

# GEORGIA'S WATER BILL OF RIGHTS

The quantity, quality, and reliability of Georgia waters shall be preserved so that the human use of water does not compromise the long-term sustainability of aquatic and associated ecosystems. All Georgians are responsible for the integrity of state waters, and the costs of providing and protecting these resources must be fairly allocated among users.

1. **We, the people, believe that Water is a Public Resource.**  
The surface and ground waters of the State of Georgia are public resources – vital areas held by the State as a trustee charged with the duty to manage these waters in the best interests of the public.
2. **We, the people, believe that Water Resource Use Must Be Sustainable.**  
Each Georgian has the right to expect that the waters of the State on and below the surface of the earth will be conserved and maintained as a perpetual blessing to the State's people and ecological systems.
3. **We, the people, believe that We All Live Downstream.**  
Management of the State's water resources must ensure the integrity of these resources by acknowledging the natural flow of waters through the watersheds and aquifers, from the mountains to the sea.
4. **We, the people, believe that Economic Prosperity Depends on Clean Water.**  
Clean surface water and pure groundwater are essential to Georgia's health, welfare, and prosperity; Georgians no longer accept the assertion that polluted water is a necessary price for economic progress.
5. **We, the people, believe that Water Policy Decisions must be Just and Equitable.**  
No person or community should bear a disproportionate share of any burden resulting from the water use of others.
6. **We, the people, believe in Property Rights that Ensure Environmental Protection for All.**  
The citizens of Georgia have a right to use the surface and groundwater resources on their properties, but the use must be reasonable, in a manner and to the extent that the water supply is not depleted or degraded to the detriment of the health of people and wildlife.
7. **We, the people, believe in Water Resource Protection through Law Enforcement.**  
Georgians have the right to the full, timely, and equitable enforcement of local, state and federal environmental laws, which rightfully require protection of water quality and all life dependent on that quality.
8. **We, the people, believe in the Public's Right to Know.**  
All decisions by government officials, the public trustees of Georgia waters, shall be made in open forums, after full disclosure through public discussion and deliberation of all scientific, political and economic facts and associated impacts. Citizens shall have readily available and unrestricted access to such information.
9. **We, the people, believe in Accountability.**  
Our government shall be held accountable for the proper management of Georgia's waters.

## *Water Bill of Rights Implementation Strategy*

Georgia's waters should be "swimmable and fishable" by 2008  
(33 U.S.C. § 1251; 40 C.F.R. § 131.2)

We should provide and ensure:

- A statewide management plan for all surface and ground waters by 2002
- User-based source of funding for monitoring, disclosure, and enforcement by 2002
- A comprehensive program for citizen education on water protection and policy by 2002
- A simple and direct process that allows all Georgians to act to protect the integrity of their water by 2004
- A sustainable natural system of stream-flow and aquifer recharge by 2006
- That Georgia's waters are swimmable and fishable by 2008

# Georgia Water Bill of Rights **Sign-On Form**

We support the attached Georgia Water Bill of Rights (finalized on August 10, 2000).

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Organization Name

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Responsible person (Please provide printed name and signature)

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Number of members in Georgia

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Address

City

State

Zip

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Telephone Number

e-mail address

**Please complete the above information and FAX the form to Hillrie Quin AT: FAX 404-892-1744 (VOICE Mail 404-876-2602/229)**

\_\_\_\_ **YES, I'll be there on Saturday, September 30 in \_\_\_\_\_ (city) and I'll bring \_\_\_\_ people.**

**I live in the \_\_\_\_\_ river basin.**