

2022

Activities & Progress Report

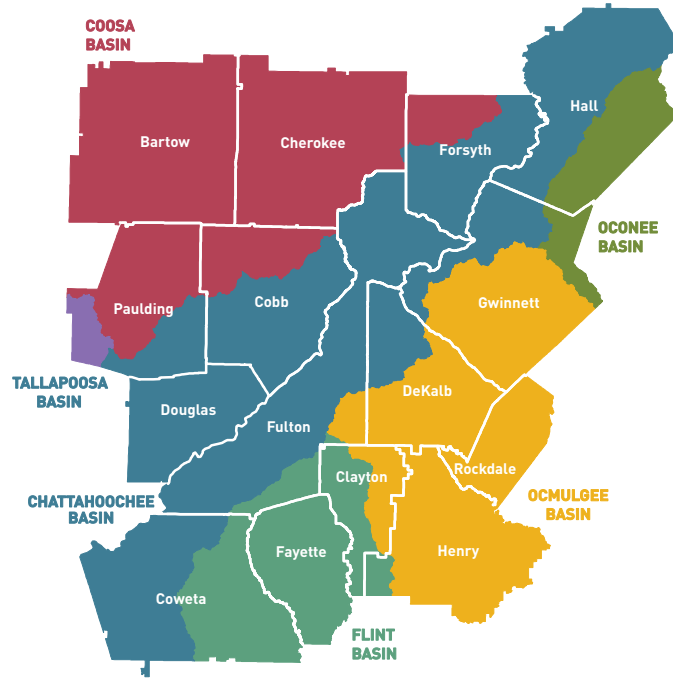
Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District



About the District

The Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District (the Metro Water District, or simply, the District) was created by the Georgia General Assembly in 2001 as a regional water resources planning agency. The Metro Water District develops comprehensive action items and strategies for the management of water supply and water conservation, wastewater, and stormwater for the 15-county, 95-city metropolitan Atlanta region. The first suite of plans was adopted in 2003 and updated in 2009 and 2017.

The 2017 update combined the suite of three plans into one integrated Water Resources Management Plan (Plan). In December 2022, the District Governing Board adopted the third update of the Plan. For the first time, the Plan includes the first-of-its-kind Stormwater Forecast (Forecast) which represents a region-wide accounting of the runoff volume from developed lands that have the potential to be managed by stormwater control measures. The Forecast will support a better understanding of the overall needs in the watershed and will provide additional information for improved decision making at both the site-scale and basin-scale. The Plan update also transitioned the River Basin Profiles from text to an interactive, web-based application which will better connect users to their watersheds through narratives and associated maps and graphics.



2022 Governing Board Members

— Elected Officials —

The Hon. Andre Dickens
Mayor, City of Atlanta

The Hon. Matthew Santini
Mayor, City of Cartersville

The Hon. Harry Johnston
Chairman, Cherokee County Commission

The Hon. Jeff Turner
Chairman, Clayton County Commission

The Hon. Lisa Cupid
Chairwoman, Cobb County Commission

The Hon. William “Dub” Pearman
Mayor, City of Senoia

The Hon. Michael L. Thurmond
CEO, DeKalb County

The Hon. Dr. Romona Jackson Jones
Chairman, Douglas County Commission

The Hon. Edward Johnson
Mayor, City of Fayetteville

The Hon. Alfred John
Chairman, Forsyth County Commission

The Hon. Robb Pitts
Chairman, Fulton County Commission

The Hon. Nicole Love Hendrickson
Chairwoman, Gwinnett County Commission

The Hon. Richard Higgins
Chairman, Hall County Commission

The Hon. Carlotta Harrell
Chair, Henry County Commission

The Hon. James Kelly
Mayor, City of Dallas

The Hon. Oz Nesbitt, Sr.
Chairman, Rockdale County Commission

— Citizen Members —

Glenn Page (*District Chair*), Marietta

Katie Kirkpatrick (*Vice Chair*), Atlanta

Dr. Mark Berry (*Secretary/Treasurer*), Atlanta

Pam Burnett, Marietta

Kit Dunlap, Gainesville

Birdel Jackson, Alpharetta

Gerald Pouncey, Jr., Atlanta

Tim Thoms, Fayetteville

Building on Past Success to Improve Our Water Resiliency

A Letter from Our Chairman

In 2022, the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District (the District) began its third decade of regional water planning with our partner communities. Integrated water resource planning is important to support economic, environmental, and social well-being. While making great strides in the Atlanta region, we’re also aware of major water challenges facing communities across the nation. Extreme drought in the west, floods in Kentucky, and infrastructure failures in Mississippi are sobering reminders of why the District’s regional planning and efforts to improve resiliency are so vital.

