

Section 3: FEDERAL AND STATE REGULATIONS

The Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District Act requires that the District-wide Watershed Management Plan “shall build upon and be coordinated with existing watershed planning efforts undertaken by local governments.” Local governments in the Metro Water District are required to follow a number of Federal and State regulations related to watershed and water quality protection. These laws and programs form the basis for watershed and stormwater management in the Metro Water District and were the starting point for the development of the local management measures provided in Section 5.

This Section summarizes the key requirements for relevant Federal and State regulations which are illustrated in Figure 3-1.

FEDERAL CLEAN WATER ACT – NATIONAL POLLUTANT DISCHARGE ELIMINATION SYSTEM (NPDES) PROGRAM

The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program was established under the Federal Clean Water Act to control water pollution by regulating the discharge of pollutants into waters of the United States. The NPDES program covers several pollutant sources that are regulated by permits issued by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (Georgia EPD).

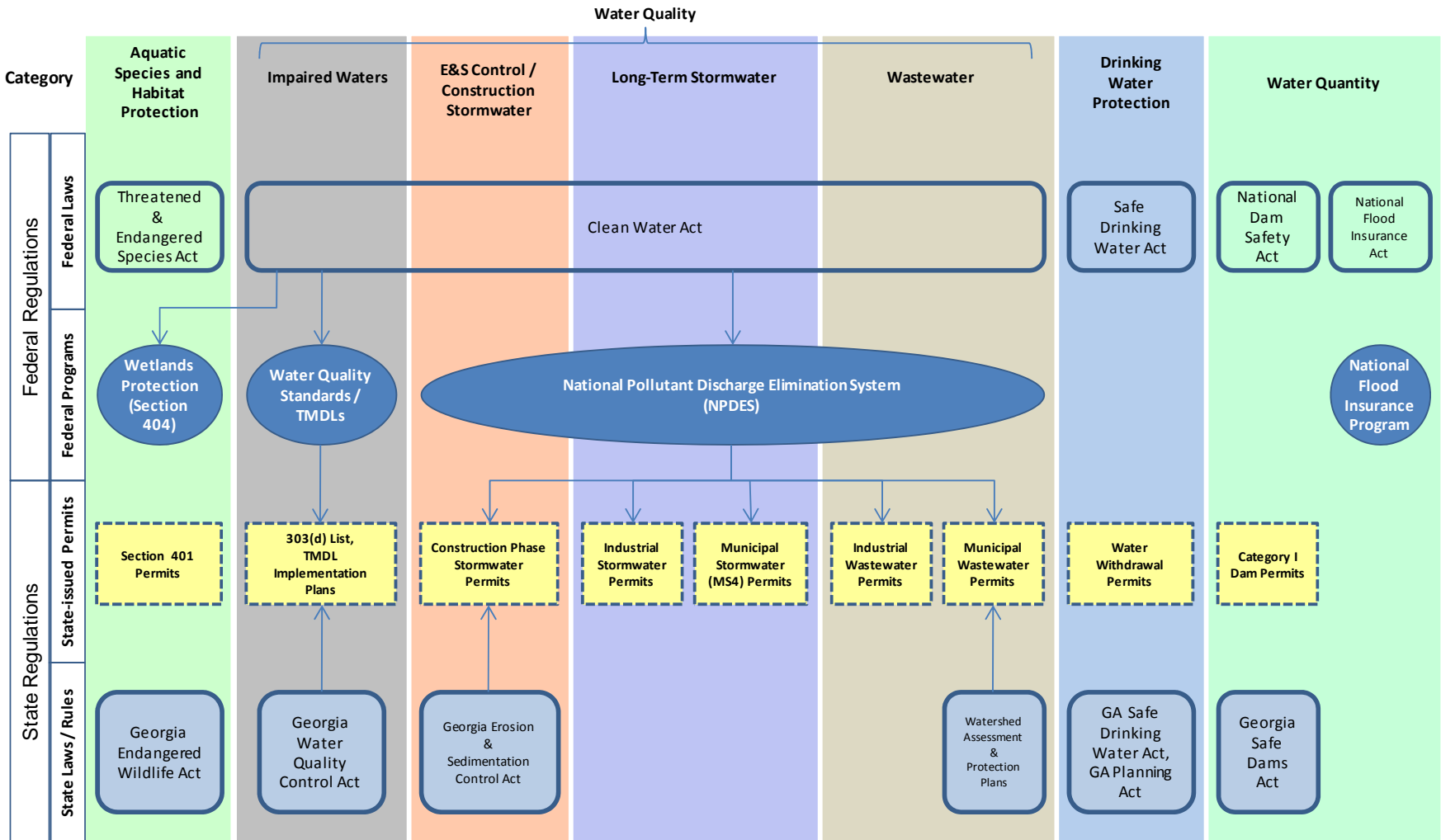
NPDES MUNICIPAL STORMWATER

Municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4) that discharge to surface waters are required to have a permit under the federal Clean Water Act. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) NPDES stormwater regulations have established two phases (Phase I and Phase II) for the municipal stormwater permit program. Phase I communities have individual permits whereas Phase II communities are covered under a general permit. Prior to permit issuance and renewal, both Phase I and II permittees are required to submit their Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP) to Georgia EPD. Table 3-1 provides a current listing of communities within the Metro Water District by permit type.

Phase I MS4 Program

Georgia EPD brought the entire five-county area of Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton and Gwinnett Counties (municipalities and unincorporated counties) into the Phase I MS4 program in 1994. Unincorporated Forsyth County was added to the Phase I program in 2000. Phase I permittees are required to develop and implement a stormwater management program that includes structural and source control measures, illicit discharge detection and elimination, industrial facility stormwater runoff control, and construction site management as minimum elements. The MS4 Phase I permits will be reissued in 2009 (2010 for Forsyth County).

FIGURE 3-1
Watershed Management Regulatory Framework



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Phase I permittees are required to submit an annual report form to Georgia EPD demonstrating progress towards permit requirements. The major activities outlined by the report form, which is available on the Georgia EPD website, currently include:

- Description of the local stormwater management plan (including any revisions);
- Annual inspections and maintenance of the drainage system;
- Screening of MS4 system outfalls annually;
