



# Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District 2012 Activities & Progress Report

# 2012 Board Members

## Elected Officials

**Hon. Boyd Austin, Jr.** *(District Chair)*  
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*Mayor, City of Atlanta*

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**Birdel Jackson** *(Secretary/Treasurer), Atlanta*

**William Thomas Craig**, *Covington*

**Bradley Currey, Jr.**, *Atlanta*

**Kit Dunlap**, *Gainesville*

**Chuck Huling**, *Mableton*

**Reginald Prime**, *Lilburn*

**Gerald Pouncey, Jr.**, *Atlanta*

**Tim Thoms**, *Fayetteville*



## About the Metro Water District

Created by the Georgia General Assembly, the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District has worked with 114 local governments and water utilities for more than a decade to protect quality, supplies and recreational values of the waters in and downstream of metro Atlanta. The Metro Water District's governing board establishes policy and oversees the planning activities of the organization. It consists of elected officials from each of the 15 counties and the City of Atlanta, as well as 10 appointed citizen members.

The District has developed three comprehensive and integrated plans in cooperation with local government officials, technical experts and stakeholders in the region: the Water Supply and Water Conservation Management Plan, the Long-term Wastewater Management Plan and the Watershed Management Plan. Plans are updated regularly, with allowances for plan amendments in interim years.

The next plan update will be consistent with the schedule of the other water planning councils throughout the state. We look forward to working with them on comprehensive, state-wide water planning.

# Chairman's Message

For the past 11 years, the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District has served as the comprehensive planning and policy making entity for water supply and conservation, wastewater and watershed management for the 15-county metro Atlanta area. No comparable organization anywhere else in the country has developed as well-rounded and comprehensive a set of water resource plans with such a high rate of local government implementation.

One of the reasons for this is because the District brings together elected and appointed officials, technical experts and local stakeholders in almost 40 different meetings and discussion forums each year, where ideas and best practices are shared, and plan components are created and perfected. These forums guide our plans and make them better.

The purpose of this annual report is to show who we are and what we have done in the past year to uphold our mission of protecting the water resources in and downstream of the region. We want to provide the reader with the big picture: that the District is more than the political boundaries that define it. We are not an organization of uncoordinated plans and mismatched ideas. The District is an interconnected body of local jurisdictions and utilities working together to implement common goals.

The District has emerged as a leader in water conservation, demonstrated by the region's continual decrease in per capita water use. The District has seen a significant reduction in per capita water use since 2000, while the population has increased by almost one million.

Watershed management in metro Atlanta is among the best in the nation. The plan includes a suite of stormwater and watershed protection ordinances to address the negative impacts of stormwater runoff and non-point source pollution. Almost all local jurisdictions in the District have adopted all stormwater model ordinances.

With 92 publicly-owned wastewater treatment plants, 16,000 miles of sanitary sewer line and over 500,000 on-site wastewater management (septic) systems in the District, wastewater management is crucial. The requirements outlined in the Wastewater Management Plan ensure that local systems have enough capacity to meet future demands and that wastewater discharges downstream are of the highest quality.

In June of this year, the courtroom battle over water supply in the ACF/ACT basins ended. By denying to hear petitions from Florida, Alabama and the Southeast Federal Power Customers, the United States Supreme Court let stand the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals' decision that water supply is an authorized purpose of Lake Lanier. This decision affirmed that water supply is indeed an authorized purpose of Lake Lanier and that metro Atlanta's future water supply is now more secure. This bodes well for the District. We can now move forward in working with our sister states on water sharing across physical, political and economic boundaries so that all needs are met.

The District is one of 11 water planning councils throughout the state. We are encouraged about the outlook of the state's future water planning efforts, and we look forward in planning comprehensively for the management of our statewide water resources. The District is proud of the strides we have made in water conservation and water resource management. We do what we do because it is of the highest importance to be good stewards of our shared water resources and think and act across borders in planning for our future water needs.

