

Georgia Comprehensive State Water Management Plan



**Advisory Committee Meeting
July 11, 2001
Macon, Georgia**

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Background

The growth in population and economic activity in Georgia is placing increasing demands on the state's water resources. The state is experiencing increasing water demands both for offstream uses (i.e., public supply, industrial use, thermoelectric power production, and agricultural and other rural uses) and instream uses (i.e., navigation, hydroelectric power production, waste assimilation, fish and wildlife habitat, and recreation). Along with addressing expanding water supply demands, there is mounting interest in maintaining or improving water quality to protect drinking water and to ensure that water is safe for recreational purposes and supportive of aquatic life. Balancing the multiple demands for water supply and water quality in an equitable manner requires the state to comprehensively plan how limited water resources may be used.

To move toward addressing water-related concerns, Governor Roy Barnes included in his legislative package for the 2001 legislative session, Senate Resolution 142. This resolution created the Joint House/Senate Comprehensive State Water Plan Study Committee and a Water Plan Advisory Committee. The charge of the Study Committee is to:

1. Study water resources issues, both quality and quantity;
2. Consider existing policy, laws, rules and programs; and
 - ✓ Recommend a process and schedule;
 - ✓ Develop the principles for the plan; and
 - ✓ Recommend any other action or legislation.

The Study Committee and Advisory Committee met jointly at The University of Georgia's Center for Continuing Education in Athens on May 30-31, 2001. The intent of this meeting was to provide an opportunity for members of the two committees to get acquainted and to provide them with an overview and reading materials related to Georgia's water resources and the problems and issues related to how we use and manage those resources. Background materials were provided to the committee members including:

- ✓ The "Water Issues White Paper" produced by the Board of Natural Resources;
- ✓ *Developing a Comprehensive State Water Management Plan: A Framework for Managing Georgia's Water Resources*, by James E. Kundell, Terry A. DeMeo and Margaret Myszewski, Research Atlanta;

- ✓ “Georgia Water Resource Policy: A Call for Action,” produced by the Association County Commissioners of Georgia and Georgia Municipal Association;
- ✓ *Protecting Stream and River Corridors: Creating Effective Local Riparian Buffer Ordinances*, by Seth J. Wenger and Laurie Fowler; and
- ✓ *Whose Water Is It? Major Water Allocation Issues Facing Georgia*,” by James E. Kundell and Diana Tetens, Vinson Institute of Government.

All of these documents are available through the internet at www.rivercenter.uga.edu (under publications), or the “White Paper” at EPD’s website (www.dnr.state.ga.us/dnr/environ/), or the ACCG/GMA document at (ACCG.org and click on natural resource policy).

Presentations were also made at the meeting to provide an overview of the water situation in the state, the issues we face, and how other states have undertaken comprehensive state water planning. The presentations are available through the internet at www.rivercenter.uga.edu.

Advisory Committee Meeting (July 11, 2001)

The first work session relating to the comprehensive state water management plan was a Water Plan Advisory Committee meeting held in Macon on July 11, 2001. Of the 50 members of the State Comprehensive Water Plan Advisory Committee, 32 were in attendance, along with a number of others interested in the water planning process. Study Committee Co-Chairman Bob Hanner was present and addressed the Committee regarding the importance of the work they were doing. Dr. Jim Kundell, Chairman of the Water Plan Advisory Committee, explained the focus of the meeting and the process that would be used. Dr. Richard Milford of the Vinson Institute of Government served as the facilitator. “Strawmen” or drafts of a vision statement, guiding principles, water management goals, lead agency, interagency cooperation, and public information and involvement were provided to the Committee. Dr. Milford then facilitated the discussion on each of these topics.

Following is the vision statement, guiding principles for the water planning process, and goals for water management as adopted through consensus by the Advisory Committee. For a review of the discussion on each topic, see the Appendix to this report.

Vision Statement

Georgia’s vision is to ensure the sustainability of water resources for the support of the state’s economy, natural systems and quality of life for all citizens.