- Inspection of industrial, commercial, and highly visible facilities;
- Development of a monitoring plan for 303(d) listed streams for the parameter(s) of concern;
- Identification of outfalls that discharge within or one mile upstream of listed stream segments;
- Implementation and assessment of the effectiveness of best management practices to address TMDL listed waters;
- Budget and staffing information for the stormwater management program;
- Enforcement actions taken to address violations;
- Local education program activities;
- Street maintenance;
- Municipal waste facility monitoring;
- Pesticide, fertilizer, herbicide application activities; and
- Construction site management.

Phase II MS4 Program

In 2002, Georgia EPD issued Phase II MS4 stormwater permits to additional communities in the Metro Water District who were in metropolitan urbanized areas as defined by the 2000 Census. New municipalities created since 2002 have also been brought under the Phase II program. The MS4 Phase II permits were reissued in 2007 and will be reissued again in 2012.

Phase II permittees are required to comply with the following set of 6 minimum measures:

1. Public Education and Outreach
2. Public Involvement and Participation
3. Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination
4. Construction Site Runoff Control
5. Post-Construction Runoff Control
6. Pollution Prevention and Good Housekeeping

Phase II permittees submit an annual report form to Georgia EPD demonstrating progress towards permit requirements. The report form is available on Georgia EPD's website.

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In addition to the six minimum measures, other permit requirements currently include:

- Developing a map of the outfalls and receiving streams.
- Developing an operation and maintenance program that includes a training component and has the ultimate goal of preventing or reducing pollutant runoff from municipal operations.
- Taking steps to reduce pollutants in impaired waters to the maximum extent practicable.

TABLE 3-1
Metro Water District NPDES MS4 Permittees by Category

Phase I MS4 Jurisdictions	Acworth Alpharetta Atlanta Austell Avondale Estates Berkeley Lake Buford Chamblee Clarkston Clayton County (unincorporated) Cobb County (unincorporated) College Park Dacula Decatur DeKalb County (unincorporated) Doraville	Duluth East Point Fairburn Forest Park Forsyth County (unincorporated) Fulton County (unincorporated) Grayson Gwinnett Co. (unincorporated) Hapeville Jonesboro Kennesaw Lake City Lawrenceville Lilburn Lithonia Lovejoy	Marietta Morrow Norcross Palmetto Pine Lake Powder Springs Riverdale Roswell Smyrna Snellville Stone Mountain Sugar Hill Suwanee Union City
Phase II MS4 Jurisdictions	Auburn Bartow Co. (unincorporated) Canton Cherokee Co. (unincorporated) Conyers Coweta County (unincorporated) Cumming Dallas Douglas Co. (unincorporated) Douglasville Dunwoody	Emerson Fayette County (unincorporated) Fayetteville Flowery Branch Gainesville Hall County (unincorporated) Hampton Henry County (unincorporated) Hiram Holly Springs Johns Creek McDonough	Milton Mountain Park Newnan Oakwood Peachtree City Paulding Co. (unincorporated) Rockdale Co. (unincorporated) Sandy Springs Stockbridge Tyrone Woodstock

