



Building Support without Building Consensus

Georgia's Water Planning Process



2004 Comprehensive Statewide Water Management Planning Act

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

SECTION 1. The General Assembly finds and declares that:

- A comprehensive state-wide water management plan for this state is needed and should be developed by the Environmental Protection Division of the Department of Natural Resources;
- Such plan should support a structured, yet flexible, approach to regional water planning and provide guidance and incentives for regional and local water planning efforts; and
- Regional water planning efforts of the Environmental Protection Division should be coordinated with and not supplant the existing efforts of all state agencies.



Guiding Principles

The Comprehensive State-wide Water Management Planning Act identifies nine principles to guide the water planning process:

- 1) Manage water to protect public health, safety and welfare.
- 2) Manage water in a sustainable manner.
- 3) Recognize citizens' stewardship responsibility to conserve and protect water resources.
- 4) Recognize that the economy and the environment are interconnected.
- 5) Recognize the interrelationships of surface and ground water, water quality and water quantity, and the need for reasonable and efficient use.
- 6) Base decisions on sound scientific and economic knowledge and recognize that economic prosperity and environmental quality are interdependent.
- 7) Encourage local and regional innovation, implementation, adaptability, and responsibility.
- 8) Promote meaningful public participation.
- 9) Periodically revise the management plan to reflect new knowledge and insights.

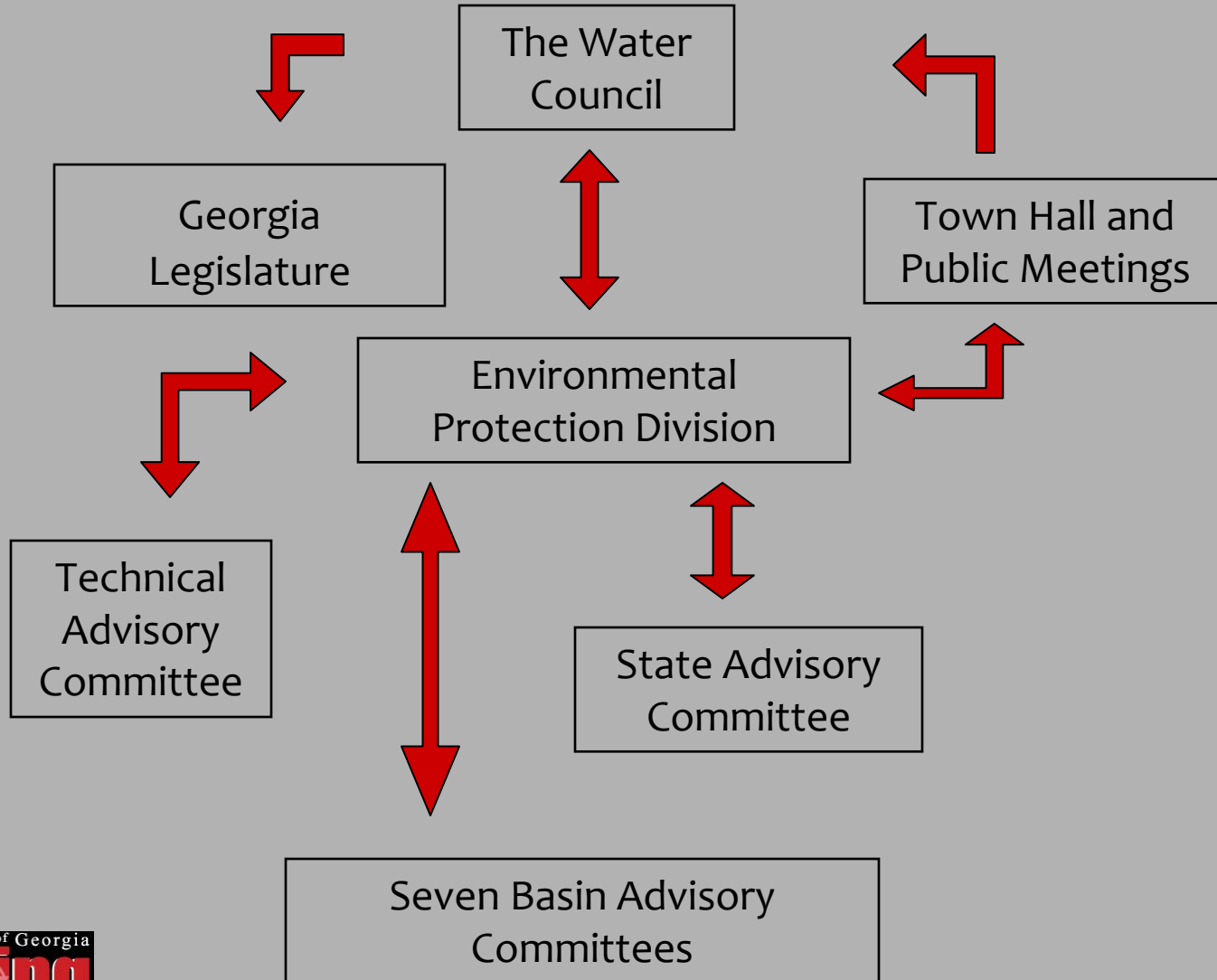


A Vision for Georgia's Water Management

Georgia manages water resources in a sustainable manner to support the state's economy, to protect public health and natural systems, and to enhance the quality of life for all citizens.