Sincerely,



Boyd Austin, Chairman



# Update on Interstate Water Issues

## Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint Basin

For 20 years, Alabama and Florida had taken the position that water supply was not an “authorized purpose” of Lake Lanier. The 11th Circuit Court of Appeals rejected these arguments in 2011 by holding that water supply is a fully authorized purpose of Lake Lanier under federal law.

In June, the U.S. Supreme Court denied petitions by Florida, Alabama and the Southeastern Federal Power Customers to review the decision of the 11th Circuit. The following day, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers released a legal opinion concluding that it is authorized to grant the request Georgia submitted in 2000 for withdrawals of 705 mgd from the Chattahoochee River. While the opinion made it clear that the Corps has not yet decided whether to grant the request – only that it is authorized to do so – this is very good news for Georgia.

With respect to claims involving the Endangered Species Act, the U.S. District Court, in 2010, denied Florida’s claim that Corps operations of the reservoirs on the Chattahoochee River were harming several species of mussels. Florida appealed that ruling, but the appeal was stayed almost immediately when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced its intention to redo or supplement the 2008 Biological Opinion that the district court had considered in its 2010 ruling.

The issuance of a new Biological Opinion in 2012 made moot any controversy concerning the earlier opinion. Therefore, Florida moved to dismiss its appeal, and the 11th Circuit granted that request. Although it is still possible that Florida will challenge the 2012 Biological Opinion, it has yet to do so.

## Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa Basin

In July, the Alabama District Court dismissed all but one claim in the litigation relating to the Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa basin. Three months later, the Alabama Parties filed a joint stipulation, dismissing the one remaining claim in the litigation,

which challenged the permit issued by the Corps for the Hickory Log Creek Reservoir. The result is to terminate the litigation in the district court.

## Going Forward

With the litigation finally wrapping up, attention in both basins will turn to the Corps’ update of water control plans.

**Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint Basin:** In October 2012, the Corps opened the scoping period for comments concerning the update of its Water Control Manual for the ACF Basin. Consistent with the 11th Circuit Court ruling, the Corps will be considering water supply operations in its Manual update. The scoping report will guide the development of alternatives for management of the basin, a draft plan and a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The District remains actively engaged in cooperation with the Corps on the development of its basin-wide plans.

In addition, the District is a member and participant in the ACF Stakeholders (ACFS) organization. ACFS is a grassroots, nonprofit entity dedicated to achieving equitable water-sharing solutions among stakeholders in the ACF Basin that balance economic, ecological and social values, while ensuring sustainability for current and future generations. ACFS is currently moving forward with the development of a Sustainable Water Management Plan for the ACF Basin through scientific modeling and a collaborative shared vision process.

**Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa Basin:** The draft Water Control Plan for the ACT is expected in January 2013. The Corps has stated the draft will not include current and future water supply withdrawals from Allatoona. The final plan will likely be issued a year or so after the draft.



**22** years

2012 marked the resolution of all the original claims in the “Water Wars” litigation, 22 years after Alabama first filed suit.

**73%** of water comes from ACF

Seventy-three percent of the District’s water supply comes from the ACF Basin.

**14%** of water comes from ACT

Fourteen percent of the District’s water supply comes from the ACT Basin.

## **56** water providers

The District has 56 water providers.

## **12,430** leaks repaired

More than 12,000 leaks were detected and repaired by local governments and water systems in 2012.

## **99%** provide conservation pricing

Ninety-nine percent of communities within the District provide conservation pricing – the more you use, the more you pay.

## **76,872** toilets

76,872 old, inefficient toilets have been replaced since the Metro Water District Toilet Rebate Program began. Thirty-six jurisdictions participate in the Toilet Rebate Program, four of which offer a Multi-Family Toilet Rebate Program.



# Water Supply and Water Conservation

The Metro Water District has emerged as a leader in water conservation. This is demonstrated by a more than 20 percent reduction in per capita water use during the past decade. From 2001 to 2010, the region's water use has dropped from 149 gallons per capita per day to 110 gallons per capita per day, even though the population has increased by one million people. Nowhere else in the country have so many local governments and water systems come together to develop and implement an aggressive and comprehensive water conservation plan that is required and enforced by the state.