I’m honored to serve as the District Board Chair and partner with our stakeholders on the comprehensive planning and policymaking for water supply and conservation, and wastewater and watershed management. The work we do together is critical to better manage the shared water resources across 15 counties and 95 cities, and to keep our region thriving.

2022 population estimates released by the Atlanta Regional Commission show the 11-county Atlanta region added 64,940 people in the past year, pushing the region’s population to over 5.1 million. And, according to the Metro Atlanta Chamber, 31 Fortune 1000 businesses have made metro Atlanta their home. Our communities and businesses all rely on one essential element – water.

Much of the District’s focus this year has been on developing the 2022 Water Resources Management Plan, adopted in December. The Plan is the result of over two and half years of data gathering and analysis, policy discussions, and feedback on draft materials – all conducted with a comprehensive stakeholder framework. We bring together elected and appointed officials, technical experts, and stakeholders in frequent forums to share ideas, research and evaluate best practices, and develop and refine plan components. Over 800 individuals participated in the development of this water road map for the region.

Drought preparedness and water efficiency are key for our communities to balance growth and available supplies in the future. To assist local water providers in preparing for and responding to drought, we’ve created the Drought Planning Guide. This time-saving resource for local water providers will help promote a coordinated, effective, and regionally consistent approach to drought response. I am also happy to note that the Apalachicola, Chattahoochee, and Flint (ACF) River Basin Drought and Water Dashboard is now available at www.drought.gov and offers a new online planning resource providing up-to-date drought data plus tools to help interpret the data and support public education about impacts in the basin. I’m especially pleased that many of the Metro Water District’s partner utilities helped the ACF Stakeholders organization and NOAA in developing this useful resource.

The 2022 Plan also includes new and expanded water conservation and efficiency action items, a residential customer leak reduction rebate program, and amended water efficiency plumbing code requirements for the District. Revised indoor and outdoor efficiency codes, effective January 2024, will require all newly constructed and renovated residential and multi-family properties in the District to install readily available water-efficient fixtures with a projected savings of up to 23,000 gallons per home annually. New local drought response, a water waste ordinance/policy, and a revised water loss control and reduction action plan will also help improve our region’s water stewardship.

Our steadfast commitment to water conservation received national recognition once again in October with a 2022 WaterSense® Sustained Excellence Award from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for our innovative programming promoting high efficiency standards. Notably this year, staff collaborated with Georgia Public Broadcasting, TelevisaUnivision and Dad’s Garage Theatre on new ways to engage residents on the value of water in our daily lives. This is the fifth consecutive year the District has received the EPA’s top WaterSense® award.

We’re pleased to offer several new resources focused on the protection of our watersheds and managing stormwater runoff in our region. The 2022 Plan includes a first-of-its-kind Stormwater Forecast using an innovative water quantity-based model. The Forecast represents an accounting of the runoff volume from developed lands and helps provide additional information for improved decision-making at both the site and basin-scale.

Newly developed River Basin Profiles offer a dynamic tool providing a high-level perspective on watershed conditions for each of the District’s nine major river basins to help reinforce the one-water management approach and guide local planning.

I want to thank the members of the District’s Governing Board, Technical Coordinating Committee, and Basin Advisory Councils for providing significant contributions in the direction and development of the final 2022 Plan. I’m proud of our work together, grateful for another year serving our region, and excited to build on our success in 2023.



Chairman Glenn Page

Cover photo credit: Janet Newton, Douglasville, GA



Stakeholder Engagement: A Critical Part of Our Planning Work

While the District uses science, data, and good stewardship to guide planning for regional water management, it relies on the volunteers and water professionals that make up our core stakeholder groups for critical input and feedback. These three groups – the Governing Board, the Technical Coordinating Committee, and the Basin Advisory Councils – work together to create, analyze, and approve plan action items throughout the planning process. The Governing Board sets directives during the planning process; the Technical Coordinating Committee, made up of water professionals from the District’s utilities and water authorities, provide feedback and expertise on plan requirements; and the Basin Advisory Councils provide public stakeholder input from a diversity of perspectives from across the region. As the District worked toward completing the update of the plan this year, continued collaboration with stakeholders has been important to creating data-driven and implementable action items that address regional issues, including the Drought Response Guide, the new Stormwater Forecast, and plumbing code updates.

