

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

For Immediate Release

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Georgia EPD Releases Draft Plan To Manage Coastal Groundwater

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) has proposed a plan to help Georgia's coastal communities move toward sustainable management of their groundwater supply, while still meeting the water needs of the rapidly growing region.

The draft *Coastal Georgia Water and Wastewater Permitting Plan for Managing Saltwater Intrusion* is based on the scientific findings of a seven-year study of groundwater use in the 24-county coastal area. The study, called the Sound Science Initiative, addresses the concern that pumping of groundwater in the region is allowing saltwater to seep into the Floridan aquifer, the principal source of drinking water.

"This plan reflects the input EPD received from citizens during public meetings this past summer," said EPD Director Carol A. Couch. "I believe it strikes a positive balance between the desire to sustain growth in this popular region, and the need to maintain this important source of drinking water."

The draft plan addresses water management issues in three geographical areas:

- Chatham, Bryan, Liberty and portions of Effingham counties
- Glynn County
- The other 19 counties in the coastal region

In Chatham, Bryan, Liberty and portions of Effingham counties, the use of Floridan aquifer water will be restricted to total amounts already permitted for the area, with the goal of reducing water withdrawals through time. Under the proposed plan, requests from municipalities in Chatham and Effingham counties that seek additional water from the Floridan aquifer will be considered, with the condition that they honor existing agreements to also tie into Savannah's surface water pipelines.

In Glynn County, no more Upper Floridan wells will be allowed in a small area underlying Brunswick due to an existing saltwater plume in the aquifer.

In the remaining 19 counties, applications for additional upper Floridan water will be considered for all uses. However, in all 24 counties, permit holders will need to meet new requirements for water conservation and reuse.

Page Two

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A copy of the draft plan is available for downloading and printing on EPD's coastal water study Web site at <http://www.gadnr.org/cws/>.

The draft plan will be presented at public meetings. Each meeting will start with an "open house" informal discussion of the proposed plan followed by a question-and-answer session.

Dates, locations and times for the meetings are:

Tuesday, January 10, 2006, 6:00-8:30: Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum, 175 Bourne Ave., Pooler, GA 31322

Thursday, January 12, 2006, 6:00-8:30: Coastal Georgia Community College, 3700 Altama Ave., Brunswick, GA 31520

Comments regarding the management plan will be accepted through January 13, 2006. Comments may be submitted at the public meetings, e-mailed to coastalwater@gaepd.org or sent to: Coastal Georgia Saltwater Management Plan, 19 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Suite 400, Atlanta, GA 30334.

Contact: Kevin Chambers (404) 651-7970