## Plan in Action

With the need to find and fix leaks promptly, the Henry County Water & Sewerage Authority has enhanced its Leak Detection Program, which has been in place since 2007. The authority replaced all leak detection equipment with new equipment and hired two more employees in 2012. These employees were certified in using leak detection equipment and received training about the different phases of leak detection. The equipment is now being deployed every 500 feet instead of every 1,000-2,000 feet to allow for maximum coverage and improve the effectiveness of the equipment. Additionally, an in-house GPS system is used to track and map the position and reading of all leak detection equipment deployed.

To date, the Henry County Water & Sewerage Authority has detected 310 leaks and has saved over 370,800,000 gallons of water.

The Water Supply and Water Conservation Management Plan sets forth an aggressive water conservation plan to help manage the area's resources. The primary focus during 2012 was researching best practices for implementing a multi-family toilet rebate program; assessing the most appropriate technologies for point-of-use leak detection programs; providing technical expertise on how to conduct commercial water audits; and collaborating with local water utilities and other stakeholders on the requirements contained within the Georgia Water Stewardship Bill of 2010.



# Wastewater Management

The District's Wastewater Management Plan focuses on meeting future demands for wastewater treatment through strategies that address wastewater collection system inspection and maintenance, management of septic systems and decentralized systems and local wastewater planning. These strategies have helped guide management practices for 92 publicly-owned treatment facilities and have helped them maintain more than 16,000 miles of sanitary sewer lines, more than 45,000 manholes and 500,000 septic systems.

Each year, more and more utilities are implementing grease management programs, and more than 90 percent of the wastewater treatment utilities have active sewer inspection and maintenance programs. These programs resulted in fewer overflows caused by structural defects and pump station failures. Also, this past year, the District offered guidance on reuse and its role in meeting future wastewater treatment demands by sharing best practices and highlighting local utilities that were successful in operating water reuse treatment plants within their service areas.



## *Plan in Action*

In December 2008, Douglasville–Douglas County Water and Sewer Authority placed in service the Sweetwater Creek Effluent Reuse Project. This project was designed for the new Google Data Center's cooling tower make-up water. The reuse facility is designed to treat effluent to reuse standards at an average flow of 1.75 million gallons per day from the authority's Sweetwater Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant. The water reuse project benefited both the Authority and Google by:

- » Reducing demand on the Authority's potable water production
- » Providing a less vulnerable supply of reuse water during periods of extended drought
- » Potential for increasing the supply of reuse water available as wastewater customer base increases
- » Returning highly treated wastewater from the Google facility directly to the Chattahoochee





## **52** wastewater providers

The Metro Water District includes 52 wastewater service providers.

## **16,000** miles

Within the District there are 16,000 miles of sanitary sewer lines, 45,000 manhole covers and 500,000 septic tanks.

## **90%** have sewer inspection programs

Ninety percent of the District provide sewer inspection and maintenance programs.

## **146,000** door hangers

Fats, Oils and Grease (F.O.G.) continue to be a problem in metro area sewer lines, and account for 50 percent of the sewer overflows. To date, the District has distributed more than 146,000 door hangers to area residents to reduce the amount of F.O.G. going into the system.

## **34** watersheds

There are 34 water supply watersheds in the Metro Water District.

## **98%** ordinance adoption rate

Ninety-eight percent adoption rate of the Metro Water District's model ordinances.

## **102** pollution prevention programs

The District has 102 local stormwater pollution prevention programs.

## **35** communities with stormwater utility funding

Thirty-five communities have a stormwater utility funding mechanism.



# Watershed Management

The Metro Water District has one of the most comprehensive and holistic regional programs for stormwater management and watershed protection in the nation. The Watershed Management Plan focuses on protecting water quality, watershed health and aquatic habitats. It provides an integrated approach to surface water management for communities, addressing development regulations, land use planning, stormwater infrastructure, floodplain management, pollution prevention and water quality monitoring, among other issues. As watersheds do not respect jurisdictional boundaries, the plan also includes a suite of model

ordinances that provides for a consistent set of local regulations for cities and counties throughout the District.

