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STATE OF ALABAMA

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State releases comprehensive assessment on Alabama's surface waters

MONTGOMERY— Barring any major catastrophic event, Alabama appears poised to sustain its water needs for the next 20 years, according to an assessment report released today by the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs' Office of Water Resources.

The 2017 Alabama Surface Water Assessment Report indicates that even with population growth in the state's larger metropolitan areas and projected increases in industrial and agricultural use of water resources, Alabama should have a plentiful supply of surface water – rivers, streams, lakes and reservoirs – to meet those requirements through the year 2040. The surface water report is available online at www.water.alabama.gov.

Completed by ADECA's OWR staff, the report is part of an ongoing study to determine the state's water needs and water availability. This report – along with a groundwater assessment report currently being completed by the Geological Survey of Alabama – provides a significant baseline of data and information for a potential revised statewide water management plan.

“Aside from being the sustainer of life on this planet, water has and always will play a critical role in the well-being of Alabama, and we must do all that is possible to ensure its bountifulness in our state,” Gov. Kay Ivey said. “This assessment is an important step in making sure that we have a plentiful supply of water for the myriad of ways it supports our state and our quality of life.”

Using the year 2010 as a benchmark, the report examines both surface and groundwater use and surface water availability from that year to help project future water needs and availability. The report examines streamflows at more than 200 locations throughout the state and summarizes water availability and water demands in every major sub-basin in the state.

“ADECA’s OWR staff has devoted numerous hours to compile what is Alabama’s most complete surface-water report ever produced and one that will help guide our state into the future,” ADECA Director Kenneth Boswell said. “I am honored and appreciative that Governor Ivey recognized the talents, expertise and capabilities of OWR staff and charged us with completing this all-important task.”

The report was made possible by an appropriation from the Alabama Legislature. The University of Alabama, Auburn University, Troy University and the Geological Survey of Alabama also supplied information for the report. OWR plans to update the report every five years.

Based on the results of the surface water and groundwater assessment reports and information previously compiled by the Alabama Water Agencies Working Group, OWR plans to propose the development of a comprehensive water management plan that includes an overview of the state's water resources, summaries of current and future water usage, existing water management policies and recommendations for additional policy needs. The development of the state water management plan, if funded by the Legislature, would be completed within a three-year time frame.

Established by the Alabama Water Resources Act in 1993, OWR is charged with planning, coordinating, developing and managing Alabama's water resources, both ground and surface water, in a manner that is in the best interest of the state. The act also established the Alabama Water Resources Commission which advises OWR, makes policy recommendations to the Governor and Legislature, and adopts rules and regulations for programs implemented by OWR.