

Gentlemen:

The need for water management policy in Alabama is of paramount importance. Water is not an infinite resource and is critical to human life and industry. To assume that Alabama will always have water is unwise. Changing climate patterns and rainfall amounts, changing populations, changing land-use impacts – all of these variables (and more) should be considered. For example, no industry should be allowed to take water from a stream or river to the point that aquatic life is placed in jeopardy and habitat is damaged. And no particular person or industry should be exempt from the limits established in a state-wide plan. SCIENCE has given us a way to look at flow amounts and their impact on the health of the stream or river; we need to use that science when establishing a water management plan.

As much as I hate to call for more government oversight in our lives, the recent droughts and water grabs by Atlanta show that some sort of management is absolutely necessary in Alabama. I would suggest to address the varied needs of any particular area, management at the WATERSHED LEVEL is necessary. This allows those directly impacted by the status of their watershed to share the responsibility for managing those resources. Individual watershed management entities will have to meet the standards and limits established by the state-wide plan, but will make decisions at a local level with a higher chance for success in implementation.

An emphasis on water CONSERVATION is called for in an intelligent water management plan. Municipal Water Systems must study infrastructure for breaks in the system, reducing water leaks. Citizens should be rewarded for water conservation efforts by the way they're billed for their water use. Children must be taught how to conserve water and encouraged to pursue their own means of water efficiencies. Individuals taking responsibility for their water consumption can be the first step towards a state-wide initiative to wisely use our resources – all of our resources, not only water.

A fair balance between the needs of industry and the needs of individual consumers must be achieved when water policy is implemented. Consumers are not only those individuals who drink, bathe and use water to clean their homes and clothes, but also those who enjoy recreating in Alabama waters. Alabama's natural resources are a draw to thousands of tourists each year – tourists who spend money here and then return to their homes to live. This is akin to rental income – we get the benefit of income with almost no ongoing impact IF we adequately protect and manage those areas that attract tourists to Alabama. Additionally, if an individual or industry violates water policy, the enforcement process should be swift, fair and adequate to ensure that the violation won't occur again. Recent paltry fines assessed against the Eastside Sewage Treatment Plant in Opelika, Alabama would be a great example of why our current system does not work, and why the plant has continued to violate water quality standards. Water management is not only about QUANTITY, but also concerns QUALITY - quality of the water as well as the rivers, streams, bays or lakes. Alabama should have streams

that are natural in the way they meander, that aren't filled with eroded sediments, and aren't choked out with algae and plants because of the nutrients that run off the watershed into the stream. Alabama really needs to put a plan into place that PROTECTS these valuable resources. We don't need only environmental MANAGEMENT in this state, we need environmental PROTECTION.

Other states have water policy plans that work – in fact, don't most of the other states in the USA have water management policy and plans of some sort? Why is Alabama so behind in this vital area? To not address this issue is short-sighted and dangerous. It is my understanding that the American Society of Civil Engineer's Regulated Riparian Model Water Code is a great resource guide, and I would encourage its use in your efforts to establish water policy in our great state.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this much needed policy change in Alabama. We need all the wisdom we can muster to address this vital issue. It will only become more critical in the future and we can't ignore it any longer.

Kind regards,

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