Local governments come together quarterly in the forum of the Stormwater Subcommittee of the District's Technical Coordinating Committee to address current issues, share information and promote implementation of the Metro Water District's plans. This past year the Metro Water District provided training to local staff on the updated industrial general stormwater permit issued by Georgia EPD to industries, as well as local governments and utilities.

## *Plan in Action*

The Clayton County Water Authority has made enormous progress in protecting and improving its waterways through its stream restoration program. Since inception, the program has restored over 10,000 linear feet (almost two miles) of streams countywide.

The East Jesters Creek project in Lake City involved the restoration of 1,600 linear feet of stream, along with an additional 850 feet along a tributary. The goal was to stabilize the stream's banks, minimize streambed scour, recreate natural meanders and replant the area with appropriate vegetation.

As part of the project, the authority partnered with the City of Lake City to develop a nature preserve adjacent to the Lake City Municipal Hall that includes restored streams, 9,000 feet of walking trails, bridges and pavilions. In addition, Lake City Municipal Hall added a number of stormwater management features, including a parking lot with permeable pavers, culvert outfall retrofits and a stormwater retention pond that doubles as a water feature and amenity for the nature preserve.



# Education and Outreach

The District remains steadfast in its commitment to inform metro area residents about water conservation and stormwater pollution prevention through two outreach campaigns. My Drop Counts Water Conservation Campaign, launched in 2011, asks individuals, families, businesses, schools and local governments to be “In” for water conservation and to make a pledge to conserve water through various in-home and in-office water saving techniques. The Clean Water Campaign, going strong in its 12th year, reminds us that keeping our rivers, lakes and streams clean starts with keeping nonpoint source pollution out of storm drains and gutters.

This year, the District revamped the education and outreach program. The Technical Coordinating Committee updated educational materials, making them more user-friendly and

relevant to current issues. It was also the goal of the District to reach a wider audience through a variety of media outlets. Currently, the District is working with local cable access television stations to feature various water saving tips and ideas for reducing pollution in our rivers, lakes and streams. Additionally, My Drop Counts water conservation public service announcements will run in local movie theaters and on radio stations and billboards in metro Atlanta in 2013.

The annual My Drop Counts/Clean Water Campaign Essay Contest was updated with a new theme and topic, “We All Live Downstream”. More than 60 metro area middle schools participated this year. The 2012 District-wide winner of the essay contest was Seth Carey, an eighth grader from North Georgia Christian School in Hall County.



## *Plan in Action*

In 2011, the Gwinnett County Department of Water Resources launched Water on Wheels, an outreach program that targets primary education and allows students to participate in hands-on lessons that teach the importance of water conservation and inspire life-long water efficient behaviors. Younger students explore the water cycle and learn that water is a basic need for all living things. They also discover where their drinking water comes from and understand that water should not be wasted. Older students focus on weather patterns, water resource sharing and learn how animals, plants and people must adapt to limited water availability. Through interactive presentations, demonstrations and activities, students leave with a greater understanding of the importance of conserving our precious water resources.

This classroom-based program travels to schools throughout Gwinnett County and has reached more than 7,000 students to date.



## Bag or compost leaves and yard debris.

Leaves and yard debris that end up in storm drains or drainage ditches can cause street flooding and degrade water quality in rivers and streams.

[www.cleanwatercampaign.com](http://www.cleanwatercampaign.com)



# Technical Coordinating Committee and Basin Advisory Councils

The Metro Water District's enabling legislation establishes two groups to provide technical guidance and public input to the District's planning process. These forums help identify ideas and best practices that are molded into the measures and ordinances included in the District's plans.

In 2012 the committee reviewed revisions to state policies and management guidelines and explored funding opportunities. Members advised District staff on various plan components including reuse, sustainable stormwater infrastructure and point of use leak detection programs.

