

1 November 2012

To: Alabama Water Agencies Working Group

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Subject: Comments on Water Management Issues in Alabama
Document dated August 1, 2012

Thank You for the opportunity to comment on this critical initiative to establish comprehensive water management policy for the State of Alabama. I am writing in support of comments offered by the Alabama Rivers Alliance as well as to provide a few comments of my own, below.

1. Preserving and enhancing Alabama's water quality for future generations and sustainable economic development relies on sound data and ongoing sampling initiatives for water and biological assessments. State agencies must be maintained with sufficient funding to take the lead, in coordination with local organizations and public stakeholders, to ensure we have sufficient and sound scientific information for a comprehensive understanding of Alabama's surface and groundwater systems. Federal programs can only go so far and could easily be suspended if funding is reduced.
2. I wholeheartedly endorse the proposal to establish a water resources data clearinghouse accessible to the public.
3. Water conservation and management methods such as rainwater catchment and greywater use should be encouraged through tax or other incentives for new development and urban redevelopment projects. The State should offer education and training for design and construction to encourage reuse before discharge.

4. State agencies and municipalities should lead by example, requiring implementation of best management practices and innovative methods to promote sound water management on their own projects. These should also be used as demonstration projects and examples to encourage privately funded efforts.
5. State agencies must work together for the common goal of protecting water quality, with sufficient checks and balances in place to prevent short-sighted decisions based on faulty science. For example, ASMC and ADEM permits were recently issued for coal mines a short run upstream from the City of Birmingham's water supply intake, which simply defies logic.
6. Water conservation issues are irretrievably intertwined with energy conservation. As such, State energy agencies must work hand in hand with those working to implement energy conservation programs in Alabama. Organizations such as the U.S. Green Building Council should be consulted to develop a more comprehensive understanding of water use in the built environment.
7. Programs and curricula for environmental organizations and K-12 schools will be instrumental to the success of whatever policy is adopted. Legacy: Partners in Environmental Education was not to be found on your list of stakeholders. This organization provides a number of posters and materials at no charge.

In closing, I will reiterate my support for the long overdue development of a comprehensive water management plan for Alabama. Please add me to your mailing lists for future news releases and public participation efforts.

Best Regards,

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