

Atlanta's Water: When it Rains, it Pours

According to Drought.gov, the Metro Atlanta region uses around 560 million gallons of water per day, with the average citizen using 50 gallons per day for uses ranging from hygiene and cleaning to waste and drinking water. Most of this water comes from surface water sources such as the Chattahoochee River, which itself accounts for 70% (300 million gallons) of Metro Atlanta's drinking water. This dependency on surface water sources makes Atlanta especially prone to droughts and flooding, and in face of a rapidly changing climate water conservation and resilience are more important than ever.

As stated earlier, Atlanta's water system and supply are dependent on natural freshwater sources like rivers and lakes. For instance, during 2007 and 2008 when Georgia endured one of its worst droughts in recent history, Lake Lanier, a major source of freshwater for Atlanta, declined to 15 feet below its average capacity. At the height of the drought, the Army Engineer Corps declared the lake only had about 3 months' worth of water left to provide. In response to the growing crisis, the Georgia government implemented both business and outdoor watering restrictions and schedules. During these few years, around 50% of Georgia endured D4 drought conditions, which are associated with extensive crop and pasture losses, shortages of water in reservoirs, rivers, and streams, and a general period of abnormal dryness for over a year.

In the wake of this disaster, Georgia realized the baleful effects an event such as a drought or even a flood could bring. If a major river or lake were to flood it could bring extensive detrimental effects on our water supply. As a result, Georgia developed one of the most thorough water conservation programs in the U.S. From 2006 to 2022 water consumption dropped by roughly 15% even whilst accompanied by a 6% rise in population. But more can be done to combat this pressing issue. One answer is increased water stewardship, which ensures the equitable and safe use of water within a

community. It can bolster the economy and create a more environmentally friendly and safe water program. In addition to those benefits, it can allow businesses to work with their communities to manage their water supply efficiently.

Although Georgia is much more conservative with water than it was many years ago, over 4 million Georgians suffer from some form of drought that impacts their access to clean water. But there are many ways to conserve water in your community, schools, or home. These can include doing simple things such as fixing water leaks as hastily as possible, minimizing the amount of time you water outdoor plants, or turning off the sink while you brush your teeth and wash your face. If more people turn these seemingly trivial things into habits, we can save millions of gallons of water. Water is an essential human right, so it only makes sense to create an accessible, equitable, and efficient water conservation program.