NPDES INDUSTRIAL STORMWATER

NPDES industrial stormwater permits authorize discharges of stormwater associated with industrial facilities, including industrial manufacturing and processing, and raw material storage areas associated with an industrial plant. Permittees are required to file a Notice of Intent (NOI) with Georgia EPD and develop a stormwater pollution prevention plan (SWPPP). The SWPPP includes appropriate stormwater management practices to control pollutants in discharges of stormwater associated with industrial activity from their facility.

The NPDES Industrial Permit, reissued in 2006, includes annual reporting requirements, additional numeric effluent limits, removal of quantitative sampling for water priority chemicals, and the addition of sampling of impaired waters as defined by the State 303(d) list where applicable. The permit will be reissued again in 2011. Municipal facilities that may require an NPDES industrial permit include wastewater treatment facilities, land application sites, solid waste or recycling transfer stations, landfills, and fueling stations.

NPDES INDUSTRIAL WASTEWATER

Discharges from industrial wastewater systems are permitted by Georgia EPD under the NPDES industrial wastewater program, similar to municipal wastewater systems. Typical industrial wastewater permits establish specific discharge levels (e.g. pollutant-specific limits and wasteloads), monitoring requirements, and reporting requirements. Industrial wastewater operators are responsible for meeting the specific discharge permit requirements for that facility.

NPDES MUNICIPAL WASTEWATER

Discharges from municipal sanitary wastewater systems are permitted by Georgia EPD under the NPDES municipal wastewater program. Regulations address publicly-owned treatment works (POTW's), separate and combined wastewater systems and facilities, sludge and biosolids handling, and pretreatment requirements for industrial users discharging into a municipal wastewater system. Typical municipal wastewater permits establish specific discharge levels (e.g. pollutant-specific limits and wasteloads), monitoring requirements, and reporting requirements. Municipal wastewater operators are responsible for meeting the specific discharge permit requirements for that facility.

NPDES CONSTRUCTION RUNOFF

The NPDES Construction Stormwater program requires land development projects one acre or larger (including smaller sites that are part of a larger common plan of development) to obtain authorization to discharge stormwater under an NPDES construction stormwater permit. Permittees must submit an NOI to Georgia EPD as well as the Local Issuing Authority (LIA), if applicable, which include an erosion, sedimentation and pollution control (ES&PC) plan. The ES&PC plan is reviewed and approved by the LIA, or Georgia EPD if the jurisdiction is not a LIA. The Construction NPDES Permit includes inspection, documentation, and sampling requirements. This permit was renewed in 2008.

FEDERAL CLEAN WATER ACT – OTHER PROVISIONS

TMDL PROGRAM

A Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is the calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant of concern that a specific segment of a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality standards. The TMDL represents the sum of allowable loads of a single pollutant from all contributing sources (including nonpoint sources) and includes a margin of safety and seasonal variations in water quality.

$$\text{TMDL} = \text{sum of load allocations (nonpoint sources)} + \text{sum of wasteload allocations (point sources)} + \text{margin of safety}$$

Pursuant to various sections of the Clean Water Act, Georgia EPD must assign a designated use for Georgia's waterways and develop a list of impaired waters that do not meet water quality standards. The Section 303(d) list is a subset of the Section 305(b) list of impaired waters that consists only of segments where Georgia EPD must establish TMDLs that allocate pollutant loads among point and nonpoint sources of pollution, including stormwater.

