

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

2 Martin Luther King Jr., Dr., Suite 1152 East Tower, Atlanta, Georgia 30334
Noel Holcomb, Commissioner
Carol A. Couch, Ph.D., Director
Environmental Protection Division
(404) 656-4713

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Water Conservation Urged As Drought Conditions Worsen

The Director of the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) today recognized the level of drought preparedness accomplished in north Georgia communities over the past year, but stressed the importance of practicing continued water conservation.

“Many local governments and water utilities are to be applauded for the work they have done to restore their water supplies and help their customers understand that conservation is the best way to battle drought,” said EPD Director Carol A. Couch. “While we have been able to allow limited outdoor water use in some areas, it should not be seen as a signal the drought is over.”

Director Couch and Dr. David Stooksbury, the state climatologist, held a joint news conference today to discuss water conservation and current drought conditions. “We are seeing drought conditions re-intensify in parts of the state, particularly in northeast Georgia,” said Dr. Stooksbury. “Barring significant rainfall from a tropical weather system, Georgians should expect a hot, dry summer.”

The EPD Director announced in May that local governments and water utilities that do not depend on Lake Lanier or on water releases directly from Buford Dam would be eligible to petition the state for relief from the outdoor water use restrictions. To date, 31 local governments and water utilities have been granted looser watering schedules, but only after showing evidence of sufficient water supply and effective water conservation. All have been advised that should conditions worsen, more stringent water use schedules will be implemented immediately.

“While many of the smaller lakes and reservoirs in north Georgia have recovered, Lake Lanier is still in bad shape and it’s a major source of water for about three million people, including much of metropolitan Atlanta,” said Director Couch. “I’m also grateful to these Georgians for practicing water conservation, but outdoor water use relief for them can’t be granted until Lake Lanier conditions improve.”

Since November of 2007, water use in the 55-county level four drought response area of north Georgia has declined an average of 12 percent compared to the same period of the previous year, with reductions of 19 and 28 percent in April and May respectively.

Water conservation information and outdoor water use tips are available at www.conservewatergeorgia.net. Dr. Stooksbury offers drought information at www.georgiadrought.org.

News Media Contact: Kevin Chambers (404) 651-7970

