

**SYNOPSIS OF PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO  
RULES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING CRITERIA  
CHAPTER 391-3-16**

The Proposed Amendments revise **Rule 391-3-16-.01 Criteria for Water Supply Watersheds**

**Purpose of Amendment:**

To clarify that local ordinances providing for the protection of the required stream buffers may also contain provisions for alternative buffer widths that specify a set of guidelines that determines the amount of buffer and requirements for other guidelines that must be followed.

**Main Features:**

- A recommendation that local governments may adopt the current buffer language and guidelines without additional requirements.
- A recommendation that if the local government may adopt an alternative approach that would allow development within the 150' buffer if the local government adopts a ordinance requiring that additional best management practices are followed.
- Buffer options are 50 feet, 75 feet, or 100 feet with varying best management practices required.
- A very strict provision for hardship buffer variance determinations that can be granted by the local government

**STATEMENT OF RATIONALE**

Chapter 391-3-16 Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria establish, pursuant to O.C.G.A. Section 12-2-8, a basis to be used by local governments to allow development of a water supply watershed without contaminating the water source to a point where it cannot be treated to meet drinking water standards. The criteria accomplish this by establishing buffer zones around streams and by specifying allowable impervious surface densities within watersheds. The criteria also include protection of water supply reservoirs by buffer zones and management practices to be established by reservoir owners and approved by the Department of Natural Resources.

These amendments clarify that local ordinances providing for the protection of the required stream buffers by also contain provisions for alternative buffer widths with requirements for other guidelines that must be followed.

Implementation of the proposed amendments is not expected to result in significant additional costs to the Department of Natural Resources.