



News Release

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Georgia Water Coalition Commercial Calls Voter Attention to Important Water Issues

For Release Monday, 10/11/10- Today the Georgia Water Coalition launched television commercials aimed at educating Georgia voters about an important issue facing Georgia: water. The commercial calls attention to water waste in metro Atlanta and calls on voters to ask gubernatorial candidates how clean water can be assured for all Georgians.

[Click here to view the commercial.](#)

“When it comes to water, it’s high time metro Atlanta becomes accountable for its own water needs and stops relying on the rest of Georgia for their water, especially when the metro area has too many leaks and not enough conservation,” said Gordon Rogers, the Flint Riverkeeper and member of the Georgia Water Coalition. “Already, metro Atlanta moves hundreds of millions of gallons of water per day among four major river basins, drying up certain portions of Georgia beyond reasonable use. As Georgia voters, we need to ask the candidates for Governor ‘How will metro Atlanta be held accountable?’ and ‘Who will protect our water?’”

For many years, metropolitan Atlanta has been one of the fastest-growing regions in the country. This growth has placed increasing pressure on Georgia’s finite water supply, and our next governor will likely face the long-running "Tri-State Water War" between Georgia, Florida and Alabama head-on once he gets into office.

The water war reached a new level on July 17, 2009, when U.S. District Court Judge Paul Magnuson ruled that metro Atlanta was illegally using Lake Lanier for water supply. Judge Magnuson gave Georgia three years to reach a water sharing agreement with Alabama and Florida that would include the use of Lanier as a drinking water supply. Without that agreement, the taps could literally be shut off to portions of metro Atlanta. When the new governor takes office, he will have only 18 months to solve this dilemma.

Governor Perdue last year appointed a task force to identify potential sources of water in light of the ruling, and that task force considered water transfers to metro Atlanta from other locations like Lake Burton, Lake Hartwell, the Tennessee River basin, Lake Jackson, and South Georgia groundwater.

While the Task Force did not recommend any of these solutions because of their financial and political costs, metro Atlanta is already supporting its expanding development with immense transfers of water that would have flowed to downstream communities if not diverted. Cartersville and Rome in the Coosa River basin lose an estimated 13 million gallons per day (MGD) through a water transfer that supports metro Atlanta's growth. LaGrange, West Point and Columbus, downstream from Atlanta on the Chattahoochee, lose an estimated 48 MGD; and Flint River communities like Thomaston, Oglethorpe and Albany lose around 10 MGD. On the Flint River, at Thomaston, this amounts to nearly 50% of the present-day low flow.

On the Flint, these transfers are already impacting water levels. Low flows in the upper Flint basin have been eroded by 60% since the 1970s, with as much as half of this attributable to interbasin water transfers alone, according to an analysis by the Flint Riverkeeper. The organization estimates that modern-day low flows could be improved by almost 50% if existing transfers of water were returned.

The 48 MGD transfer from the Chattahoochee is enough to supply the current daily demands of the downstream communities in Newnan, LaGrange, and Columbus combined, according to the Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper.

In the Coosa basin, reductions in water transfers show that aggressive water conservation measures can help protect downstream communities. Transfers from the Coosa basin to metro Atlanta peaked in 2002 at 38 MGD, but have since declined steadily. During the drought year of 2008, water conservation efforts and drought-related watering restrictions kept the average monthly transfer below 18 MGD.

"This is the kind of success story we want to see more of from metro Atlanta," said Joe Cook, Upper Coosa Riverkeeper. "It shows that if metro Atlanta gets serious about conservation, they can live within their means and protect water supplies for all Georgia communities like Rome, Albany and Columbus."

"What has happened on the Coosa can happen on the Flint and Chattahoochee, too", said Rogers. "Metro Atlanta has already demonstrated it can be more efficient, and share the water more equitably. We support these efforts, and want the next Governor to do all he can to move this ball down the field to a goal line of 'no unreasonable impacts' on downstream communities."

Estimates show that metro Atlanta could save between 120 and 200 mgd by implementing water efficiency and conservation measures. [Click here for a fact sheet with details on how](#). The commercial directs viewers to the "[No Water Grabs](#)" website where they can sign a petition asking the Governor to ensure any current and future interbasin transfers of water protect our natural resources and our economic future.

The television commercial is broadcasting in southwest Georgia over the next week, and is being broadcast over the internet on Georgia Water Coalition partners' websites, YouTube, e-mail communications, and social networking sites.

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The Georgia Water Coalition is a consortium of 182 groups working together to promote state water policy that ensures enough clean water for this and future generations.