In 2022, the District’s stakeholder groups were able to shift to a hybrid meeting style, incorporating in-person meetings with a virtual component. Meeting topics included discussing Plan action items and sharing examples of outstanding programs and projects being implemented by the District’s partner utilities and local governments. Additionally, the 267-member Basin Advisory Councils were able to reintroduce treatment facility and dam tours after a long hiatus due to the pandemic.

2022 Update of the Water Resources Management Plan

In December 2022, the Metro Water District Governing Board approved the 2022 Water Resources Management Plan (Plan) that builds on our past successes while advancing new opportunities for water resources conservation and protection through technology and targeted policies. This is the third update to the original Plan adopted in 2003. The 2022 Plan is a culmination of over two and a half years of data gathering and analysis, policy discussions, and feedback on draft materials. The District's Governing Board, Technical Coordinating Committee, and Basin Advisory Councils all played a key role in the direction and development of the final 2022 Plan.

Key highlights of the 2022 Plan include the region's first Stormwater Forecast as well as newly developed forecast categories for water plant residuals and wastewater plant biosolids to complement the updated water and wastewater demand forecasts. Additionally, the 2022 Plan includes new or expanded water conservation and efficiency action items while eliminating out of date action items and those that are now duplicative of state or federal requirements. New action items include a residential customer leak reduction program, a Metro Water District water efficiency code requirement, a local drought response and water waste ordinance/policy, and a revised water loss control and reduction action item.

Drought Planning Guide Assists Utilities in Our Region with Drought Preparedness

The new Drought Planning Guide serves as a "one-stop-shop" to assist water providers in the metro Atlanta region as they prepare for and respond to the next drought pursuant to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division's (GA EPD) Drought Rule. In metro Atlanta, it is not a matter of "if" drought will occur, but "when." As a result, the guide encourages utilities to plan proactively before the next drought occurs so they can be ready to implement measures to mitigate the effects of drought. Local water providers retain flexibility in implementing the GA EPD Drought Rule, however the guide includes recommendations on coordinated and proven approaches to implementing drought-mitigating measures from utilities in our region and across the United States. Additionally, this comprehensive guide is intended to help local water providers meet various legal requirements under state and federal law. By providing information in a single document, the guide is intended to be a time-saving resource for utilities and promote a coordinated, effective, and regionally consistent approach to drought response. Topics which utilities may find particularly helpful include local pre-drought planning, drought contingency plans, and variance requests.

Photo credit: Jeff Shell

The First-Of-Its-Kind Stormwater Forecast to Identify New Stormwater Management Solutions and Prepare the District for the Future

Since 2001, the District has coordinated strategies to protect watershed conditions and manage stormwater for the 15 counties and 95 cities of the metro Atlanta region in coordination with existing state regulatory frameworks. Earlier versions of the District's Water Resources Management Plan described watershed and stormwater management in terms of land development, imperviousness, water quality impairment, and population growth. These factors should be considered as part of a robust watershed and stormwater management program. Despite many efforts, urban stormwater runoff remains a leading cause of nonpoint source pollution and flooding across the District.

In the 2022 Plan update, the District created a new tool called the Stormwater Forecast, which is a first-of-its-kind water quantity-based indicator. The Forecast is an estimate of the total potential runoff volume from development that can be managed by stormwater control measures, e.g., detention ponds, if current post-construction stormwater management standards were fully in place. It is calculated at the basin-scale using four different development scenarios (predevelopment, 2019 current, 2030 future and 2040 future).

The goals of the Forecast were to 1) aid in improved decision making at both the site-scale and basin-scale, 2) support a better understanding of overall challenges and opportunities in the watershed, and 3) engage stakeholders in generating new solutions and policies that address ongoing stormwater management challenges. The Forecast is intended to complement and support local jurisdictions' implementation of existing water quality and flood reduction goals. District staff is providing technical assistance to a subset of District local governments to test the functionality of the Forecast. Continued testing under real-world scenarios will provide new insights into the functionality of this water quantity-based indicator to identify opportunities and constraints for stormwater management at the local level.

