

29 August 12

Dear Bennett,

I have read the AWAWG issue paper and am impressed with its clarity and scope. I appreciate your sharing the committee's work with me.

As you may know, my own perspective on water issues in Alabama comes from earlier work dealing with methylmercury in the State's waters* and the long-debated issues associated with proposed water diversion from Alabama's waters for Atlanta's water needs.** Of course, you are aware of my long-standing interest in lateral connectivity issues in our river systems, as you just served so ably on Thomas Wells' dissertation committee. (As you know, Thomas will be presenting on this issue in Gulf Shores next week.) Accordingly, please allow me to make a few observations about water issues in Alabama that do not seem to stand out in the current draft, or at least, I am not sure that they are included:

- I would hope for a greater emphasis on tourism and outdoor recreation interests as a significant consideration in water policy for the State. Angling and other water-based activities are enormous generators of economic activity. To this end, the lateral connectivity issue is of vital significance to fisheries quality and quantity. Add to this that people have camp houses and other property on backwaters that are no longer accessible to their river systems. This obviously contributes to a depreciation of property values specifically and quality of life generally.
- Of course, the larger context for such issues is that we are in an era of *aging river systems*. Altered rivers (i.e., those with locks and dams) are experiencing silt build-up and fill-up that carry important consequences for adequate transportation channel depths, power generation potential, flood control, outdoor recreation access to backwaters, fish spawning habitat, ecological diversity, and ecological services in general. In short, some river systems (e.g., the Black Warrior below Tuscaloosa) are becoming narrow, silt-laden transportation canals as dredging for barge traffic proceeds without commitment to maintaining backwater access. We need a balance between dredging for transportation and dredging for recreation and other ecological services.

*Samya, Misty, Hendrik Snow, and Hobson Bryan, "Integrating social impact assessment with research: the case of methylmercury in fish in the Mobile-Alabama River Basin," Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal, 2003, Vol. 21, No. 2).

** Bryan, C. H., and S. Rose, "Stakeholders and issues in the ACT and ACF systems." In J. L. Jordan and A. T. Wolf (Eds.) Interstate Water Allocation in Alabama, Florida, and Georgia: New Issues, New Methods, New Models,* Gainesville, University Press of Florida, pp. 30-48, 2006.

**Rose, S. and H. Bryan, "Stakeholder analysis and social impacts of water reallocation in the ACT and ACF systems." In J. L. Jordan and A. T. Wolf (Eds.) Interstate Water Allocation in Alabama, Florida, and Georgia: New Issues, New Methods, New Models,* Gainesville, University Press of Florida, pp. 159-179, 2006.

**Bryan, Hobson, "Interstate water disputes," Encyclopedia of Alabama, Alabama Humanities Foundation, Auburn, Alabama (2008).

- Management of aquatic vegetation is another important issue for state waters. My understanding is that Alabama does not have a law governing the use of herbicides and other vegetation controls (e.g., grass carp). Aging fisheries have been revitalized by aquatic vegetation (including such exotics as milfoil and hydrilla), yet such vegetation, if too abundant, can be unsightly, restrict boating and angling access, have negative impacts on fisheries and block power generation facilities. As the situation stands, however, anyone who is willing and able to absorb the cost can apply at will herbicides or introduce grass carp and other entities into our waterways. Such activity needs to be a carefully regulated and monitored process. (Of course, the health effects of herbicides are not fully known.)
- Some of our state's locks and dams and resulting water bodies have been authorized and managed for purposes that may no longer be primarily for transportation and traditional power generation or water control uses. Alabama's water policy might include a "best use" doctrine, whereby a shift to management for fisheries could be a primary management objective. I would like to see a working group to address, for example, the management of Millers Ferry (William B. Dannelly Reservoir) on the Alabama River and Lake Eufaula (William F. George Reservoir) from a transportation corridor emphasis to a recreational fishery emphasis. My guess is that such a shift could result in significant economic boosts to the nearby towns of Camden and Eufaula.

I recognize that the concerns and suggestions I have expressed may go beyond the scope of your committee's charge, but I welcome discussion on these topics. Again, thank you for sharing with me a copy of the Committee's work.

