



STATE OF GEORGIA

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Sonny Perdue
GOVERNOR

For Immediate Release
Communications, (404) 651-7774
Wednesday, February 6, 2008
(404) 651-7970

Contacts: Office of

Kevin Chambers, EPD,

Governor Perdue Signs Water Plan into Law

*Governor Perdue Announces Modifications to Restrictions on the
Filling of Swimming Pools*

ATLANTA— Today Governor Sonny Perdue signed HR 1022, the Statewide Water Management Plan, that will guide Georgia in managing its water resources. The newly enacted plan will utilize the state's water resources in a sustainable manner; will support the state's economy, will protect public health and natural systems, and will enhance the quality of life for all citizens. The resolution was sponsored by Rep. Lynn Smith (R-Newnan) in the House of Representatives and state Sen. Ross Tolleson (R-Perry) carried the resolution in the Senate.

“Water management is one of the most critical issues facing Georgia today,” said Governor Sonny Perdue. “This plan was created by an inclusive process, allowing all parties to contribute and offer their solutions – from local governments to business owners to the agricultural community and the general public. Georgia now has a comprehensive, statewide plan for managing and conserving this precious resource.”

Georgia's first comprehensive statewide Water Plan was recommended unanimously by the Water Council in January, and both the House and Senate Natural Resource Committees were quick to address it. The Water Plan was passed by both chambers and sent to the Governor for signature yesterday, the 11th day of the 2008 legislative session.

“We have come together to provide Georgians with a clear process for managing the future of our water resources,” said Rep. Lynn Smith. “By approving the Statewide Water Management plan, we are presenting Georgians with the ability to plan and conserve.”

The plan lays out statewide policies, management practices, and guidance for regional planning. The provisions of this plan are intended to guide river basin and aquifer management plans and regional water planning efforts statewide.

“By passing Georgia’s first Statewide Comprehensive Water Plan, we are now able to prepare for the future water needs of our state,” said state Sen. Ross Tolleson. “This plan balances the growth of our state while protecting the needs of our environment.”

Citing risks to public health and safety, Governor Sonny Perdue announced plans today to modify state restrictions on the filling of swimming pools in drought-stricken north Georgia, but will still require that water conservation goals be met. Under a Level Four Drought Response, the filling of outdoor swimming pools is prohibited. Today Governor Perdue announced the lifting of this restriction, allowing outdoor pools to be filled from April through September 2008.

“Citizens should not see this as a signal the drought is over,” said Governor Perdue. “The drought remains persistent and water conservation is our top priority.”

The decision to change the state’s restrictions is based on water use data collected by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD). However, Governor Perdue emphasized that local governments and water utilities still have the authority to impose restrictions more stringent than state requirements.

Local governments and water utilities in the 61-county Level Four Drought Response area will still be required to achieve the Governor’s water use reduction goal of at least 10 percent. Beginning April 1, the water savings will be calculated using last year’s April-September average monthly water use.

It’s estimated there are approximately 6,500 public pools and 92,000 private residential pools in the Level Four area. According to EPD, those pools will require seven million gallons of water per day from April through September.

“We believe the swimming pool exemption will have only a modest impact on water supply, provided citizens can still meet the required water conservation goals,” said Governor

Perdue. “We will continue to closely monitor drought conditions and will re-evaluate the exemptions and make adjustments if needed throughout the spring and summer.”

Some potential impacts if outdoor pools were left empty include collecting stagnant water, cracking or collapsing of pools and posing a safety threat of falling into the empty pool.

This morning, Governor Perdue announced new exemptions to the Level Four Drought Response in addition to outdoor pools. The state will now allow limited hand watering of existing landscapes, a more thorough and beneficial watering schedule on newly installed landscapes and the continued call for 10 percent reductions in use when compared to the summer average from 2007.

“Our hope is that every Georgian who takes advantage of these new exemptions will also help conserve and allow local water authorities to continue to meet the 10 percent reductions,” Governor Perdue added.

More information about the drought and water conservation can be found at www.georgiaepd.com and www.conservewatergeorgia.net.