

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Review of Water Conservation Planning for the Atlanta, Georgia Region (August, 2006)

To better understand the Atlanta, Georgia region's potential to reduce water waste in order to maintain critical water flows for downstream ecosystems, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection asked the **Pacific Institute** to review the region's water conservation plans, including potential water conservation and efficiency efforts, along with their projected future demand.

Our analysis reveals that the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District's Water Supply and Water Conservation Plan may significantly overestimate regional demand for water in 2030 and underestimate the potential for cost-effective demand management. A straightforward reexamination of conservation scenarios, using more plausible population estimates and the cost-effective conservation efforts described in the Plan as Package C, produces a 2030 demand for water that remains below the level of existing supplies. Further, more efficiency improvements, recycling, and reuse can be expanded beyond projected levels.

Key Findings

Analysis inadequate in projecting demand

Future water demand is dependent on the population to be served. When estimating future water demand, the plan adopts a high-growth scenario that is significantly higher than other growth projections for the area. This overestimated population projection suggests the District's 2030 water demand is overestimated as well.

Current conservation programs leave significant untapped water savings

While some effort has been made to improve conservation efforts, many cost-effective efficiency measures remain to be considered. The implementation of adopted conservation measures remains weak; half of the local water districts lack conservation programs all together. This reveals that there still remains a huge potential for significant water-savings.

Analysis underestimates conservation potential

Many proven, cost-effective efficiency measures were not considered in the creation of possible conservation programs for the Atlanta region. The programs considered by the plan fall short of efficiency benchmark guidelines. Other conservation assessments suggest that the region could save significantly more water beyond what is provided by the adopted program. In addition, even more savings can be realized by incorporating the full benefits of water recycling and reuse.

Analysis underestimates economic value of conservation

The economic viability of prospective efficiency measures are analyzed from the utility's perspective which ignores the large savings the customer and community can receive through lower water, energy, and wastewater bills. This misses important cost savings that make many efficiency measures extremely cost-effective.

Conclusion

The Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District's planning report fails to adequately estimate future water demand and underestimates the potential for cost-effective conservation and efficiency improvements.

To download the Pacific Institute's full 46-page analysis, go to <http://www.pacinst.org/reports/atlanta/>



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