Guiding Principles for the Water Planning Process

Guided by the Vision Statement, the process for developing the state's comprehensive water management plan must be based on the best scientific and economic information available, and should incorporate the following:

1. a holistic/comprehensive approach which recognizes the interconnectedness of the hydrologic cycle, including atmospheric, surface and ground water quality and quantity;
2. interdependence of economic prosperity and environmental quality;
3. cooperation, coordination, communication and collaboration among federal, state and local units of government, and other water management entities;
4. watersheds, river basins, and aquifer systems as the geographic and hydrologic basis for water planning and management programs;
5. consideration of intrastate and/or interstate regional water management options;
6. interrelationship between land use and water resources;
7. water conservation, efficiency and reuse, with attention to the impact of consumptive use and return flow, as integral components of the water management program;
8. meeting all federal, state and local water quality and quantity requirements;
9. equitable¹ allocation of water resources while protecting other water users and the environment;
10. drought and flood mitigation policies and procedures;
11. identification of data and information needs, and implementation of monitoring, research, technology transfer and other efforts necessary to address those needs;
12. timely and effective public education, information and participation mechanisms;
13. timely and effective information and involvement mechanisms for permittees, advocacy groups, and other stakeholders;
14. recommendations on changes in state law necessary to carry out the plan;
15. recommendations for necessary funding to implement the plan; and
16. periodic revisions of the plan to accurately reflect new insights from monitoring and research, as well as dynamic social, economic and environmental factors.

¹Equitable is defined as: impartial or reasonable in judgement or dispensation; just.

Water Management Goals

Guided by the Vision Statement, Georgia's water resources should be managed in the public interest and directed by the following:

1. basing water management on comprehensive and long-range planning;
2. managing water resources to protect public health, safety and welfare;
3. employing interagency and intergovernmental communication, cooperation and coordination mechanisms;
4. integrating surface and ground water and water quality and water quantity decision-making;
5. utilizing river basins, watersheds and aquifer systems as the geographic and hydrologic basis for water management programs;
6. protecting, maintaining, and improving the quality and quantity of the state's water resources consistent with federal, state, and local water laws;
7. ensuring that all public water systems consistently provide adequate amounts of safe, high quality water to Georgia's citizens, while encouraging conservation and efficient water use;
8. ensuring that all Georgians have access to safe, high quality drinking water;
9. incorporating mechanisms that minimize the adverse impacts that land use activities have on water resources;
10. meeting the practical and economic needs of Georgians while maintaining, protecting, and improving the state's natural systems;
11. equitably allocating water resources while protecting other water users and the environment;
12. basing water resources decisions on the best available technical and scientific data and principles;
13. ensuring that research, standards, and decision-making in all water resources programs are supported by a water information system that is broadly accessible, comprehensive, and based on the best available scientific information;
14. encouraging/requiring water conservation, efficiency and reuse in a technologically and economically feasible manner;
15. incorporating drought and flood mitigation measures into water management decision-making;

16. maintaining state and local water management programs on sound financial footing by focusing limited resources on priority needs, encouraging multi-jurisdictional approaches and by expanding revenue;
17. establishing timely and effective public and stakeholder information, education and involvement strategies as integral parts of the state's water management program; and
18. uniformly enforcing federal and state laws so that the environment and public health are protected.

Lead Agency, Interagency Cooperation, and Public Information and Involvement

Material was provided to the Committee on options for lead agency, interagency cooperation, and public information and involvement. Several Committee members expressed opinions that it was too early in the process to make a recommendation on a lead agency. Members believed a greater understanding of the planning process and the skill set needed to develop and implement the plan was necessary before making the decision.

Members of the Committee recognized that interagency cooperation would be extremely important to the development of a Comprehensive State Water Management Plan. Given the discussion on the lead agency recommendation and the deferral of a recommendation on that issue, the discussion of the interagency cooperation was also deferred.

A list of recommended mechanisms for ensuring public information and involvement were provided to the Advisory Committee for their consideration. The Committee discussed various options for informing and involving the public but did not make specific recommendations on how public information and involvement should be achieved. As with the lead agency and interagency cooperation discussion, the Committee felt it was premature to recommend specific options.