Sincerely,

Hobson Bryan, PhD.
Professor

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Dear Bennett:

It was good to renew old acquaintances and friendships at the Alabama Water Conference last month, and Thomas Wells and I appreciated meeting with you in your office as a follow-up to concerns we expressed at those meetings. We particularly appreciate your invitation to further a recreational fishing perspective as part of the State's emerging water policy.

The following expands on the range and specificity of my original communication to you, essentially a categorization and list of concerns from a recreational angling perspective. Please note that I do not officially represent Alabama anglers, my employer, or any other entity. My advocacy comes from my perspectives as a researcher of the human dimensions of resource management and involvement over the years in the recreational angling community.

1. **Habitat issues.** Advocacy for a water policy that is strong on both fishery habitat protection and enhancement. This includes:
 - Maintaining lateral connectivity in our altered river systems to gain a fuller range of ecological services, including fish spawning.
 - A balanced approach to the role and management of exotic vegetation (e.g., milfoil and hydrilla) in our public waters, as well as the restoration and promotion of native aquatic vegetation. (Corollary issues are both fishery and human safety concerns about large- scale introduction of herbicides to water ecosystems)

and the fact that Alabama does not regulate the introduction of herbicides to its public waters by private interests.)

- Dredging policies that are sensitive to fishery habitat.
- Promotion of riverbank integrity to mitigate erosion and fish habitat reduction from bank cover removal and wake damage from large vessels (e.g., yachts).

2. Fishery access issues. Advocacy for recognition that water management officials have an obligation to maintain main-river and backwater connectivity for public access. The loss of connectivity and access deprives the angling public and other recreationists of large and prime fishing acreage that in many cases the public has already paid for but is now denied. Waterways are effectively becoming barge canals that offer only a narrow range of ecological services.

3. Water quantity and quality issues. Advocacy for:

- Recognition that angling and other environmental services are ideally delivered under closest approximations of natural flow and high water quality regimes.
- Large-scale watershed management policies that minimize soil erosion, sedimentation and other water pollution issues negatively affecting our fisheries.

4. Fishery jurisdiction issues. Advocacy for a reexamination of management jurisdiction and priorities for the State's large reservoirs. The fact is that first priority management of such water bodies as Eufaula and Millers Ferry remains commercial transportation. Yet such use is minimal on these reservoirs. In the meantime, aggressive main river channel maintenance and aquatic vegetation control remain the norm. Why not manage these lakes primarily for their fisheries?

5. Economic issues. Advocacy for recognition that the recreational angling industry contributes significantly to the State's economy and that Alabama's water resources are keys in the equation.

- Nationally, 37 million people over the age of 16 spent 90 billion dollars on the sport last year. Angling participation is up 11% from 2006 (Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, 2012).
- In the State of Alabama, according to the U.S Fish and Wildlife survey. 2006 survey...2011 data are just coming in)—806,000 anglers bought licenses, 206,000 were from out of state, with visiting anglers representing over one million fishing days. Anglers generated \$878 million in retail sales (10th among all states) and \$1.7 billion in economic output for the state's economy (this represented almost 20,000 jobs and \$412 million in salaries and wages).

- Bass fishing is the most popular type of fishing in the U. S., with bass tournament anglers being among the most avid and spending the most money. Thousands of bass tournaments are held around the country every year and Alabama is the “home of tournament bass fishing.” The sport *started in Alabama*, with Montgomery being the original home of Ray Scott’s Bass Angler Sportsmen Society (now B.A.S.S., Inc.). The State is presently capitalizing on the sport. Initiatives include development of the Alabama Bass Trail, a push for locating a bass fishing hall of fame and fishing center in Alabama, and a number of other initiatives that depend, either directly or indirectly, on a water policy that considers the importance of this sport and fishing in general to the State’s economy.

In closing, thank you again for the opportunity of expressing our views. Perhaps these advocacy points will be helpful in further water policy discussions with you, and other members of the Governor’s Alabama Water Agencies Working Group. By copy of this correspondence, I am inviting those who represent various perspectives of the recreational angling community to respond with their own views of priorities for an Alabama water policy.

Sincerely,

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Professor

Cc:

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