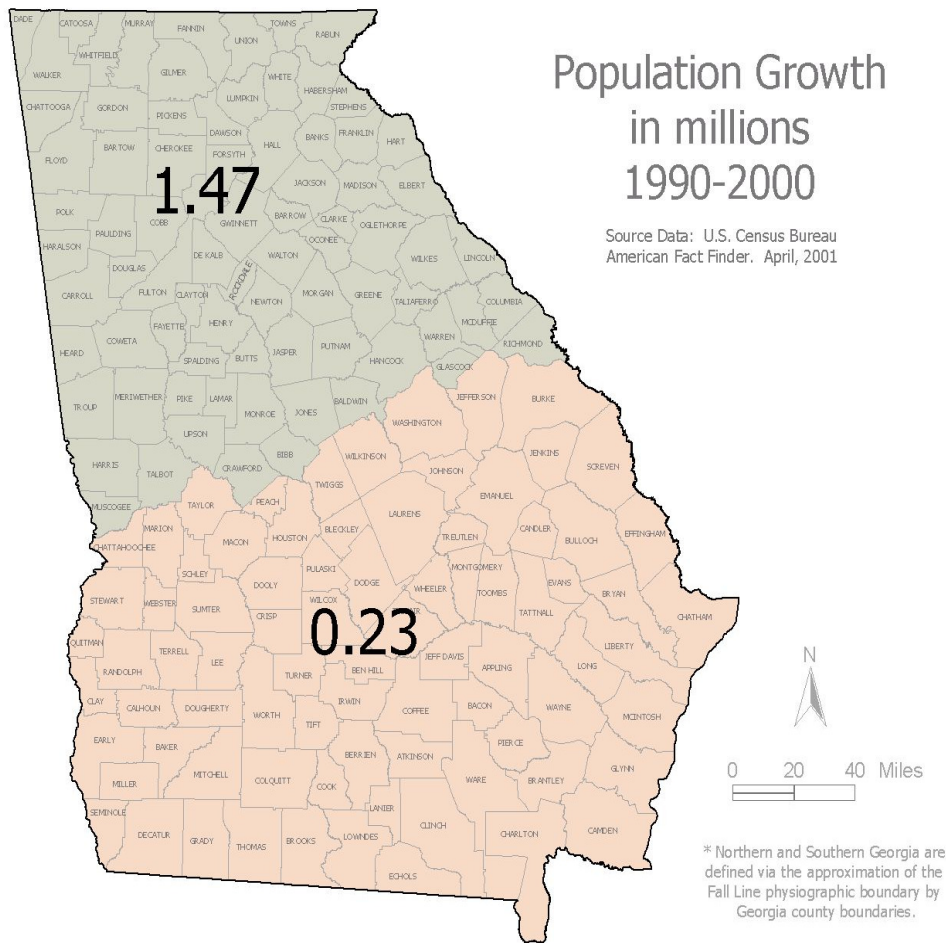
## Man Vs. Mussel

- Comprised of multiple Lawsuits (7)
- Ongoing for 19 years.
- ACT and ACF Basins.
- Multi-Jurisdictional River Basins and Federal Reservoirs.
- Smallest River basins in the US to support a Major Metro Area.
- Atlanta at Headwaters.
- Competing Needs in the Real World