APPENDIX

Meeting Summary Comprehensive State Water Plan Advisory Committee July 11, 2001 Macon, Georgia

The following is a summary of the proceedings of the Comprehensive State Water Plan Advisory Committee meeting held on July 11, 2001 in Macon, Georgia. This document is intended to summarize issues discussed, as well as comments and concerns raised in the development of recommendations for a vision statement and guiding principles for the water planning process and goals for water management.

Recommendation of a Vision Statement

For discussion purposes the following statement, developed by ACCG/GMA, was placed before the Advisory Committee:

“Our vision for the state is that all current and future Georgians have equitable access to a reliable supply of good quality water while ensuring that the resources are protective of public health and environmental quality and supportive of economic development.”

In addition, the vision statements adopted by several other states were also made available.

Summary of Discussion

A suggestion was made to specifically add the terms “surface water and ground water” to the statement to denote that the plan and program will address both resources. Members of the Committee noted that Georgia law addresses ground water and surface water differently.

In addition, a member suggested identifying surface and ground waters as a community property resource and that this resource should attain a “fishable, swimmable and drinkable” standard. Several members expressed concern over the use of the terms, fishable, swimmable and drinkable such as the use of these terms to develop a “standard” that may change in the future.

Members of the Advisory Committee provided comments and concerns over other terms in the proposed statement such as “reliable” and “equitable.” A dictionary definition of “equitable” was provided: “impartial or reasonable in judgement or dispensation; just.” Consideration was given to changing “reliable” to “sustainable.” Suggestions were made to delete “current and future” and to provide more emphasis on quantity of water.

Recognizing that the vision statement should be as concise as possible, a suggestion was made to consider working from another vision statement. It was noted that the alternative statement

included reference to the “state’s economy, natural systems and quality of life.” Some members of the Committee expressed concern over the meaning of the terms “sustainability” and “benefit.”

Consensus was reached that “sustainability” was a generally understood term and that “benefit” should be changed to “support”. In addition, the focus of the vision statement was changed from the state to its citizens. The Committee had a discussion of the need to expand language in the vision statement to include a more interstate regional approach.

A point was raised that the vision statement should address how to balance water resource uses between the economy, natural systems and quality of life.

Consensus was reached on the following recommendation for the vision statement.

Georgia’s vision is to ensure the sustainability of water resources for the support of the state’s economy, natural systems and quality of life for all citizens.

Recommendation of Guiding Principles for the State Comprehensive Water Management Plan

A “strawman” of guiding principles was placed before the Advisory Committee. The distinction between “guiding principles” and “goals” was explained. Guiding principles are to guide the planning process. The goals are goals for the water management program. It was noted that the principles were not listed in any specific order of priority.

In discussions about the introductory sentence, some members expressed concern that the proposed principles did not sufficiently recognize the importance of economic factors and the interdependence of the state’s economy and water resources. The members generally agreed that the plan should be “science-based,” but lack of scientific certainty should not be a reason to do nothing. To address these concerns and comments, language was added to the sentence linking it to the vision statement and providing for use of the best scientific information available in developing the plan. A new principle expressing the interdependence between economic prosperity and environmental quality was also added (see new principle #2).

Consensus was reached on the following introductory sentence.

Guided by the Vision Statement, the process for developing the state’s comprehensive water management plan must be based on the best scientific information available, and should incorporate the following:

The following guiding principles were discussed.

1. A holistic/comprehensive approach, which recognizes the interconnectedness of surface and ground water and water quality and quantity;

Summary of Discussion

Some members expressed concern over the lack of extensive knowledge regarding the relationship between surface and ground water. However, it was pointed out that more was known about the relationship than current management techniques indicate. A point was raised that atmospheric water (precipitation) should also be addressed. To tie the various components together reference to the “hydrologic cycle” was included in the language.

Consensus recommendation 1: a holistic/comprehensive approach which recognizes the interconnectedness of the hydrologic cycle, including atmospheric, surface and ground water quality and quantity;

2. New consensus recommendation 2: *interdependence between economic prosperity and environmental quality*;

Summary of Discussion

As noted previously under the discussion on the introductory sentence, this principle was added to specifically recognize the referenced interdependence. Some members were concerned that the proposed principles did not sufficiently recognize the importance of economic factors and the interdependence of the state's economy and water resources.

