

Georgia Water Fact Sheet



From the expanding Metro Atlanta suburbs to the world-class golf courses on the Atlantic Coast, Georgia's economy depends on a consistent supply of fresh water. Though Georgia has a humid climate and a statewide rainfall average of 51 inches per year, periodic water shortages have become a fact of life for the state's residents. Such shortages are triggered not only by occasional droughts, but also by uncertain aquifer supplies and a dwindling number of new surface water sources available to satisfy the state's growing population.



Population Pressure

While Georgia's population grew modestly during most of the 20th century, it has recently boomed. Georgia was the sixth fastest growing state in the nation in 2000, and by 2006 it had risen to fourth, growing by 1.5 million people in just six years. If current trends continue, Georgia will reach 14.4 million residents by 2030.

About half of the state's residents live in rapidly growing Metro Atlanta. The city has a small surface water supply relative to its size. As a result of this water supply and demand imbalance, Metro Atlanta is disproportionately affected by water shortages—a condition likely to worsen as Atlanta continues to grow.

Water Supply

Like other Southeastern states, Georgia relies heavily on groundwater to meet its population's needs. The state's southern half lies above the 100,000-square-mile Floridian aquifer—one of the world's most productive groundwater resources and a principal water supply for Georgia and other Southeastern states.

Even though Georgia's high average rainfall is usually enough to recharge its aquifers, the combination of recent droughts and increased demand have strained the state's groundwater resources. For example, unsustainable pumping rates have significantly lowered water pressure in the aquifer underneath Savannah and raised

concerns about saltwater intrusion into fresh drinking water. Surface water supply is largely limited by rainfall levels and Georgians' ability to efficiently capture and manage this important resource.

Solutions for the Future

Georgia has implemented a number of successful water-efficiency efforts to reduce demand on water sources, from the top levels of government to its neighborhoods.

The Georgia legislature recently passed Governor Sonny Perdue's plan to encourage the conservation of the state's water supply, including a mandate that state codes will require individual water metering in multi-unit buildings, as well as high-efficiency toilets and other plumbing fixtures in all new construction beginning in July 2012.

The state has also hosted a sales tax holiday for the past two years on WaterSense labeled products. For several days in October, Georgia residents pay no state sales tax when they purchase one of these water-saving devices.

Cobb County, which includes Marietta, was named a WaterSense Partner of the Year for 2009. Cobb County's toilet rebate program helped pay for more than 1,650 WaterSense labeled toilets and brought together Lowe's, The Home Depot, and local partners to make the most of the statewide sales tax holiday.

On the other side of the state in Chatham County, residents saved more than one million gallons of water in one year after replacing 600 water-wasting toilets with more efficient models.

At the local level, Atlanta's Brown Village saw water consumption drop by more than 6.1 million gallons per year after distributing efficient

toilets, low-flow showerheads, and water-saving tips to 340 residents.

If every household in Georgia replaced its showerheads with WaterSense labeled models, they would save nearly 9 billion gallons of water, more than \$50 million in water bills, and another \$120 million in energy costs for heating the water each year.

Continued efforts such as these will help Georgia get the most of its water supply and ensure sufficient water supply for generations to come. To learn more about EPA's WaterSense program, visit www.epa.gov/watersense.

Resource at Risk: Lake Lanier

In 2007, Georgia marked the 50-year anniversary of the construction of Lake Lanier, a reservoir on the Chattahoochee River situated northeast of Atlanta. Originally constructed for power production, flood control, and downstream navigation, the lake has become the sole source of water for most of Metro Atlanta, which presents a significant problem for the future security of Atlanta's water supply.

In late 2007, the lake dropped to its lowest point since construction, and persistent drought conditions in 2008 slowed its recovery. Due to extreme weather patterns Georgia experienced in 2009, Lake Lanier made a full recovery; however, given that a hot day can evaporate about 200 million gallons from the lake, and with the continued demand of Metro Atlanta's growing population, major water-efficiency measures are needed to avoid future droughts in the area.

