

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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RESERVOIR PROJECT APPROVED BY GEORGIA LEGISLATURE THREATENS TRISTATE NEGOTIATIONS

April 30, 2010 – Atlanta & Albany, GA - Just a month after passing a comprehensive water conservation bill, the Georgia legislature took a major step backward in resolving the state's water supply disputes with its downstream neighbors. A bill was passed to expedite the construction of a reservoir, which is in part an amenity lake in the midst of a projected upscale subdivision in metro Atlanta. This step is certain to undermine negotiations with Alabama and Florida over the water in the Chattahoochee River Basin.

Sally Bethea, Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, said, "If this reservoir is built, its operation will result in a significant and entirely unnecessary loss of water to the river and communities downstream in Georgia, Alabama and Florida. It threatens our efforts to develop an equitable, water sharing agreement and will negate the water savings achieved through the new conservation bill."

Three cities in South Fulton County applied to the Corps of Engineers in 2009 to build a 440-acre reservoir on Bear Creek, a tributary to the Chattahoochee, and pump 32 million gallons of water per day (MGD) from the river to fill the impoundment. Federal agencies, the city of Atlanta and numerous environmental organizations objected to the construction of the project in comments to the Corps.

"Thirty-two million gallons per day is a significant percentage of what Georgia and Florida are arguing over at the Florida line," said Gordon Rogers, Flint Riverkeeper. This is a greedy water grab by metro north Georgia that harms the Chattahoochee and puts more pressure on the Flint to make up the difference."

Currently, the South Fulton County area is supplied with water by the city of Atlanta which has the existing, fully permitted capacity to continue to serve the area well into the future, without the construction of this reservoir. HB 406, which passed on the last night of the session, removed an impediment to the state's permitting and funding of that project, and any similar project, by exempting

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it from the Service Delivery Act, thereby allowing the Georgia Environmental Protection Division to move forward with its review and approval of the permit application and the state to allocate funds for its construction.

The Bear Creek reservoir is to be constructed on property owned by Carl Bouckaert, owner and future developer of thousands of acres in South Fulton County. About half of the water withdrawn from the Chattahoochee would be used only for the purpose of maintaining an aesthetic level in this amenity reservoir at the expense of downstream water users.

Less than two miles downstream of the confluence of Bear Creek and the Chattahoochee lies the existing Dog Creek reservoir in Douglas County. Bethea said, “Governor Perdue’s Water Contingency Task Force identified an expansion of this reservoir to be a top priority since it will yield twice as much water supply as the Bear Creek reservoir at half the cost. With the approval of HB 406, the Georgia legislature has shown that it is more interested in hoarding water for private development in metro Atlanta, than equitably sharing this liquid wealth with its downstream neighbors.”

In addition to undermining Georgia’s negotiating position in the tri-state water dispute, the bill has potentially devastating implications for utilities across Georgia who rely on service delivery agreements to ensure that they are compensated for the water utility services and investments on infrastructure they provide to Georgia’s cities and counties.

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Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper (UCR) is a nonprofit environmental advocacy group whose mission is to protect and preserve the Chattahoochee River, its tributaries and watershed, for the people, fish, and wildlife that depend upon it. Since its inception in 1994, UCR has stopped the flow of hundreds of millions of gallons of untreated sewage into the river system. UCR has more than 4500 members and was the 11th licensed program in the international Waterkeeper Alliance. Learn more at www.chattahoochee.org.

The Flint Riverkeeper's (FRK's) sole purpose is to serve as a steward for this valued waterway and to ensure the future life and health of the river and its tributaries remains certain during these uncertain times. FRK is a non-profit 501(c) 3 corporation with the goal of protecting the Flint River in its most natural state for future generations to enjoy. Flint Riverkeeper ® is a fully licensed member of the Waterkeeper Alliance. Learn more at www.flintriverkeeper.org.

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