River Basin Profiles Go Digital

The River Basin Profiles (RBPs) are high-level summaries of watershed conditions and features within the District's nine Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC)-8 watersheds. These watersheds follow the major river systems that intersect with the 15 counties and 95 cities of the District. Information regarding physical and natural features, land use, impaired water bodies, management issues, and strategies to address those issues has been updated for each of the nine profiles included in Appendix A of the 2022 Plan. Traditionally, the intended audience for the RBPs has been District member local governments and utilities for the purposes of reinforcing the interconnectedness of the various water sectors (water supply, wastewater, and stormwater) and guiding local planning and management. However, this year, in addition to the written profiles found in Appendix A of the Plan, District staff have created interactive, web-based applications using ESRI's ArcGIS StoryMaps for each of the RBPs, thus broadening the potential audience and reach. The individual web-based profiles connect users to watersheds through narrative texts and associated maps and graphics. This new digital format offers a dynamic and engaging product that is easy to navigate.

View River Basin Profiles online here.



Education and Public Awareness

Education and public awareness are central components to the Metro Water District's planning efforts. To meet the goals of raising public awareness of the need to protect and conserve our water resources, the District continues to host engaging and interactive events and contests for the public and supports water providers and local governments with outstanding educational resources, program assistance, and engagement opportunities.

In 2022, the District worked closely with many regional and statewide partners to create new programming and events, including the continuation of the partnership with Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB). In 2022, the District partnered with GPB to create a video for "Camp GPB", which included activities and accompanying lesson plans about the water cycle, preventing stormwater pollution, and wastewater treatment. It has received over 1,700 views since it went live over the summer.

The District partnered with TelevisaUnivision on the High School Video Contest to help promote the contest within the region's Spanish-speaking community. TelevisaUnivision ran an advertisement about the contest on their network and has since interviewed members of District staff for a segment on their Contigo brand program that will feature information about water conservation and how to properly dispose of fats, oils, grease, and wipes.

To celebrate Imagine a Day Without Water in October, the District partnered with Dad's Garage Theatre in Atlanta to host an improvisational comedy show about water. The show was creative, fun, and engaging. The audience included around 90 individuals with varying levels of knowledge and understanding about our water resources. Comedy was proven to be a useful tool to introduce members of the community to important water topics.

At the WaterSmart Innovations Conference in October, the District received its fifth WaterSense® Sustained Excellence Award from the US EPA for the District's ongoing efforts to promote water conservation and efficiency in our region and state. This is the eighth consecutive year the EPA has recognized the District for promoting the WaterSense® brand and water efficiency.

Financials for 2022

The Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District operated on a calendar-year budget, with revenues coming from local government dues (\$1,208,186) and state funding from the Georgia General Assembly (\$250,000) to support annual program administration and the development of the 2022 Water Resources Management Plan Update.

Contract expenses for the Wet Weather Septic System Impact to Surface Water Quality Study have been reduced to reflect the anticipated shift of work performed in 2022 towards 2023. The District will continue to maintain a consistent dues rate of \$0.25 per capita for future years and fund the future work for the 2027 Water Resource Management Plan Update that will begin in 2025. The District strives to maintain a minimum fund balance of \$300,000 for operating contingencies.

	2022 Budget Approved June 9, 2021	2022 Budget Approved December 14, 2022
Beginning Fund Balance (Estimated)		\$1,004,894
Revenues		
State Funding (Appropriations)	\$250,000	\$250,000
State Funding (GEFA)	-	-
Source Water Assessment Plan Grant (GEFA/DNR)	-	-
Local Dues (2010 Census at \$0.25 per capita)	\$1,208,186	\$1,208,186
Interest Income	\$1,000	\$250
Misc. Fees	\$30,000	\$12,675
Total Revenues	\$1,489,186	\$1,471,111
Expenses by Type		
Chairman's Allowance	\$3,000	\$500
Salaries	\$535,253	\$535,253
Fringe Benefits	\$315,799	\$295,460
Overhead	\$352,335	\$320,655
Contracts	\$380,000	\$246,000
Septic Study – Wet Weather	\$200,000	\$65,000
Miscellaneous Operating	\$75,000	\$60,000
Public Awareness / Education	\$100,000	\$85,000
Total Expenses	\$1,961,387	\$1,607,868
Projected Ending Fund Balance		\$868,137