The Basin Advisory Councils represent our local stakeholders, including educators, water industry professionals, farmers, power industry professionals, businessmen, civic group representatives, environmentalists, recreationalists and property owners. This year, advisory council members toured water supply reservoirs, provided feedback on education materials and communicated with state and local leaders about water resource issues in their basins.

**600** stakeholders provide input

More than 600 Technical Committee and Basin Advisory Council members provide ongoing input to the District's efforts.

**30** meetings

The Technical Coordinating Committee and Basin Advisory Councils met a combined total of 30 times in 2012.

**5** water facility tours

More than 100 Basin Advisory Council members took part in 5 water facility tours.



# Financials

The Metro Water District operates on a calendar year budget, with the majority of revenues coming from local government dues (\$773,239) and the State of Georgia (\$250,000). Local government dues were \$0.16 per capita for 2012 (based on the 2010 Census). Below is a review of the revenues and expenses. This accounting is subject to adjustment after fiscal year-end close and independent audit.

## Financials for 2013

In June 2011, the Board adopted a financial policy to establish and strive to maintain a minimum fund balance of \$300,000 for operating contingencies. The estimated ending general fund balance for 2012 is \$569,742.

The governing board has adopted a budget of \$1,126,143 for 2013, with the majority of revenues coming from local government dues (\$773,239) and the State of Georgia (\$250,000). Local government dues will be \$0.16 per capita for 2013 (based on the 2010 Census).



**Beginning Fund Balance . . . . . \$517,427**

### Revenues

State Funds . . . . . \$250,000  
 Local Dues (\$0.16 per capita) . . . . . \$773,239  
 Interest Income . . . . . \$1,000  
 District Special Projects Revenues . . . . . \$0  
 Designated My Drop Counts  
 ("I'm In") Carryover . . . . . \$247,000  
 Misc./Fees . . . . . \$59,925

**Total . . . . . \$ 1,331,164**

### Expenses

Chairman's Allowance . . . . . \$3,000  
 District Special Projects . . . . . \$0  
 Salaries . . . . . \$354,733  
 Fringe Benefits . . . . . \$204,116  
 Contracts . . . . . \$60,000  
 Overhead . . . . . \$255,000  
 Miscellaneous Operating . . . . . \$70,000  
 Public Awareness/Education . . . . . \$85,000  
 My Drop Counts ("I'm In")  
 Water Conservation Campaign . . . . . \$75,000

