

House Bill 982

By: Representatives Buckner of the 130<sup>th</sup>, Thomas of the 100<sup>th</sup>, McKillip of the 115<sup>th</sup>, Nix of the 69<sup>th</sup>, Meadows of the 5<sup>th</sup>, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 5 of Title 12 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to water  
2 resources, so as to change certain provisions relating to permits for withdrawal, diversion,  
3 or impoundment of surface waters generally and for farm use; to change certain provisions  
4 relating to permits to withdraw, obtaining, or use of ground water; to change certain  
5 provisions relating to a policy statement for comprehensive state-wide water management  
6 planning, guiding principles, and requirements of plans; to provide an effective date; to  
7 repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

9 style="text-align:center">**SECTION 1.**

10 Chapter 5 of Title 12 of the Official Code of Georgia, relating to water resources, is amended  
11 by revising subsection (e) of Code Section 12-5-31, relating to permits for withdrawal,  
12 diversion, or impoundment of surface waters generally and for farm use, as follows:

13 "(e) Subject to subsection (g) of this Code section, the Board of Natural Resources shall  
14 by rule or regulation establish a reasonable system of classification for application in  
15 situations involving competing uses, existing or proposed, for a supply of available surface  
16 waters. Such classifications shall be based upon but not necessarily limited to the  
17 following factors:

- 18 (1) The number of persons using the particular water source and the object, extent, and  
19 necessity of their respective withdrawals, diversions, or impoundments;  
20 (2) The nature and size of the water source;  
21 (3) The physical and chemical nature of any impairment of the water source adversely  
22 affecting its availability or fitness for other water uses;  
23 (4) The probable severity and duration of such impairment under foreseeable conditions;  
24 (5) The injury to public health, safety, or welfare which would result if such impairment  
25 were not prevented or abated;

1 (6) The kinds of businesses or activities to which the various uses are related and the  
2 economic consequences;

3 (7) The importance and necessity of the uses, including farm uses, claimed by permit  
4 applicants and the extent of any injury or detriment caused or expected to be caused to  
5 other water uses;

6 (8) Diversion from or reduction of flows in other watercourses in accordance with any  
7 state-wide water plan provided by or pursuant to Article 8 of this chapter;

8 (9) The prior investments of any person in lands, and plans for the usage of water in  
9 connection with such lands which plans have been submitted to the director within a  
10 reasonable time after July 1, 1977, or, if for farm uses, after July 1, 1988; provided,  
11 however, that the granting of such permit shall not have unreasonably adverse effects  
12 upon other water uses in the area, including potential as well as present use; and

13 (10) The varying circumstances of each case."

## 14 SECTION 2.

15 Said chapter is further amended by revising subsection (n) of Code Section 12-5-31, relating  
16 to permits for withdrawal, diversion, or impoundment of surface waters generally and for  
17 farm use, as follows:

18 "(n) In the consideration of applications for permits which if granted would authorize the  
19 withdrawal and transfer of surface waters across natural basins, the director shall be bound  
20 by any factors related thereto pursuant to Article 8 of this chapter and the following  
21 requirements:

22 (1) The director shall give due consideration to competing existing uses and applications  
23 for permits which would not involve interbasin transfers of surface water and, subject to  
24 subsection (e) of this Code section, shall endeavor to allocate a reasonable supply of  
25 surface waters to such users and applicants; and

26 (2) The director shall provide a press release regarding the proposed issuance of all  
27 permits authorizing such interbasin transfer of surface waters to newspapers of general  
28 circulation in all areas of the state which would be affected by such issuance. The press  
29 release shall be provided at least seven days before the issuance of these permits. If the  
30 director should determine that sufficient public interest warrants a public hearing on the  
31 issuance of these permits, he or she shall cause such a hearing to be held somewhere in  
32 the area affected prior to the issuance of these permits."

## 33 SECTION 3.

34 Said chapter is further amended by revising subsection (d) of Code Section 12-5-96, relating  
35 to permits to withdraw, obtaining, or use of ground water, as follows:

1 "(d) In adopting any regulations pursuant to Code Section 12-5-95 and in considering  
 2 permit applications, revocations, or modifications under this Code section, the Board of  
 3 Natural Resources or the division shall consider:

- 4 (1) The number of persons using an aquifer and the object, extent, and necessity of their  
 5 respective withdrawals or uses;
- 6 (2) The nature and size of the aquifer;
- 7 (3) The physical and chemical nature of any impairment of the aquifer adversely  
 8 affecting its availability or fitness for other water uses, including public use;
- 9 (4) The probable severity and duration of such impairment under foreseeable conditions;
- 10 (5) The injury to public health, safety, or welfare which would result if such impairment  
 11 were not prevented or abated;
- 12 (6) The kinds of businesses or activities to which the various uses are related;
- 13 (7) The importance and necessity of the uses, including farm uses, claimed by permit  
 14 applicants under this Code section, or of the water uses of the area under Code  
 15 Section 12-5-95, and the extent of any injury or detriment caused or expected to be  
 16 caused to other water uses, including public use;
- 17 (8) Diversion from or reduction of flows in other watercourses or aquifers in accordance  
 18 with any state-wide water plan provided by or pursuant to Article 8 of this chapter;
- 19 (9) A regional water development conservation and sustainable use plan, where  
 20 applicable; and
- 21 (10) Any other relevant factors."