# The Contested Basins



# It is NOT the Growth!



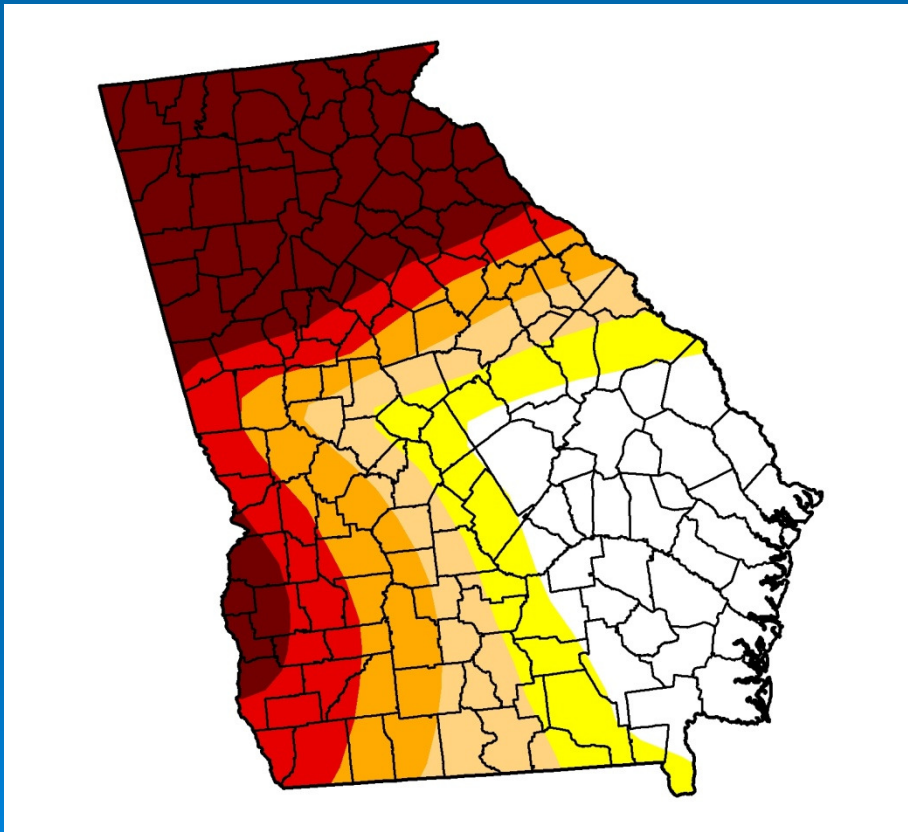
- Metro Atlanta added more people than 44 states Between 1990-2000 (1.2 million).
- Chattahoochee River is one of the smallest rivers in the United States to supply a major metropolitan area's water needs.
- Development and land-use patterns threaten water quality.

# A Tale of Two States

	Total Population in 2006 (millions)	50-year Avg. Annual Precipitation (inches)	Land Area (sq. miles)	Avg. Annual Water from Precipitation (trillion gallons)
Georgia	9.3	50.1	58,910	51.3
Florida	17.0	54.5	58,664	55.6

- In 30 years Georgia is predicted to have 16 million people, like Florida does now.
- Florida, and many states with less water than Georgia, manage water and Growth.

# It's the DROUGHT



- Fall 2005- Decreased Rainfall.
- Spring 2006 – Hydrologic Drought. (Level 1 Declared)
- Spring 2007 – Level 2 Declared.
- July 2007- Surpassed every indicator for level 4 Drought.
- September 28, 2007 – Declared Level 4 Drought