As a result of legal action in Georgia, the rapid scheduled development of TMDLs and later implementation plans for Georgia's river basin groups began in 1998 and continues for newly listed segments following Georgia's basin group planning cycle. Following an initial interagency agreement between Georgia EPD and U.S. EPA Region IV, every TMDL includes a boilerplate "Initial TMDL Implementation Plan" that provides guidelines for and schedules the subsequent preparation of a more detailed "Revised TMDL Implementation Plan". The Revised TMDL Implementation Plans identify the management practices and activities needed to reduce the pollutant load and restore water quality. TMDL Implementation Plans can be found on the Georgia EPD website.

WETLANDS (SECTION 404)

The Federal Clean Water Act was amended in 1977 (Section 404) to address the placement of fill in waters of the United States and the preservation of wetlands. Section 404 is administered by the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), with consultation from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service. Any unavoidable dredge or fill activities associated with "waters of the United States" must be permitted and mitigation activities performed to compensate for the loss of wetlands. In recent years, case law has shaped the definition of protected wetlands and the interpretation of activities requiring permits.

Local permit review staff are required to ensure that land disturbance activities that affect waters of the U.S. are properly permitted. There are a number of nationwide permits for different activities used by the Corps to authorize activities that have minimal individual and cumulative adverse effects on the aquatic environment. Associated with the Section 404 permits, a Section 401 Water Quality Permit must be granted from Georgia EPD prior to any dredge or fill activities.

FEDERAL SAFE DRINKING WATER ACT

The Federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) was originally passed by Congress in 1974 to protect public health by regulating the nation's public drinking water supply as a response to outbreaks of waterborne diseases and increasing chemical contamination. The law was amended in 1986 and 1996 and requires many actions to protect drinking water and its sources: rivers, lakes, reservoirs, springs, and ground water wells.

One component of the 1996 amendment requires the creation of Source Water Assessment Plans (SWAP) by public water systems. SWAP plans for most of the communities in the Metro Water District were completed with the help of the Atlanta Regional Commission, other Regional Development Centers, and the Lake Allatoona Preservation Authority. A SWAP identifies areas of risk for source water pollution within a drinking water supply watershed. The criteria for determining the overall watershed ranking for the 10-county Atlanta region included the number of potential pollutant sources located in the watershed, transitional land, impervious area, number of sanitary sewer crossings, number of railroad crossings, and the number of identified spills. The watersheds were then provided with an overall watershed ranking (low, medium, medium-high, high) that indicates the watershed risk for future pollution. Thus a drinking water supply watershed with an overall watershed ranking of low has a lower risk of pollution than a watershed that ranks high. The overall watershed ranking does not indicate the quality of treated drinking water from that supply source.

Wellhead protection requirements were also included in the 1986 amendments to the SDWA. Georgia EPD has established protection areas around drinking water supply wells that can vary based on the local geology, well depth, and pumping rate, among other factors. These wellhead protection areas are intended to help protect wells and springs used as sources of water supply for community public water systems owned by and/or serving municipalities, counties, and authorities from nearby pollution sources.

FEDERAL FLOOD PROTECTION PROGRAMS

NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE ACT

The National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 led to the creation of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and offered new flood protection to homeowners. Participation in the NFIP is voluntary, based on an agreement between local communities and the federal government which states that if a community will adopt and enforce a floodplain management ordinance to reduce future flood risks to new construction in “special flood hazard areas”, the Federal government will make flood insurance available within the community as a financial protection against flood losses.

In 2001, FEMA promulgated hazard mitigation planning regulations pursuant to the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. FEMA established the 10-step Community Rating System (CRS) process that identified four essential parts to mitigation planning and created a point-based evaluation system. The CRS rewards communities that undertake floodplain activities beyond the requirements with lower flood insurance premiums. A Class 1 rating requires the most credit points and gives the greatest premium reduction; Class 10 receives no premium reduction. A community that does not apply for the CRS, or does not obtain the minimum number of credit points is automatically categorized a Class 10 community.

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The program was further amended by the Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2004, with the goal of reducing losses to repetitive loss properties. The 2004 reforms to the NFIP were incorporated into the amendment to the Metro Water District model floodplain management and flood damage prevention model ordinance.