2. Interagency communication, coordination, and collaboration;
3. Intergovernmental cooperation and coordination among federal, state and local units of government;

Summary of Discussion

With regard to proposed principle #2, some members sought clarification of the definition of "agency." Given the similarities between the concepts in proposed principles #2 and #3, it was suggested that they be combined. Some members of the Committee suggested that the combined concept should be broadened beyond its current governmental focus to include permitted users, private water management companies and other entities engaged in water management activities.

Consensus recommendation 3: cooperation, coordination, communication and collaboration among federal, state and local units of government, and other water management entities;

4. River basins, watersheds and aquifer systems as the geographic and hydrologic basis for water planning and management programs;

Summary of Discussion

Some members of the Committee raised concern that this principle did not sufficiently recognize the importance of intrastate regional water management. Intrastate regional water management is important to addressing the needs of that region's economy. The point was also raised that there may be opportunities to address some water resource issues on an interstate regional basis. A state water plan should consider these matters, as well as inter-regional cooperation. A consensus was reached that a new guiding principle needed to be developed to deal with these issues (see new principle #5).

Consensus recommendation 4: watersheds, river basins, and aquifer systems as the geographic and hydrologic basis for water planning and management programs;

New consensus recommendation 5: consideration of intrastate and/or interstate regional water management options.

Summary of Discussion

See summary regarding principle #4.

5. Consensus recommendation 6: *interrelationship between land use and water resources;*
6. Water conservation, efficiency and reuse as integral components of the water management program;

Summary of Discussion

The Committee briefly discussed the concepts of “reuse” and “efficiency.” Clarification was provided that “reuse” did include the reuse of wastewater (gray water). A suggestion was made that this principle contains language to include the impacts of “consumptive use and return flows.” Consumptive use could be considered in terms of reuse and efficiency. The Committee discussed the need for inclusion of “consumptive use” in this principle as well as the issue of return flows resulting in interbasin transfers. The point was raised that consumptive use and return flows were important for downstream users to be able to assess the availability of water.

Consensus recommendation 7: *water conservation, efficiency and reuse, with attention to the impact of consumptive use and return flow, as integral components of the water management program;*

7. Meeting all federal and state water quality requirements;

Summary of Discussion

Local requirements may stem from such programs as source water protection. The principle should also include water quantity requirements.

Consensus recommendation 8: *meeting all federal, state and local water quality and quantity requirements;*

8. Equitable allocation of water for reasonable uses without impairing the resources or adversely affecting other water users;

Summary of Discussion

Members of the Committee expressed concerns over “impairing” given its legal connotation and “reasonable” due to the subjective nature of the term. Comments were also made regarding the use of “adversely.” It was noted that some adverse impacts are currently allowed if the use is reasonable and that the focus should be placed on elimination of unreasonable impacts.

The point was raised as to whether “other water users” just referred to in-state water users or was a broader term which included the concept of regionalism. It was decided that “other water users” did follow the broader meaning.

The members of the Committee discussed the meaning of “resources.” Some members suggested that “resources” should include “aquatic” resources, organisms living in and depending on the water rather than just human uses of water resources. No other principles directly refer to protection of aquatic resources. However, other members noted that the holistic tone of principle #1 would address broader implications and that this principle was attempting to address the more narrow issue of human uses of water resources.

As in previous discussions, some members commented on the use of “equitable.” Members decided to reframe this principle in a more positive light. In doing so, the use of “environment” implies a broad meaning that includes aquatic resources, as well as the water.

Consensus recommendation 9: equitable allocation of water resources while protecting other water users and the environment;

9. Consensus recommendation 10: drought and flood mitigation policies and procedures;
10. Identification of data and information needs and monitoring, research and other efforts necessary to address those needs;

Summary of Discussion

The Committee discussed the need for the plan to provide focus on the implementation of efforts to address the data and information needs. Simply identifying those needs will not be sufficient to produce an effective water resources management program. Technology transfer was also added, as another option to address needs.

