

**Testimony before the Georgia Assembly,  
House Natural Resources Sub-Committee**

**February 2, 2008**

**by Jenny Hoffner, Director  
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Good morning and thank you for providing me with this opportunity to speak to you. My name is Jenny Hoffner and I am the director of the Atlanta-based water supply and water efficiency program for the national non-profit, American Rivers. I am here speaking today on behalf of the Georgia Water Coalition of which we are a member.

We understand that The Georgia Water Supply Act of 2008 is trying to address our serious water problems, but the provisions of the bill will tie our hands as we develop a sustainable clean water supply that works for the entire state of Georgia and for our future generations.

We are obviously in a very serious water supply situation in Georgia and the entire Southeast. Too often, though, we make rash decisions when there is a great threat, and we cannot afford to do that here. While we need to take quick, decisive steps to provide clean water for our region, we must take the right steps. Otherwise, we will create bigger, more expensive problems down the line.

Water supply impoundments are an answer but not the first answer. Instead, we need to first look at all feasible and fiscally responsible alternatives, including the kinds of quick and substantial water efficiency measures that other cities have used to cut water use by 20 to 30 percent without compromising quality of life or economic growth. Replacing

inefficient plumbing alone can create up to 10% more “new” clean water supply – as will be demonstrated in DeKalb County where they passed a Retrofit on Reconnect ordinance on Tuesday. By replacing inefficient toilets and showerheads in the 165,000 pre-1993 homes, DeKalb will save nearly 9 million gpcd – that’s nearly 10% of their current daily withdrawal.

Once we have invested in efficiency measures, then we need to hold to a clearly established decision-making process to determine whether and where new reservoirs are needed. The Georgia Legislature just authorized the development of a State Water Plan. This plan provides for a process to determine what new supply is available and needed. But we need to give our state water planning process time. It will establish the needed criteria to make informed decisions that will meet the clean water needs of the state and all its citizens. The future will prove us foolish if we jump to building new reservoirs simply out of desperation due to crisis.

Beyond these general comments, we would like to urge you to make some specific changes to this legislation that will provide for this better process and support cost-effective and time-efficient solutions to our water supply problems while meeting the immediate needs of water utilities across the state.

In section 12-5-471 paragraph 10 after, “thereby promoting water conservation,” add to the paragraph:

“...such conservation shall also include the programmatic reduction of pipe leaks, the use of efficient fixtures and appliances, and the revision of water utility rate structures to promote the conservation of water whilst protecting the revenue of the water utility, all for the essential public purpose of providing water facilities and services to meet public health and environmental standards and to protect the natural environment, and to aid the development of trade, commerce, industry, agriculture,

and employment opportunities. Projects shall not include any legal expenses for litigation of interstate resource allocation or any direct funding for inter-basin transfers within the State.”

And in Section 12-5-474, paragraph C, we suggest restoring everything after “may determine necessary or appropriate”(line 22) so it reads:

“... may determine necessary or appropriate; and the department shall require a water conservation plan approved pursuant to rules and regulations prescribed by the Board of Natural Resources.”

As I have stated above, these solutions to our water supply problems are critically important and must be given greater weight as we work toward a solution.

Thank you and I am happy to answer any questions.