NATIONAL DAM SAFETY PROGRAM

The National Dam Safety Program (NDSP) was formally established through the Water Resources and Development Act of 1996 but requirements for dam inspections have existed since 1972. The intent of the NDSP is to reduce the risk of life and property damage through the regulation of high hazard dams. Georgia EPD has managed a Safe Dam Act program since 1978. Dams regulated by the Safe Dams Act include those greater than 25 feet tall or that impound greater than 100 acre-feet of water. Category I dams are those with the potential for the loss of life due to dam failure and Category II dams are those with the potential for loss of property. Regulated dams are inspected by Georgia EPD and deficiencies must be addressed or the dam will be breached. The Georgia Safe Dams Act has detailed criteria for the design and inspections of regulated dams. Responsibility for inspections of dams that do not meet these criteria to ensure protection of downstream persons and property are the responsibility of the local jurisdictions.

FEDERAL ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) provides for the conservation of threatened and endangered plants and animals and their habitats. The FWS and the National Marine Fisheries Service maintain a list of endangered and threatened species.

The ESA prohibits any action that results in a “taking” (harassing, harming, or killing) of a listed species or adversely affects its habitat. It also requires federal agencies to consult with the relevant management agency before taking action or granting a permit that would jeopardize a species. Protection or improvement of habitat on state or private lands may be addressed through the development and implementation of Habitat Conservation Plans on a regional basis or through individual incidental take permits.

STATE OF GEORGIA REGULATIONS

The State of Georgia has passed laws that are part of the delegation of federal regulations to the state. In addition, the State has a number of water quality and watershed protection regulations which complement and extend the intent of federal provisions.

GEORGIA WATER QUALITY CONTROL ACT

The Georgia Water Quality Control Act provides for the establishment of water quality standards, as well as policies and procedures for waterbodies that do not meet these standards. Under Section 303(d) of the Federal Clean Water Act, the Georgia EPD must assign a designated use for Georgia’s waterways and develop water quality standards based on the designated use. Georgia currently has five categories of designated uses including; drinking water supplies, recreation, fishing, wild and scenic river, and coastal fishing. The majority of the streams in the Metro Water District are designated as fishing and/or drinking water. The water quality standards for each designated use are developed by Georgia EPD, based on EPA water quality guidelines.

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Monitored waters that do not meet their state water quality standards are considered impaired and published in the State’s 303(d) list of impaired waters, per the Clean Water Act. Substantial changes to the 2008 Georgia 303(d) list were made to comply with EPA guidance. Assessed waters are now placed into one of five categories, as outlined in Table 3-2. The goal of the five-category system is to increase clarity. According to the Clean Water Act, the 303(d) list identifies waters not meeting their designated uses and for which TMDL’s have not been completed for the parameters of concern. Once the TMDL is completed, the water will no longer be on the 303(d) list regardless of whether it meets its designated use. With the new five-category system, Georgia EPD adjusted the ranking method for TMDL development to reflect the existing basin rotation schedule. Other changes to the 2008 303(d) list include discontinuation of the term “partially supporting” and inclusion of “EPA added waters” or stream segments assessed by EPA as part of the TMDL development process.

Georgia EPD also designates streams as primary or secondary trout streams. Primary trout streams support self-sustaining populations of Rainbow, Brown or Brook Trout. Secondary trout streams are those with no evidence of natural trout reproduction, but are capable of supporting trout throughout the year. There are no primary trout streams located in the Metro Water District, but there are several secondary trout streams.

TABLE 3-2
2008 303(d) List Assessed Waters Categories

2008 Category	2008 Category Description	Prior to 2008
Category 1	Supporting designated use(s).	Supporting
Category 2	The water has more than one designated use. One designated use is met and insufficient information exists regarding the other designated use.	None
Category 3	Insufficient data to make a determination.	Not Listed
Category 4a	Not supporting use(s) - TMDL completed.	Not Supporting and "3" in the 303(d) column
Category 4b	Not supporting use(s) - actions in place other than TMDL to bring water into compliance.	Not Supporting and "2" in the 303(d) column
Category 4c	Not supporting use(s) - source of non-attainment is not a pollutant.	None
Category 5	Not supporting use - TMDLs not completed.	Not Supporting and "x" in the 303(d) column

WATERSHED ASSESSMENTS AND WATERSHED PROTECTION PLANS

In addition to the Federal NPDES wastewater permit requirements, Georgia EPD requires watershed monitoring plans, watershed assessments, and watershed protection plans from all POTWs greater than 1.0 MGD or for new or expanding facilities. Recognizing that existing and additional wastewater capacity supports growth, the local wastewater providers must address the potential for water quality

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impacts from stormwater runoff and nonpoint source pollution that would result from that growth. Many local governments within the Metro Water District have completed watershed assessments and are implementing their watershed protection plans. The specific requirements for each of these three elements are detailed in guidance documents on Georgia EPD's website and are outlined below.