#### 22 SECTION 4.

23 Said chapter is further amended by adding new subsections in Code Section 12-5-522,  
 24 relating to a policy statement for comprehensive state-wide water management planning,  
 25 guiding principles, and requirements of plans, to read as follows:

26 "(c.1)(1) As used in this subsection, the term:

- 27 (A) 'Donor basin' means a river basin from which a withdrawal or diversion of water  
 28 occurs in an interbasin transfer.
- 29 (B) 'Interbasin transfer' means a withdrawal or diversion of water from one river basin  
 30 followed by use or return of some or all of that water to a different river basin.
- 31 (C) 'Intrabasin transfer' means a withdrawal or diversion of water from a point within  
 32 a subbasin within a river basin, followed by the use and discharge of some portion of  
 33 that water into a second subbasin within the same river basin.
- 34 (D) 'Raw water interbasin transfer' means an interbasin transfer of untreated water for  
 35 treatment, use, and disposal in the receiving basin.

1 (E) 'Receiving basin' means a river basin to which all or a portion of water from  
2 another river basin is diverted and returned in an interbasin transfer.

3 (2) Any state-wide water plan shall provide that, subject to the provisions of this chapter,  
4 interbasin transfers may be permitted to meet water needs in areas facing limitations on  
5 their water resources, as indicated when the forecasted consumption of water from a  
6 specific source approaches the defined consumptive use assessment, as long as the  
7 transfer does not unreasonably foreclose opportunities for water use in the donor basin;  
8 provided, however, that raw water interbasin transfers shall not be permitted.

9 (3) Any state-wide water plan shall provide that interbasin transfers of water that occur  
10 in connection with mining, conveying, processing, sale, or shipment of minerals or other  
11 products transported for further processing or sale shall be exempt from limitations on  
12 interbasin transfers provided by this subsection.

13 (4) Any state-wide water plan shall provide that interbasin transfers of raw water shall  
14 not be permitted until consumptive use assessments have been completed for the affected  
15 water sources and water development and conservation plans which identify the need for  
16 such transfers have been completed for the affected water planning regions.

17 (5) Any state-wide water plan shall provide that, in evaluating a permit application for  
18 a new interbasin transfer, the director shall review and consider:

19 (A) Donor basin considerations, including but not limited to:

20 (i) The quantity of the proposed withdrawal and the stream flow of the donor basin,  
21 with special consideration for dry years and low-flow conditions;

22 (ii) The current and reasonably foreseeable future water needs of the donor basin,  
23 with special consideration for dry years and low-flow conditions;

24 (iii) Protection of water quality in the donor basin, with special consideration for dry  
25 years and low-flow conditions;

26 (iv) Any offsetting increases in flow in the donor basin that may be arranged through  
27 permit conditions;

28 (v) The number of downstream river miles from which water will be diverted as a  
29 result of the transfer; and

30 (vi) The connection between surface water and ground water in the donor basin, and  
31 the effect of the proposed transfer on either or both;

32 (B) Receiving basin considerations, including but not limited to:

33 (i) Determination of whether or not the applicant's proposed use is reasonable,  
34 including consideration of whether the applicant has implemented water conservation  
35 practices and achieved reasonable water conservation goals;

36 (ii) Assessment of the waste-water treatment capacity of the receiving basin;

1 (iii) The supply of water presently available to the receiving basin as well as the  
 2 estimates of overall current water demand and the reasonable foreseeable future water  
 3 needs of the receiving basin;

4 (iv) The beneficial impact of any proposed transfer and the demonstrated capability  
 5 of the applicant to effectively implement its responsibilities under the requested  
 6 permit;

7 (v) The impact of the proposed transfer on water conservation;

8 (vi) The applicant's efforts to explore all reasonable options for use of reclaimed  
 9 water and recycling of available resources to meet the needs of the receiving basin;  
 10 and

11 (vii) Assessment of the adequacy of treatment capacity and current water quality  
 12 conditions; and

13 (C) Considerations affecting both basins, including but not limited to:

14 (i) The economic feasibility, cost effectiveness, and environmental effects of the  
 15 proposed transfer in relation to alternative sources of water supply;

16 (ii) The cumulative effects of the current and proposed interbasin transfers in each  
 17 basin;

18 (iii) The requirements of the state and federal agencies with authority related to water  
 19 resources;

20 (iv) The availability of water for responding to emergencies, including but not limited  
 21 to drought, in the donor basin and the receiving basin;

22 (v) The effects, whether beneficial or detrimental, on offstream and instream uses;

23 (vi) The quantity, quality, location, and timing of water returned to the donor basin,  
 24 receiving basin, and basins downstream;

25 (vii) Effects on interstate water use;

26 (viii) The cumulative effect on the donor basin and the receiving basin of any water  
 27 transfer or consumptive use that is authorized or forecasted; and

28 (ix) Such other factors as are reasonably necessary to carry out the purposes of this  
 29 chapter.

30 (c.2)(1) Any state-wide water plan shall provide that, subject to the provisions of this  
 31 chapter, intrabasin transfers may continue to be undertaken to meet such practical water  
 32 needs as are necessary for a water provider to meet the reasonable needs of users within  
 33 its service area. If a new intrabasin transfer is to cross the jurisdictional boundaries of  
 34 more than four counties, it shall not be permitted until consumptive use assessments have  
 35 been completed for the affected water sources and water development and conservation  
 36 plans which identify the need for such transfers have been completed for the affected  
 37 water planning regions.

1 (2) Any state-wide water plan shall provide that intrabasin transfers of water that occur  
2 in connection with mining, conveying, processing, sale, or shipment of minerals or other  
3 products transported for further processing or sale shall continue to be permitted."

4 **SECTION 5.**

5 This Act shall become effective upon its approval by the Governor or upon its becoming law  
6 without such approval.

7 **SECTION 6.**

8 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.