

## **Water Council Passes Water Plan**

Association County Commissioners of Georgia

January 8, 2008

The Association County Commissioners of Georgia writes with encouraging news on the water planning front. After several weeks of meetings with Water Council members, our state's leadership, the Georgia Municipal Association and the Georgia Association of Water Professionals, the Water Council has adopted a draft water plan that ACCG endorses and believes is a workable compromise for Georgia counties. As counties are aware, ACCG's primary concern has been on the proposed make-up of the regional boundaries and councils, particularly that councils be assured adequate local government representation.

These concerns were met, and the plan adopted by the Water Council will have local elected officials representing a minimum of 8 of 25 (or 32 percent) seats on each regional council. In addition, a local government advisory council will be established within each region to advise regional councils.

Most importantly, the Governor, Lt. Governor and House Speaker have endorsed this plan (see joint press release). While we cannot be certain how the plan will be addressed by the General Assembly during its 2008 legislative session, having this support certainly means it will receive key favorable consideration.

In addressing recent (December 2007) county concerns, the plan adopted by the Water Council:

- 1) Establishes a new map for the regions that is based more along river basin boundaries;
- 2) Enables a county to opt out of one region and into an adjoining one if it shares a river basin;
- 3) Enlarges each Regional Council's membership from 18 to 25 members, with the Governor appointing 13 members, the House Speaker appointing 6 members, and the Lt. Gov appointing 6 members;
  - a. Of the Governor's 13 appointments, 4 will be local elected officials (2 city and 2 county);
  - b. Of the Speaker's 6 appointments, 2 will be local elected officials (1 city and 1 county);
  - c. Of the Lt. Governor's 6 appointments, 2 will be local elected officials (1 city and 1 county);
- 4) Requires members of each regional water council to be residents of that region;
- 5) Establishes a local government advisory council within each region, with every city and county having a representative on it. This council will publicly provide input pertaining to population, employment and economic forecasts and technical and other comment on each regional plan prior to it being submitted to the EPD; and
- 6) Requires that implementation of regional water plans is done in concert with regional and local comprehensive plans.