Watershed Monitoring Plans

The Watershed Monitoring Plan describes the field study to document current water quality conditions and identify stressors that affect water resources quality in the watershed area. The monitoring plan must include a watershed characterization, a description of the monitoring stations selected, and a schedule for chemical and habitat monitoring. The data collected during watershed monitoring is then analyzed as part of the Watershed Assessment.

Watershed Assessments

The Watershed Assessment defines the current watershed conditions and predicts the direct and indirect effects of growth and development on the watershed. The watershed characterization includes discussions of population, land use changes, and analysis of other potential pollutant sources within the watershed. Water quality data collected from the monitoring plan plus other locally available data should identify, document and rank any impaired waters in the study area. Any anticipated changes in water quality based on future growth should also be documented in the Watershed Assessment.

Watershed Protection Plans

The Watershed Protection Plan is based on the information in the Watershed Assessment. The Watershed Protection Plan must contain the protection strategies and necessary steps to improve and meet water quality standards. The Watershed Protection Plan must include specific actions and detailed schedules for implementation. Local governments must submit an annual certification of implementation with a progress report of specific actions and long-term monitoring data must be available for review. Local governments are urged to coordinate Watershed Protection Plan actions with those required for compliance with NPDES MS4 permits or other similar watershed requirements. The goal of Watershed Protection Plans is to protect water quality from anticipated land use changes and nonpoint sources of pollution.

GEORGIA EROSION AND SEDIMENTATION CONTROL ACT

Georgia's Erosion and Sedimentation Control Act (ESCA) was first passed in 1975 to protect Georgia's waters from soil erosion and sediment deposition. The Act requires permits for land-disturbing activities on sites one acre or larger as well as an erosion, sedimentation and pollution control (ES&PC) plan for preventing and/or minimizing erosion and sedimentation from the activity. In addition, the regulations require undisturbed buffers between the land-disturbing activity and streams to minimize adverse impacts to water quality. Development is not allowed within 25 feet of most streams in Georgia and 50 feet for trout streams. Unlike the NPDES Construction Permit, the ESCA is administered primarily through the Local Issuing Authority (LIA). Plan review checklists, updated in 2008, are available by development type on the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission website.

In 2003, O.C.G.A. § 12-7-19 amended the ESCA to include mandatory certification for all individuals involved in any aspect of land disturbance activities in Georgia by December 31, 2006. The amendment also included mandatory fees per acre of disturbed land to fund enforcement programs for Georgia EPD and for the LIA. While similar to the NPDES Construction Permit, the ESCA further

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outlines the responsibilities of the LIA. Georgia EPD has asked LIA's to educate the development community on the need to file an NOI under the NPDES Construction Permit, which are processed by Georgia EPD.

The buffer variance procedure and criteria, amended in 2004, provides a list of exempted activities that may be allowed by the LIA and a list of activities that will be considered for a variance by Georgia EPD. The rule also outlines the minimum information needed for the buffer variance application and the details for buffer mitigation plans, if required. Enforcement of the buffer variance procedure requires support from the local issuing authority in identifying waters of the state within their jurisdiction, related to new development and redevelopment projects. Georgia EPD has recently released a field guide to assist local governments in making stream determinations that is available on their website.

METROPOLITAN RIVER PROTECTION ACT

In 1973, the Georgia General Assembly passed the Metropolitan River Protection Act (MRPA) to provide protection to the land and water resources of the Chattahoochee River between Buford Dam and Peachtree Creek. MRPA established the 2,000-foot Chattahoochee River Corridor on both banks of the River and authorized the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) to adopt a plan for its protection.

Under the Chattahoochee Corridor Plan, all development activities in the Corridor must be consistent with plan standards to be approved. These standards include limits on land disturbance and impervious surface, buffers and setbacks on the river, and floodplain requirements. The Act was amended in 1998 to extend the Corridor to the downstream limits of Fulton and Douglas Counties. The jurisdictions impacted by MRPA should ensure that all land development permittees within the Corridor have completed a MRPA review by ARC and, when necessary, adopt the review recommendations as permit conditions.