Consensus recommendation 11: identification of data and information needs, and implementation of monitoring, research, technology transfer and other efforts necessary to address those needs;

11. Public information, education and participation mechanisms;

Summary of Discussion

Members of the Committee commented that these mechanisms need to be both timely and effective. A discussion of adding “technology transfer” to this principle ensued, but it was agreed that “technology transfer” would fit more appropriately in principle #10. The members of the Committee also discussed combining this principle with principle #12. Some members sought clarification regarding the inclusiveness of the terms, “public” and “stakeholder.” It was determined that “public” referred to the general population (everybody) and that “stakeholders” were those people “closer” to the issue and did include permit holders. Some members suggested that permit holders clearly needed to have involvement in the planning process. Because of concern over the meaning of “stakeholder” and the potential for using different mechanisms to work with stakeholders, the two principles were not combined. Government agencies should also be included as targets of activities under this principle.

Consensus recommendation 12: timely and effective public education, information and participation mechanisms;

12. Stakeholder information and involvement mechanisms;

Summary of Discussion

It was suggested that the planning process needed to provide a clear mechanism for providing information to and involvement of permit holders. It was further suggested that permit holders should not be simply grouped in with other “stakeholders.” It was also recommended that “advocacy groups” also be specifically identified in this principle. Some members raised questions whether “advocacy groups” includes groups from outside the state or whether “citizen groups” would be a more appropriate term. “Advocacy” is defined as: “active support, as of a cause.” An advocacy group would be an organization that actively supports a specific cause.

Consensus recommendation 13: timely and effective information and involvement mechanisms for permittees, advocacy groups, and other stakeholders;

13. Changes in state law necessary to carry out the plan;

Consensus recommendation 14: recommendations on changes in state law necessary to carry out the plan;

14. Necessary funding to implement the plan;

Summary of Discussion

Some members of the Committee pointed out that since sound management of water resources benefits the general public, the cost of implementing those programs should be borne by the public at large and not simply placed on industry. However, it was further pointed out that the public at large provides funding through the State General Fund, which is appropriated by the General Assembly.

Consensus recommendation 15: recommendations for necessary funding to implement the plan;

15. Periodic revisions of the plan to accurately reflect dynamic social, political, economic and environmental factors;

Summary of Discussion

Members of the Committee commented that revisions of the Comprehensive State Water Management Plan need to incorporate the results and insights from monitoring and research programs, as well as other new scientific information. It was suggested that wording be

added to clarify that revisions would be based on changes in social values, not the listed factors.

Some members expressed concern over the inclusion of “political” factors. Revisions resulting from changes in political factors may undermine any stability and certainty associated with the plan and programs implemented thereunder.

Consensus recommendation 16: periodic revisions of the plan to accurately reflect new insights from monitoring and research, as well as dynamic social, economic and environmental factors;

Other Matters

The point was raised that water is a scarce resource and should go to those users who can most efficiently use it. The question was raised as to whether a new principle should be created to address this issue. Some members noted that allocation decisions should not be narrowed to economic considerations alone. No new principle was proposed.

Recommendation of Goals for the Water Management Program as Developed in the State Comprehensive Water Management Plan

A “strawman” of goals for the water management program was placed before the Advisory Committee. It was agreed that, where applicable, goal statements containing similar language to a guiding principle would be conformed to the language adopted in the guiding principle.

Some members sought clarification as to the need for both guiding principles and goals. It was explained that the guiding principles were for the development of the Plan and the goals were more applicable to and focused on the state’s water management program.

Consensus was reached on the following introductory sentence.

Guided by the Vision Statement, Georgia’s water resources should be managed in the public interest and directed by the following:

1. basing water management on comprehensive and long-range planning;
2. managing Georgia’s water resources in the public interest and to protect public health, safety and welfare;

Summary of Discussion

Some Committee members questioned the need for the inclusion of “public interest” in this statement given the adoption of the vision statement. A brief explanation was provided that the Environmental Protection Division is currently charged by state law with managing water resources in the public interest. Further explanation was offered regarding the state’s “police powers” or the authority to regulate activities in order to protect public health, safety and welfare. Members suggested that management in the “public interest” could be included in all goal statements. For the sake of brevity, clarity and consistency, the concept of management in the “public interest” was added to the introductory sentence (see above).

