



**Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District  
Lanier Basin Advisory Council  
MEETING SUMMARY  
January 10, 2008**

The Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District Lanier Basin Advisory Council met on Thursday, January 10, 2008, at 1:00 p.m. at the Hall County Public Library in Gainesville, GA.

**Members Present**

Jim Hazelwood  
Darcie Holcomb  
Jackie Joseph  
Kevin McInturff  
Val Perry  
Wilton Rooks

**Welcome and Introductions**

Joy Hinkle of the Metro Water District staff welcomed the Council and initiated introductions. Members introduced themselves with name, organization and favorite water activity or resource within the Lanier/Chattahoochee basin. Activities mentioned included: boating, fly fishing, waterskiing, aesthetics, W. Fork Little River, paddling, Adopt-A-Lake, playing with grandchildren, swimming, tubing, just want it clean and full.

**Basin Profile Overview**

Kim Shorter of Metcalf & Eddy presented the draft Chattahoochee basin profile, which covered the following:

- 50% increase in population (almost 1 million in total population increase)
- 1,823 square miles
- Land Use will include revised future land use (2035)
- Increase in residential land use since 1999, medium and low density
- Currently show high increase in low density, but more likely to be in medium density
- Fecal Coliform listings likely from septic, agricultural sources, and sanitary sewer outfalls

- Discussion that biota listings are likely to increase dramatically as more monitoring is conducted
- Water withdrawals (not yet in the report to TCC for QA/QC)
- Wastewater treatment – areas of septic tank concentration in Chattahoochee Basin (draft not yet reported to TCC for QA/QC)
- Successes: City of Atlanta Clean Water Act, Georgia Power Heat Reduction, River Cleanups (including Shore Sweep and Super Sweep specific to Lake Lanier) , reuse to Lake Lanier (for wastewater plan)
- Challenges: fecal coliform bacteria, responsible new development, Lake Lanier water levels

## **Open Discussion**

Kim Shorter facilitated discussion on successes and challenges in the Lanier Basin that could be added to the draft basin profile. Council members provided the following feedback:

### **General**

- Lake Lanier residents are concerned that Senator Shelby of Alabama passed legislation allowing for no Federal dollars to be used for changes to the interim operating plan for Lake Lanier.
- Citizens believed that the 2030 land use numbers for commercial-industrial (9%) and medium residential (26%) are too low. Steve Haubner noted that these numbers are for the entire basin and may represent more of a balancing act between different regions in the basin.
- Concerned the Georgia EPD auditing does not have enough follow-up enforcement measures. Audits can be as long as five years apart if no water/wastewater changes or GEFA loans.
- The goal of this plan update will be doing a better job of linking land use with watershed quality and watershed health – development which does not adversely impact water quality or water quantity.
- Dawson County is proposing a lot of development along the shores of Lake Lanier, yet they are not located in the MNGWPD. Perhaps Dawson County should be added to the District.
- National success stories include metro Portland, Oregon, the Chesapeake Bay watershed, and San Francisco Bay. See if any of those success stories (Chesapeake Bay Flush Tax) can be applied in the MNGWPD.

### **Successes**

- The Lake Lanier Association has sponsored “shore sweep” which brings 1,000 people together every September to clean the lake. This year, with reduced lake levels, they are sponsoring “super sweep.”
- The Lake Lanier Association also sponsors Adopt-A-Lake which monitors water quality at over 30 sites.
- Elachee Nature Center and their education programs

## **Challenges**

- Inter-basin water transfers from the Chattahoochee Basin to the Ocmulgee Basin (DeKalb County) reduce the amount of water flowing into Apalachicola Bay and increases required releases from Lake Lanier.
- Concern with pharmaceutical levels in wastewater discharges – this will be part of the Wastewater Management Plan and is a concern among the District utilities.
- Lake Lanier is a huge economic engine for the basin. Low water levels are resulting in large economic losses.
- Water quality trading is a bad idea and should be called out as such in the report. The MNGWPD must be willing to take a strong position on this in the report.

## **Phosphorus and Septic System Discussion and Polling**

Ms. Shorter led a brief discussion about reducing phosphorus and septic systems issues. Council members provided the following comments:

### Phosphorus

- The participants voted on the most effective way to remove phosphorous. The first choice was homeowner fertilizer education programs followed by ordinances restricting phosphorous fertilizers, other methods, and stream buffer restoration programs.
- Education at large fertilizer suppliers (Pike's Nursery, Lowe's, Home Depot) was also encouraged.

### Septic Systems

- Weekend homes on small lots are now being used as full time homes with no room for an adequate drain field.
- Schools, churches, and large subdivisions are using cluster septic system. There is a great deal of concern about the long-term viability of these systems. These concerns will be addressed in the Wastewater Management Plan.
- Local construction inspections are the best way to make sure septic systems are not failing, followed by requiring a pump out of each system every 3-5 years.
- Some local counties have a good working relationship with Environmental Health and others don't.
- Septic systems are failing in some areas after 1 year because of poor construction practices.
- Septic system education and system mapping is important; many residents do not know whether they are on sewer or septic.

Ms. Shorter concluded the meeting by polling Council members using an automated response system. The BAC was asked to choose their preferred answer to the following (% response):

- What is the best method of reducing phosphorus contributions from fertilizer?
  - A) Homeowner fertilizer education programs (50%)
  - B) Stream buffer restoration programs
  - C) Ordinances restricting phosphorus fertilizers without supporting soil samples (33%)
  - D) Other (17%)
  
- What is the best program to improve septic system quality?
  - A) Increase minimum lot size to 1 acre (0%)
  - B) Local construction inspections (67%)
  - C) Require mandatory inspections/pump out certification every five years (33%)
  - D) Homeowner education on proper maintenance (0%)

Ms. Hinkle reviewed the plan update schedule and reminded Council members to check email and the Web site for meeting announcements. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.