GEORGIA PLANNING ACT

The Georgia Planning Act of 1989 requires local governments to adopt comprehensive land use plans. One component of the Act, generally known as the "Environmental Planning Criteria" or "Part V Criteria", requires local governments to incorporate minimum planning measures to protect natural resources into their comprehensive plans. The Environmental Planning Criteria include the protection of: wetlands, water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, protected rivers, and protected mountains. Sensitive features such as wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, and protected mountains should be identified in land use plans and protected to the extent practicable as defined in O.C.G.A. §391-3-16, located on the Georgia EPD website. Protected rivers as part of the Part V criteria include any perennial river or watercourse with an average annual flow of at least 400 cubic feet per second that are not covered by the Metropolitan River Protection Act.

The stream buffer requirements for the protection of drinking water supply watersheds were recently amended by Georgia EPD to include alternate minimum buffer criteria for drinking water supply watersheds as long as the additional minimum criteria are met as outlined in Table 3-3.

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TABLE 3-3
GEORGIA EPD Alternative Minimum Criteria for Drinking Water Supply Watersheds

Management Principles	Rule Paragraph 391-3-16(10)	Rule Option 3.(i)	Rule Option 3.(ii)	Rule Option 3.(iii)	Current Rule
Critical area extent (see Note 1)	-----	1-mile	-----	-----	7-miles
Critical area buffer	-----	100-foot	-----	-----	100-foot
Buffer width (outside of critical area)	-----	50-foot	75-foot	100-foot	50-foot (Note 2)
Setback	-----	-----	-----	-----	150-foot
Implement public education	3.(i)	Yes	Yes	Yes	-----
Design guidelines (diffuse flow)	3.(ii)	Yes	Yes	Yes	-----
Declarations on deed/plat	-----	Yes	Yes	Yes	-----
Stormwater ordinance	3.(iii)	Yes	Yes	Yes	-----
Septic tank inspections every 7 years	3.(vii)	Yes	Yes	-----	-----
Monitoring program	3.(iv)	Yes	Yes	Note 3	-----
Buffer vegetation	3.(v)	Yes	Yes	Note 3	-----
Septic notification	-----	-----	-----	Note 3	-----
Maintain Local Issuing Authority status	-----	Yes	Yes	Note 3	-----
10% Effective Impervious Area	3.(vi)	Yes	-----	Note 3	-----
Impervious Surface Limits (25-percent)	-----	-----	-----	-----	Yes (Note 2)

Notes:

1. Critical area extent is the radius upstream of the public drinking water supply.
2. This requirement is only for small drinking water supply watersheds (less than 100 square miles of land upstream of supply).
3. These practices are recommended but not required in the drinking water supply watershed.

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (Georgia DCA) reviews the Part V standards as part of the Local Comprehensive Plan reviews every 10 years. The Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning also require local governments within the Metro Water District to incorporate recommendations from the three water management plans into their local comprehensive land use plans. Failure to properly administer and enforce these planning standards can lead to “Unqualified Local Government” status and the loss of State and Federal funds.

STATE WATER PLAN

In 2004, the Georgia General Assembly passed the Comprehensive State-wide Water Management Planning Act to establish a set of policies to govern water management decisions. Following two years of development and public comment, the Comprehensive State-wide Water Management Plan (State Water Plan) was adopted by the Georgia General Assembly on January 18, 2008. The overall goal of the plan is to manage “water resources in a sustainable manner to support the state’s economy, to protect public health and natural systems, and to enhance the quality of life for all citizens”.

Key themes repeated throughout the State Water Plan include: management of consumptive use to ensure present and future opportunities for use of the resource, management of point and nonpoint sources on a watershed basis, and protection of waters that currently meet state standards and restoration of waters that are currently impaired. Several meetings were held with Georgia EPD throughout the planning process to provide consistency with the State Water Plan. Future action items that may affect

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the Watershed Management Plan include adoption of an E. coli bacteria water quality standard, calculations of assimilative capacity to balance stormwater and wastewater loads, recommendations for consumptive use that may consider stormwater treatment, and an increased future focus on restoration of impacted waters.

Georgia EPD will establish guidelines and criteria for local plans to be implemented by the Metro Water District and the other planning districts statewide. As the state water planning process progresses, the Metro Water District will evaluate and update its water resources plans and programs as needed to stay in compliance with the State Water Plan guidelines and criteria.

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