May 14, 2009

Ms. Heidi Davison
Mayor
Athens-Clarke County
PO Box 1868
Athens, GA 30603-1868

Dear Mayor Davison:

This letter requests your review and comment on a set of draft population and employment projections prepared by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at UGA. The projections, when finalized, will be the foundation for forecasting future regional municipal and industrial water and wastewater needs for a series of regional water plans being developed by regional water planning councils. The attached "Fact Sheet" provides additional background information relative to the 2008 Georgia Comprehensive State-wide Water Management Plan and the development of the projections.

The enclosed digital video disc (DVD) includes links to a set of draft population and employment projections for Georgia counties. EPD, ACCG, and GMA respectfully request that you engage an appropriate team of persons in your political jurisdiction (e.g., planners, economic development advisors, chambers of commerce, etc.) to review and provide comments on the information and data contained in the DVD.

We request that you submit your comments - no later than June 12, 2009 - using the website www.georgiawaterplanning.org/pe. The DVD includes questionnaires that, when completed using instructions on the website, will provide information useful to the Vinson Institute in finalizing the projections.

Your comments should be based on the unique knowledge you and your team have of present and future circumstances in your local jurisdiction. The Vinson Institute's professional staff will review all comments and determine what adjustments, if any, to make in the population and employment projections prior to finalization.

We look forward to working with you over the next few years as these regional water plans are developed.

Sincerely,

Jim Higdon, Executive Director
Georgia Municipal Association

Jerry R. Griffin, Executive Director
Association County Commissioners of Georgia

Carol A. Couch, Director
Georgia Environmental Protection Division
FACT SHEET

- The State Water Plan was adopted by the General Assembly, and signed by Governor Perdue during the 2008 Legislative session.

- In early 2009 the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the House announced their appointees to the regional water planning councils (for a list of council members from your region and for further information about the plan, please visit the web site: www.georgiawaterplanning.org).

- Regional water planning councils are responsible for developing recommended regional water plans for their respective water planning regions, and the Environmental Protection Division is responsible for final review and approval of those plans. Upon adoption these plans will guide EPD water and wastewater management decisions for water activities within each region. The councils began their work on May 1, 2009.

- The State Water Plan calls for the formation of a Local Government Advisory Body to provide vital input into the regional water planning process. The Local Government Advisory Body is composed of one elected official from each municipality and county within the water planning region. In addition to providing input on regional population and employment projections, the Local Government Advisory Body tasks that are specifically called for in the Plan include:
  1. Commenting on the fiscal implications of the regional water plan on local governments, and
  2. Reviewing and commenting on other data and information required for the preparation of the regional water plans.

- In July, 2008, the Office of Planning and Budget contracted with the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia to produce reliable, scientifically based, independent population and employment projections for Georgia for uniform use by all agencies of state government.

- The Office of Planning and Budget contract with the Vinson Institute created an advisory board to provide input into development of the projection methodologies. The advisory board consists of representatives from the Office of Planning and Budget, the Environmental Protection Division, the Department of Community Affairs, the Department of Transportation, ACCG, GMA, the Council of Regional Commissions, the Atlanta Regional Commission, and the state economist.

- EPD, through the regional water planning process, will be the first state agency to utilize the Vinson Institute's population and employment projections.