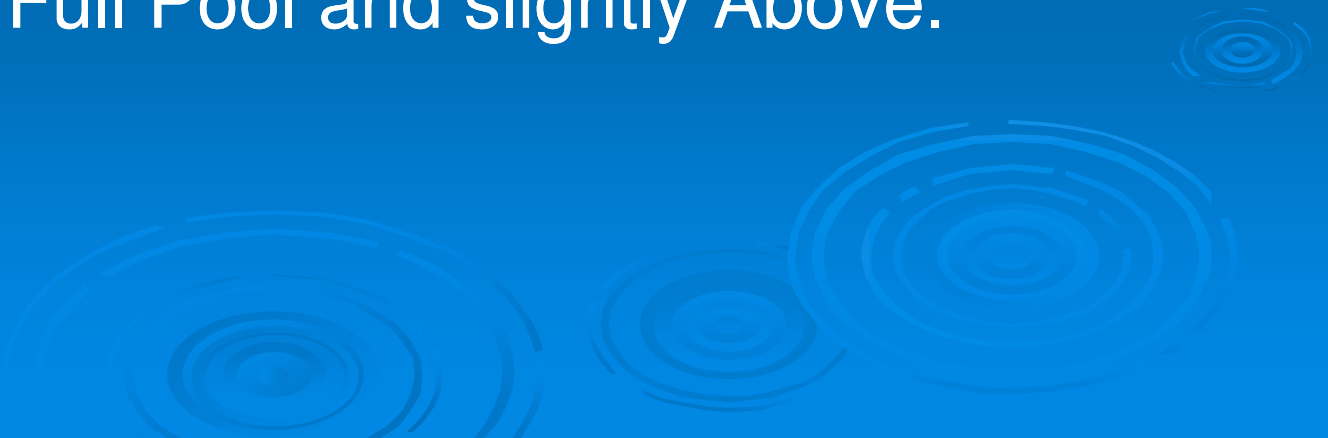
October 2, 2007

# Lake Lanier

- Drinking Water Source for more than 3 Million people
- ACF Basin (Apalachicola Chattahoochee Flint Basin)
- 38,000 Surface Acres 690 Miles Shore Line. - Appx. 625 billion gallons water at full pool
- 1040 Sq. Miles Drainage Area
- Currently 6 feet below full pool.
- December of 2007 – Lowest Ever 21 Ft Below Full Pool.

# Lake Allatoona

- Drinking water source for 800,000 people
- ACT Basin (Alabama Coosa Tallapoosa Basin)
- 1210 Surface Acres - 270 Miles Shore Line – Appx. 120 Billion Gallons of Water
- 1100 Sq. Miles Drainage Area.
- Currently Full Pool and slightly Above.



# The Drinking water Source for 800,000 People



Lake Allatoona in October 2007

# What Do You Do?



# What Did Georgia Do?

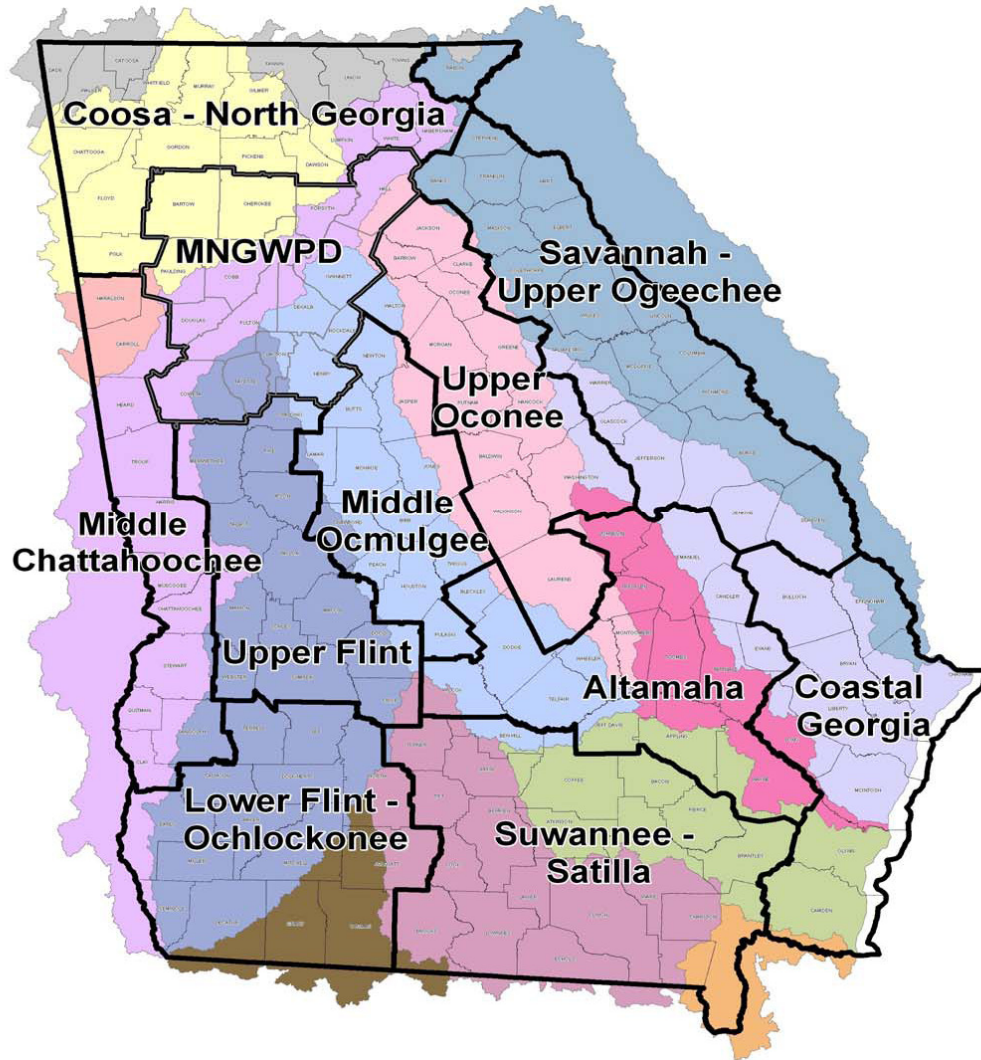
- September 28, 2007 – Declared Drought Level 4 for 64 Counties – Total Ban on Outdoor Watering.
- October 23, 2007 – Governor Perdue Issues Mandatory 10% reduction from winter use for all affected utilities.
- October 25, 2007 – Governor holds a Press Conference from the bed of Lake Lanier “Conservation is useless.”
- February 2008 – Declares Pools can be opened, hand watering is allowed, and extends the new landscape exemption to 10 weeks.
- March 2008 - GA EPD advises we begin our dry season in a much worse position than last year.
- May 2008 - Signs HB1281 into Law.
- March 2009 – EPD adds Drip and Soaker Hose Exemption.
- May 2009 – First Time in 3 Years State is out of Drought conditions on Palmer Drought Index.
- June 30, 2009 – EPD will review Conditions, 4 month benchmark called for in the State Plan.
- Restrictions Will Be Lessened July 2009 – WE HOPE.