Consensus recommendation 2: managing water resources to protect public health, safety and welfare;

3. Consensus recommendation 3: employing interagency and intergovernmental communication, cooperation and coordination mechanisms;
4. Consensus recommendation 4: integrating surface and ground water and water quality and water quantity decision-making;
5. Consensus recommendation 4: utilizing watersheds, river basins and aquifer systems as the geographic and hydrologic basis for water management programs;
6. Consensus recommendation 5: protecting, maintaining, and improving the quality of the state’s water resources consistent with federal, state and local water laws;

7. ensuring that all public drinking water systems consistently provide adequate amounts of safe, high quality water to Georgia’s citizens;

Summary of Discussion

It was suggested that “public” should be removed so that the goal would apply to drinking water systems in general. Some members expressed concern regarding the implications of removing “public” and thus having the goal apply to private wells. The Committee briefly discussed Georgia’s current drinking water regulatory scheme.

Another point raised by some members was whether the use of “provide” implied that the state would be committing to a goal to furnish water for every person. It was noted that the state ensures the quality of the water through regulation, but water systems deliver water services. “Access” to water does not guarantee water service. Members also remarked that the statement should include language about Georgians’ responsibility to conserve water.

Some Committee members commented on the concept of supplying “adequate amounts” of water. It was noted that water from public water systems is often used for other purposes such as fire protection and lawn watering. The question was raised as to what extent the state’s water management program should be striving to provide adequate amounts of high quality water for those uses also.

In order to address comments and concerns, the statement was divided into two statements. See new consensus recommendation #8 below.

Consensus recommendation 7: *ensuring that all public water systems consistently provide adequate amounts of safe, high quality water to Georgia’s citizens, while encouraging conservation and efficient water use;*

New consensus recommendation 8: *ensuring that all Georgians have access to safe, high quality drinking water;*

Summary of Discussion

See discussion of goal #7.

8. incorporating mechanisms that minimize the impact that land use activities have on water resources;

Summary of Discussion

Statement should refer to “adverse impacts”.

Consensus recommendation 9: *incorporating mechanisms that minimize the adverse impacts that land use activities have on water resources;*

9. Consensus recommendation 10: *meeting the practical and economic needs of Georgians while maintaining, protecting, and improving the state's natural systems;*
10. equitably allocating water for reasonable uses without impairing the resources or adversely affecting other water users;

Summary of Discussion

Conform to guiding principle #8.

Consensus recommendation 11: *equitably allocating water resources while protecting other water users and the environment;*

11. basing all resource project decisions on technically and scientifically sound data and principles;

Summary of Discussion

It was suggested that the goal be clarified to focus on “water resources” decisions, in lieu of “resource project” decisions. In addition, concern was again expressed over the terminology “technically and scientifically sound data.” The suggestion was made to conform to the guiding principles by substitution of “best available technical and scientific data.”

Consensus recommendation 12: *basing water resources decisions on the best available technical and scientific data and principles;*

12. Consensus recommendation 13: *ensuring that research, standards, and decision-making in all water resources programs are supported by a water information system that is broadly accessible, comprehensive, and based on the best available scientific information;*
13. Consensus recommendation 14: *encouraging/requiring water conservation, efficiency and reuse in a technologically and economically feasible manner;*
14. Consensus recommendation 15: *incorporating drought and flood mitigation measures into water management decision-making;*

15. maintaining state and local water management programs on sound financial footing by focusing limited resources on priority needs and by expanding revenue sources;

Summary of Discussion

As previously discussed under guiding principle #14, some concerns were expressed about how programs would be funded. Some members noted that if water resources will be managed in the public interest, the public should pay for those programs through general revenues. It was noted that, in any case, sufficient user fees could not likely be imposed to

pay for all programs developed in accordance with the plan and that public funds will be required. Members also stated that this statement should include language to encourage multi-jurisdictional approaches.

