

GEORGIA'S RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT ACT

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Abstract. Water resource management is one of the most critical issues facing the State of Georgia in our future. Abundant supplies of clean water have greatly contributed to economic development and the quality of life we appreciate here. The River Basin Management Act of 1992 was part of the environmental package of legislation I introduced in coordination with our Environmental Advisory Council in that year. The goals and requirements of this bill are designed to guide Georgia toward sustainable growth and long term protection of the health of Georgia's citizens.

Over the last two decades, we have made significant progress developing strategies to deal with water pollution. The solutions we have generated have gone a long way to take care of problems with discharges from point sources. We need innovative methods to deal with the type of water quality questions we face in the future, so that we may determine what actions need to be taken in river basins to make the same kind of gains in dealing with nonpoint source water pollution. The River Basin Management Act provides a program which will develop management plans for the major river basins in Georgia. It calls for the establishment of goals, which may include public education, pollution source reduction, improving and protecting habitat and wildlife, and providing recreational benefits. In addition to developing recommendations for protecting water quality, river basin management plans will provide a way to manage our water resources effectively.

Public participation in the process of planning is a central component of the River Basin Management Act. Citizen Advisory Committees made up of businesses, government, civic and environmental representatives will assist in the development of management plans. In addition, public hearings and other elements of the planning process ensure that plans are developed with the input of local citizens and interests whose futures are linked to the effective management of shared river resources. With proper implementation, the River Basin Management Act will be a program that ensures the protection of our state's water resources.