# The 2008 Legislative Session

## (The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly)

- State-wide Water Plan Passes – We have a plan to make ...a plan.
  - February 2009 – Water Council Membership announced.
  - Comprehensive Education Plan Launched by the State.
- Reservoir Bill Passes – with an incentive for a sales tax holiday on WaterSense Products & \$40 Million in Water Supply Project Grants.
  - Reservoir Money was Eliminated 3 Months Later with Budget Woes.
- Legislation to redraw the state line and stick Metro Atlanta's "Drinking Straw" in the Tennessee River.
- House Bill 1281 Passes by 80%
  - Currently Redrafting the Drought Response Plan (mandated by HB 1281) while still in the middle of operating under Drought Response Plan


# Final Delineation of Water Planning Regions



0 5 10 20 30 40 Miles



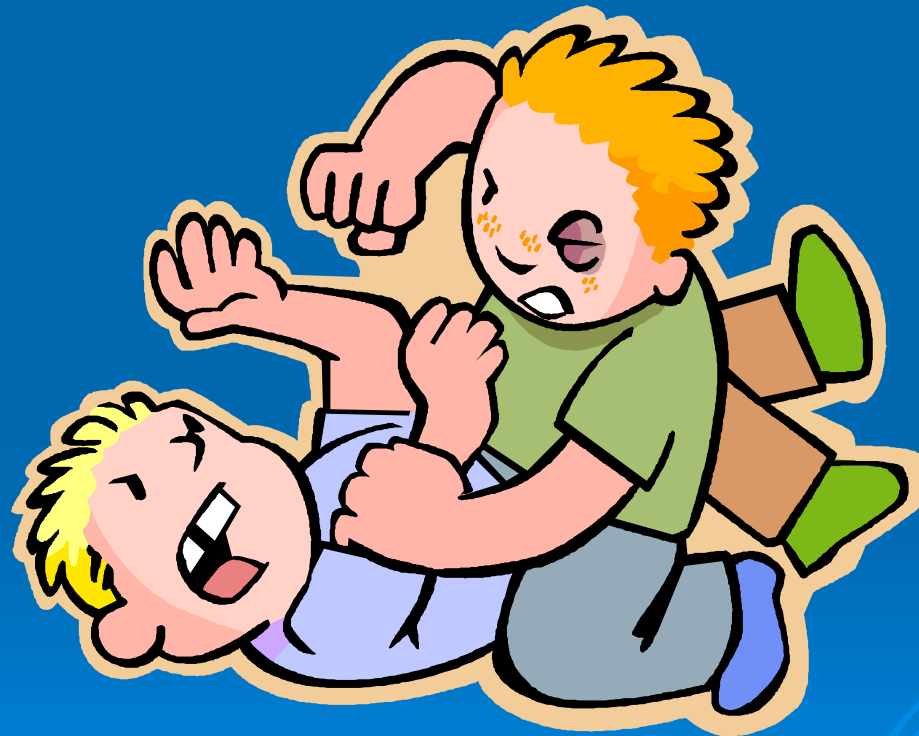
# State Water Plan Progress

- Regional water Council's Announced.
    - Dissention in Appointments
    - Only one Environmentalist
    - Only 18 Women
    - Some Appointees Never Applied.
  - Tasked with developing plans and determining resource issues for their region.
  - Appointees have little or no water knowledge.
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# HB 1281

- Brought forth and lobbied by the Green Industry.
- “We will stop Joe Operator from walking to the reservoir with a yardstick and deciding we’ll have a ban today!”
- State law that stripped local utilities of the ability to make any restrictions different from the state, without petitioning the state.
- Additionally, if we do petition and it is approved by the state we are subject to legal challenges by any affected stakeholder even a homeowner.
- Requires comprehensive revision to Drought Response Plan

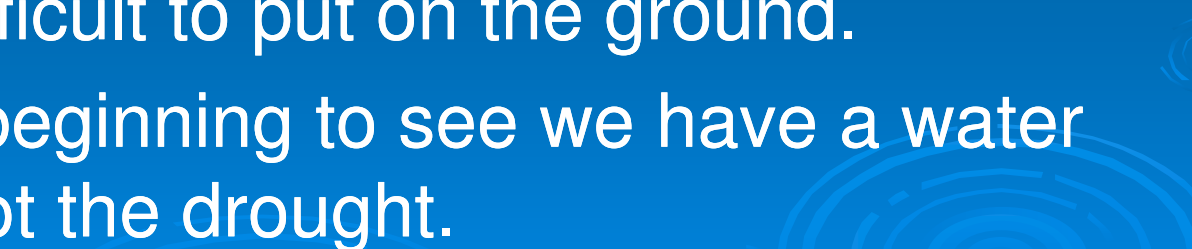
“Whiskey is for Drinking...Water is  
for Fighting!” Mark Twain  
AKA: Regional Water Planning



# Impacts of Crisis

- Green Industry Lost \$3 Billion Dollars and Thousands of Jobs.
- Utilities Lost Millions in Revenue.
- Relationships between Environmentalists, the State, Regulators, Stakeholders, and Water Purveyors suffered.
- Atlanta's publicized water issues impacted new businesses opportunities.

# Results

- The affected North Georgia Area cut their water use by 17%.
  - Lake Allatoona had a chance to recharge.
  - The state devised a method for utilities not dependent on the Chattahoochee basin to apply for looser restrictions.
  - Discovered the Drought Management Plan as written... Difficult to put on the ground.
  - People are beginning to see we have a water problem...not the drought.
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# It is Darkest Before the Dawn

Opportunity is Knocking

- Currently Drafting the State-wide Water Conservation Implementation Plan.
- Revising the State Outdoor Water Use Rules.
- Revising the State Drought Response Plan.
- Creating the Regional Water Plans for the State-wide Plan.
- Dovetailing of Water Quality and Quantity Concerns included in State Plan.
- There is no \$ or Staff to Complete any initiatives
- The State says “This model is unsustainable”

# Lessons Learned

- Drought Response is NOT Conservation.
- We Have a Water Problem.
- The Historic Under Pricing of Water has Significant Financial Consequences Brought to the Forefront During the Crisis.
- There is Not One Solution for the Region.
- Voluntary Conservation is Unlikely to Work in a Historically Water Rich Region.
- Water Efficiency Ethic Takes Time to Take Hold.
- Crisis Breeds Concern.

# Steps Toward Change

- Started a Regional Toilet Rebate Program.
- Initiated Discussions on “Smart” growth in the Region.
- Increased Interest in Green Building.
- Conservation is being considered in supply planning.
- Conservation Plans and Progress Will be Considered in future Permitting.
- Some utilities are seeing Efficiency as an essential Part of Business.

# Thank You

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