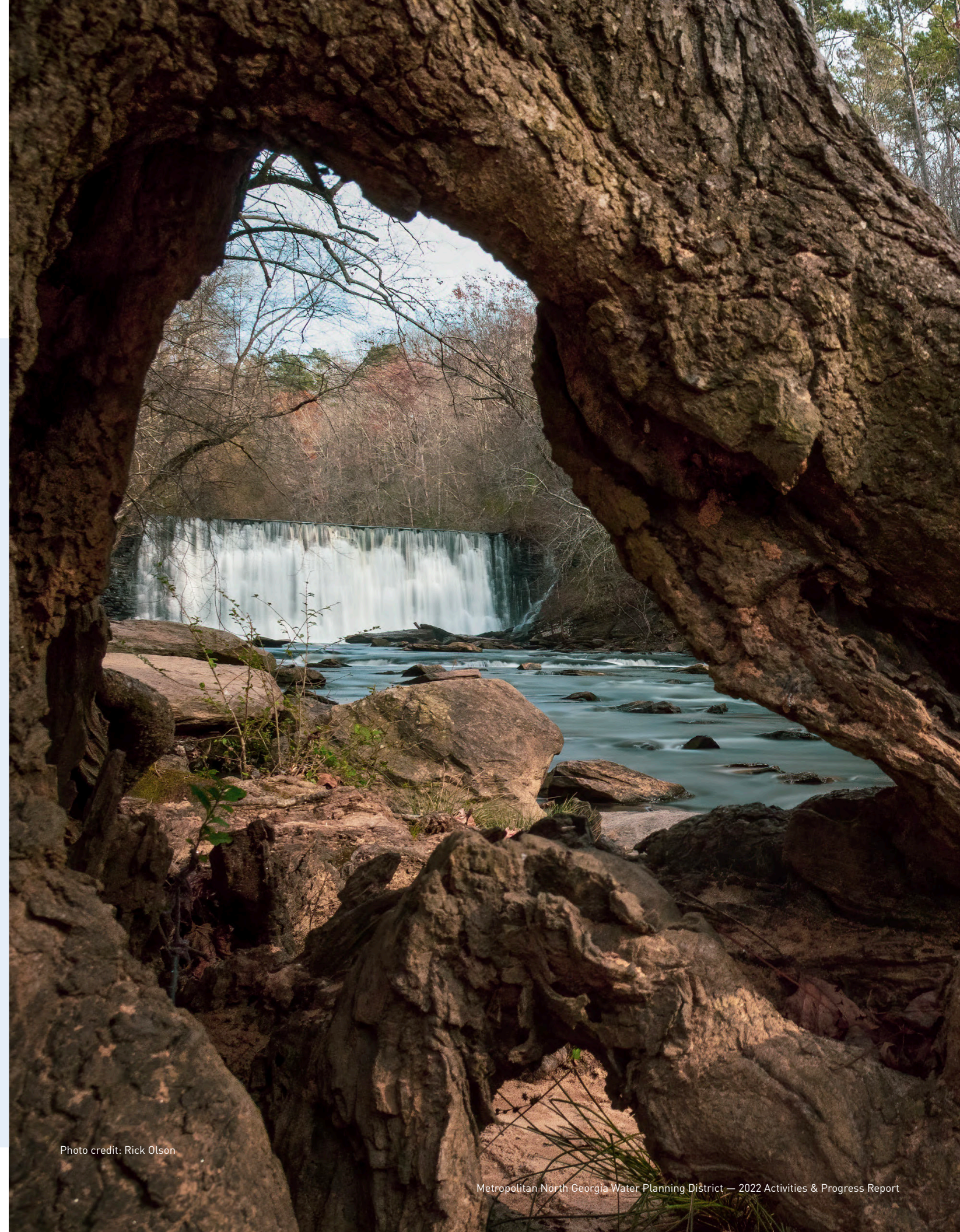


Photo credit: Rick Olson



Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District

The Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District is staffed by the Atlanta Regional Commission and manages a comprehensive, integrated plan for water supply and water conservation, wastewater, and watershed management in the 15-county metro Atlanta region.

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northgeorgiawater.org

Photo credit: Kellie Rauk