

## **Alabama and Georgia Water Wars**

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Whether or not we have water should not be an option. People need water to live their everyday lives and cannot always share water to have enough to survive properly. Alabama and Georgia are engaged in a battle over water from two big river basins, the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) and Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa (ACT). Alabama wants to ensure a steady supply of water from the Chattahoochee River, which forms the border between Alabama and Georgia, and from Lake Allatoona and Weiss Lake, which sit near the two states' borders in the ACT basin. Florida wants to ensure an adequate flow to the Apalachicola River, formed by the confluence of the Flint and Chattahoochee. The Apalachicola basin is an area of great biodiversity, and Apalachicola Bay, where it meets the Gulf of Mexico, is home to a thriving oyster industry. Georgia's downstream farmers also want to ensure an adequate supply for irrigation, making this battle less between Georgia on one side and Florida and Alabama on the other than Georgia, Florida and Alabama versus metro Atlanta ("Chattahoochee Blues," 2010, p. 44). The water wars with Alabama and Georgia have to stop. There needs to be a solution to the water problem with these two states that will shape them into better places to live. There are many solutions to this problem. It is just a matter of deciding what to do to better the environment for people.

With the population growing, there needs to be an adequate water resource. Georgia is complaining that it doesn't have enough water for municipal and industrial use because it shares water supply. In the mid-1940s, Congress authorized the construction of the Buford Dam to create Lake Lanier, an immense reservoir divided among the five counties northeast of Atlanta ("Chattahoochee Blues," 2010, p. 44). The federal government built the Buford Dam across the Chattahoochee River by the Army Corps of Engineers. Atlanta paid nothing for the

construction of this dam. From Atlanta, Georgia, through Lake Lanier, the Chattahoochee River flows across the states of Alabama and Georgia. Lake Lanier's main purpose is for flood control, navigation, and electric power generation. At the Buford Dam, the electric power generation is sold to suppliers and resold to customers, which does not help the water flowing through Alabama and Georgia. Georgia filed a lawsuit against the Army Corps of Engineers, wanting them to increase the water supply to Georgia from Lake Lanier. Alabama filed a lawsuit stating that the Corps had failed to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, and they wanted to prohibit Georgia from withdrawing water from Lake Lanier until a comprehensive studies plan was completed. The Army Corps of Engineers believes the water supply is an "incidental benefit" flowing from Lake Lanier. The United States Appeals Court held that the dispute involved Georgia, Florida, and Alabama. The amount of water supply flowing from Lake Lanier affects these states because the water flows from Lake Lanier into the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River Basin. After many filings with the court, Alabama and Florida demonstrated they had a challenge on the issue. This has been an issue for about thirteen years. The water resource problem is very complex, and a decision has not been made as of yet. The case was vacated and remanded ("Alabama v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers," 2005).

Alabama has a statewide organization that helps to restore Alabama's rivers by creation of a water policy. Gil Rogers, Atlanta-based senior attorney with Southern Environmental Law Center, stated, "Other southeastern states such as Georgia and South Carolina have had water-management plans for years, and it was time Alabama had one as well" (McCreless, 2011).

There are many people who think a comprehensive water plan for Alabama will solve the problem of the water supply shortage. Something needs to be done about this water supply

shortage, and Congress has attached a date for the problem to be solved. In that “shock-and-awe” ruling in 2009, Senior U.S. District Judge Paul Magnuson set a doomsday clock ticking. If Georgia, Alabama and Florida cannot arrive at a water-sharing agreement that is approved by Congress by July 17, 2012, metro Atlanta can only take the same amount of water it received in the mid-1970s (Rankin, 2011).

In order to solve this problem, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida need to come to an agreement about the usage of water supply that is flowing through these states. A comprehensive water plan agreed upon by these states will help the environment with the growing population, municipal and industrial water use.

## References

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