

**Comments by the Choctawhatchee, Pea and Yellow Rivers Watershed Management Authority
on the “Water Management Issues in Alabama” report by the
Alabama Water Agencies Working Group**

November 1, 2012

The Choctawhatchee, Pea and Yellow Rivers Watershed Management Authority (CPYRWMA) was created by the Alabama Legislature in 1991 and has been addressing water issues in the ten southeastern counties of *Barbour, Bullock, Coffee, Covington, Crenshaw, Dale, Geneva, Henry, Houston, and Pike* in Alabama since that time.

Watersheds are nature’s boundaries that define natural geographic areas drained by a stream or river and its tributaries and are characterized by all runoff being conveyed to the same downstream outlet. As such, watersheds are hydrologically defined and are not constrained by municipal, county, or state lines. Therefore, land-use activities anywhere within a watershed may affect all downstream areas. Protective measures, if they are to be effective, must also supersede such political boundaries and address the watershed as a whole.

The CPYRWMA has focused its efforts over the years to gaining knowledge of the region’s water resources and to understanding local water issues from an information and data perspective. It has worked cooperatively with city and county governments, state and federal agencies, NGOs, and local citizens to better understand the water resources in these watersheds of southeast Alabama by funding scientific investigations which have produced an unprecedented amount of data about water resources and needs in southeast Alabama. This approach has resulted in educated and informed local governments which have gained invaluable knowledge in the responsible management, development, and protection of their water resources.

Water resources statewide must be adequate for human consumption, for support of long-term economic growth, and for environmental stability. Water management decisions should be based on the best possible water use and water availability data interpreted within the framework of statewide water policies and statutes. Water management plans and policies must be designed with the overall goal of sustaining the economic, cultural, and environmental health of the state.

Suggestions for a statewide Water Management Plan:

- *Determine how much water is used in what sectors of society and how this water can be used more efficiently. Complete a water resource assessment and establish a statewide surface and ground water monitoring network. Determine data and knowledge deficiencies and create research opportunities to fill these gaps. Determine how much*

water is available from surface and groundwater sources. Determine how much water should remain in surface channels to support fish and wildlife populations and sustain the water-production functions of natural hydrologic systems.

- *Forecast water needs for human consumption, economic development, agriculture, and energy production. Determine flow needs for pollution assimilation, sustaining biological condition, and protecting the water production system.*

- *Identify the management practices necessary to meet identified needs and to protect water resource functions.*

- *Create a responsible water-resource development program to meet future water supply needs for all areas of the state.*

- *Develop a statewide Water Conservation Plan to include recommended practices.*

- *Create or designate a central repository for receipt of data, reports, permits, etc.*

- *Develop a strong yet sensible enforcement plan. Implement the approved water management plan. Proceed with an adaptive management approach for all stakeholders and have a process for conflict resolution.*

- *When developing an implementation method for the statewide management plan, the “watershed management authority” concept is a proven and highly successful concept and should be considered for utilization.*