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WATER

The Challenge

The Chattahoochee River is the smallest river in the nation serving as the major water source for a region our size, and North Georgia is 98 percent dependent on surface water. These factors combined with previous severe droughts, mismanagement of Lake Lanier by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and now a federal court ruling have produced a water crisis in our region.

History of Chamber Leadership

The Chamber has long been involved in water policy:

- The Chamber's **Clean Water Initiative** resulted in the creation of the **Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District** in 2001. The district has raised more than \$10 million, and created a plan to manage water quality and supply through the year 2030. Local governments within the district -- which includes 16 counties and about 100 cities -- must follow this plan to obtain state permits to withdraw water or discharge treated wastewater.
- The Chamber's public-private **Quality Growth Task Force** resulted in the creation of the **Livable Communities Coalition, Inc.**, a nonprofit launched in September 2005 to advocate for sustainable growth.
- During the historic drought of 2007, the Chamber aggressively pushed the **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers** to stop releasing so much water to downstream states, and held a **high-profile water forum** that brought together elected officials, policy experts and business leaders from across the state, drawing national media.
- In February 2008, Governor Sonny Perdue signed into law Georgia's first-ever **statewide water management plan**. This plan strikes a good balance between economic sustainability and environmental preservation, thanks in part to the effective advocacy of an **ad-hoc coalition of 40+ statewide water users** that the Chamber has led.
- Following a federal court judge's ruling in July 2009, we are working with business leaders, conservationists, state and local government and elected officials through the Governor's **Water Contingency Task Force** to close the gap in water supply absent congressional authorization by 2012.

2010 Call to Action

We support:

- **implementing an action-driven contingency plan** focused on increasing conservation efforts, capturing our excess rainfall and implementing control measures to efficiently manage our water resources.
- **fully funding the historic statewide water plan** passed in 2008, which could total more than \$10 million in state and federal funds during the final year of implementation.
- **restoring funds in water planning grants** originally passed in the 2008 budget to expedite reservoir development and other water management tools.
- **\$250,000 in matching funds for the Metro North Georgia Water Planning District**, ensuring long-term water management planning continues for a vital economic region.

We oppose:

- further restrictions or bans on interbasin water transfers because most counties in the metro region are located in two or more river basins

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