Consensus recommendation 16: maintaining state and local water management programs on sound financial footing by focusing limited resources on priority needs, encouraging multi-jurisdictional approaches and by expanding revenue;

16. *Consensus recommendation 17: establishing timely and effective public and stakeholder information, education and involvement strategies as integral parts of the state's water management program;*
17. uniformly enforcing Georgia law in ways that fairly assign liability so that the environment is fully protected and the burden on people innocently exposed to water misuse is minimized;

Summary of Discussion

Some members raised questions regarding the meaning of this statement. It was noted that assignment of liability was a legal issue that rests with the courts. People liable for environmental violations are prosecuted, thereby providing protection for the public health and welfare and the environment. The point was also raised that the goal should reference federal law since Georgia agencies also enforce federal laws through delegated programs.

Consensus recommendation 18: uniformly enforcing federal and state laws so that the environment and public health are protected;

Other Matters

One member stated a concern that the goals did not address the issue of whether water is a public resource or a private resource. The member raised the question regarding where that issue would be addressed. The member expressed a belief that this issue was a fundamental issue in water resources management. Mention was made of the public trust doctrine and current requirements for management of water resources in the public interest.

Recommendation of a Lead Agency for Development of the State Comprehensive Water Management Plan

A list of potential lead agencies was placed before the Advisory Committee for discussion purposes. The list included the following agencies with a brief explanation of their duties.

- Georgia Environmental Protection Division
- Governor's Office
- Governor's Office of Planning and Budget
- Georgia Regional Transportation Authority
- Commissioner of DNR's Office
- New Division within DNR
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority
- Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission

Summary of Discussion

After a brief discussion, several of the above-referenced agencies were eliminated from consideration. The remaining alternatives included: Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD), Commissioner of DNR's Office, and a new division within DNR. Some members expressed concerns over whether EPD has staff with the appropriate expertise to develop the plan. In addition, some were concerned about the co-location of planning and enforcement functions, while others supported the co-location of these functions. Other options added were: a new state agency or an Office of Water Resources (that would be attached to one of the options previously identified).

Several Committee members expressed opinions that it was too early in the process to make a recommendation on a lead agency. Members believed a greater understanding of the planning process and skill set needed to develop and implement the plan was necessary before making the decision. Some members suggested that the appropriate set of skills necessary for development of the State Water Management Plan be identified and agencies be evaluated on the availability of those skills and their record of accomplishment. It was also suggested that a flow chart identifying necessary factors for planning and implementation be constructed to inform the discussion of a recommendation for a lead agency.

Consensus recommendation on the lead agency: *Deferred to a later date.*

Recommendation of an Interagency Cooperation Mechanism for Development of the State Comprehensive Water Management Plan

Members of the Committee recognized that interagency cooperation would be extremely important to the development of a Comprehensive State Water Management Plan. Given the discussion on the lead agency recommendation and the deferral of a recommendation on that issue, the discussion of the interagency cooperation was also deferred.

Consensus recommendation on interagency cooperation: *Deferred to a later date.*

Recommendation of Public Information and Involvement Mechanisms in the Development of the State Comprehensive Water Management Plan

A list of recommended mechanisms for ensuring public information and involvement were provided to the Advisory Committee for their consideration. These included the following:

- ✓ webpage communications;
- ✓ public meetings;
- ✓ focus groups; and
- ✓ public hearings.

Summary of Discussion

It was suggested that press releases be added to the list. In addition, some members suggested that an e-mail listserve of interested parties be created to disseminate information such as Committee reports and white papers.

A suggestion was offered that the public information and involvement policy clearly state that meetings will be open to the public and that documents produced would be available for public review. It was noted that all meetings of the Joint House/Senate Comprehensive State Water Planning Study Committee and this Advisory Committee are open to the public.

Some members commented that the difference between public meetings (e.g., providing information) and public hearings (e.g., accepting comments) needs to be clearly expressed.

Consensus recommendation on public information and involvement: *Deferred to a later date.*