**Total . . . . . \$ 1,106,849**

**Designated My Drop Counts . . . . . \$172,000**  
**("I'm In") Carryover**

**Estimated Ending General Fund Balance . \$569,742**



**Metropolitan North Georgia  
Water Planning District**

**40 Courtland Street, NE  
Atlanta, GA 30303**

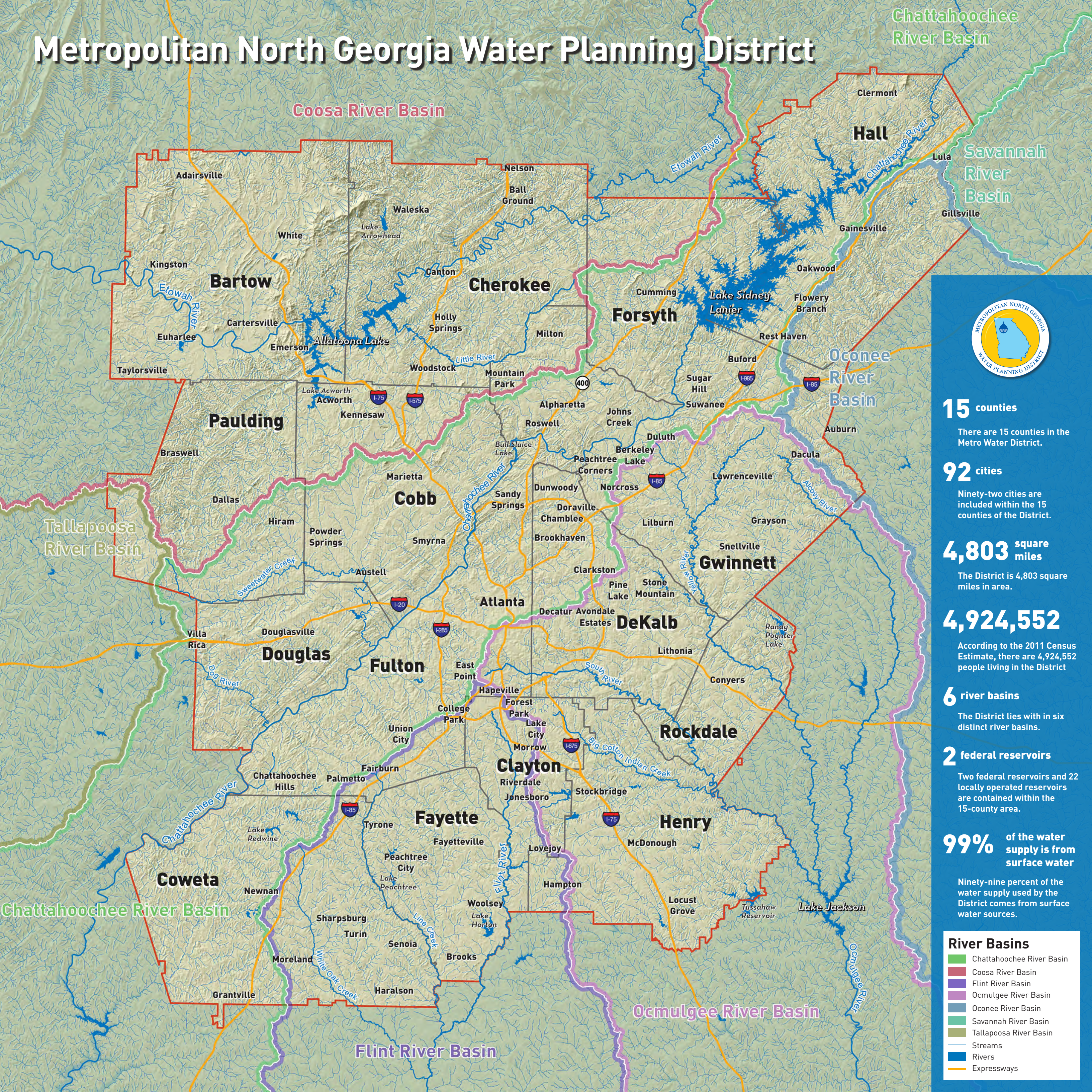
**404.463.3256 | fax: 404.463.3254**

**[www.northgeorgiawater.org](http://www.northgeorgiawater.org)**





# Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District



**15** counties  
There are 15 counties in the Metro Water District.

**92** cities  
Ninety-two cities are included within the 15 counties of the District.

**4,803** square miles  
The District is 4,803 square miles in area.

**4,924,552**  
According to the 2011 Census Estimate, there are 4,924,552 people living in the District

**6** river basins  
The District lies with in six distinct river basins.

**2** federal reservoirs  
Two federal reservoirs and 22 locally operated reservoirs are contained within the 15-county area.

**99%** of the water supply is from surface water  
Ninety-nine percent of the water supply used by the District comes from surface water sources.

**River Basins**

<span style="color: green;">█</span>	Chattahoochee River Basin
<span style="color: red;">█</span>	Coosa River Basin
<span style="color: purple;">█</span>	Flint River Basin
<span style="color: blue;">█</span>	Ocmulgee River Basin
<span style="color: pink;">█</span>	Oconee River Basin
<span style="color: lightgreen;">█</span>	Savannah River Basin
<span style="color: olive;">█</span>	Tallapoosa River Basin
<span style="color: blue;">—</span>	Streams
<span style="color: darkblue;">—</span>	Rivers
<span style="color: orange;">—</span>	Expressways