Water Planning Structure



The Water Council

- Ensure coordination, cooperation and communication among state agencies and their water-related efforts in the development of a comprehensive statewide water management plan
- Provide input to the Environmental Protection Division (EPD) of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources concerning development of the plan
- Review, modify if necessary, and approve the final draft of the proposed plan
- Recommend such proposed plan for consideration by the General Assembly



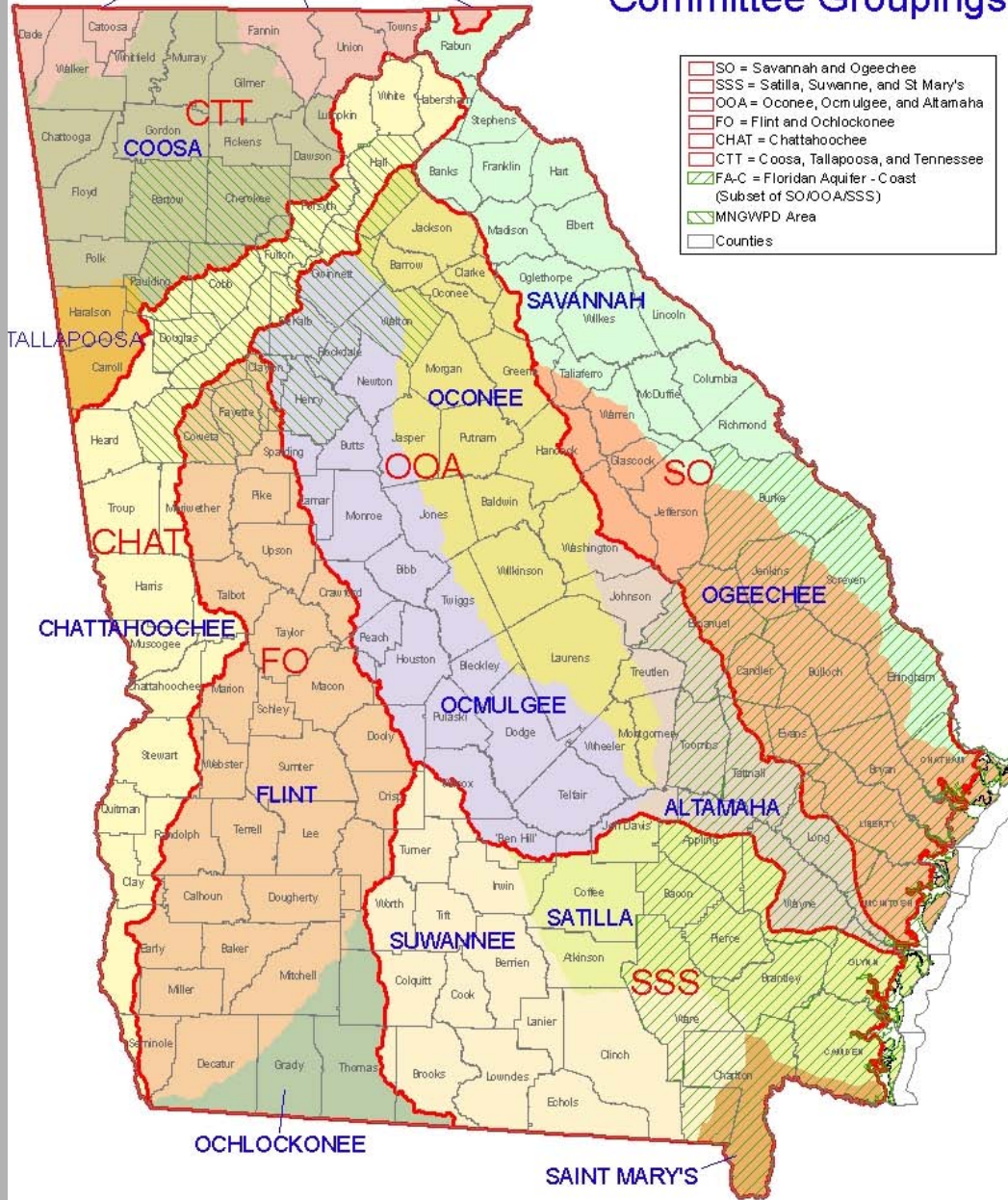
Advisory Committees

- Basin Advisory Committee:
 - Seven committees with 187 members, 6 meetings each
- Technical Advisory Committee:
 - Four committees, 45 members, 10 meetings
- State Advisory Committee:
 - One committee, 32 members, 8 meetings



TENNESSEE

Basin Advisory Committee Groupings



Bringing People to the Table

- Basin Advisory Committee membership:
 - nominations were sought from organizations around the state, from Farm Bureau to the Georgia Municipal Association to the Sierra Club
- Charge to Committees:
 - provide insight and input, from a regional perspective, on the four management objectives and the proposed guidance for sub-state planning; consensus is not the goal



Management Objectives

- Minimize Withdrawals:
 - conservation, reuse, and efficiency
- Maximize Returns:
 - interbasin transfers, LAS, and septic systems
- Water Quantity:
 - instream and offstream needs, storage
- Water Quality:
 - wastewater discharges, reduce runoff



Post-Process BAC Survey

- **66%** of respondents were mostly or very satisfied with the process
- **92%** of respondents reported that the membership on their BAC reflected the diversity of their region
- **88%** agreed or mostly agreed that meetings were conducive to open and honest communication
- **60%** felt the final management plan was responsive to BAC comments and opinions



Town Hall and Public Meetings

- Town Hall Meetings:
 - 3 rounds, 22 meetings, over 2,700 attendees
- Public Meetings:
 - 2 rounds, 18 meetings, over 1,000 attendees
- Web-based Review and Comment:
 - approximately 600 comments via interactive website and 400 comment letters via mail



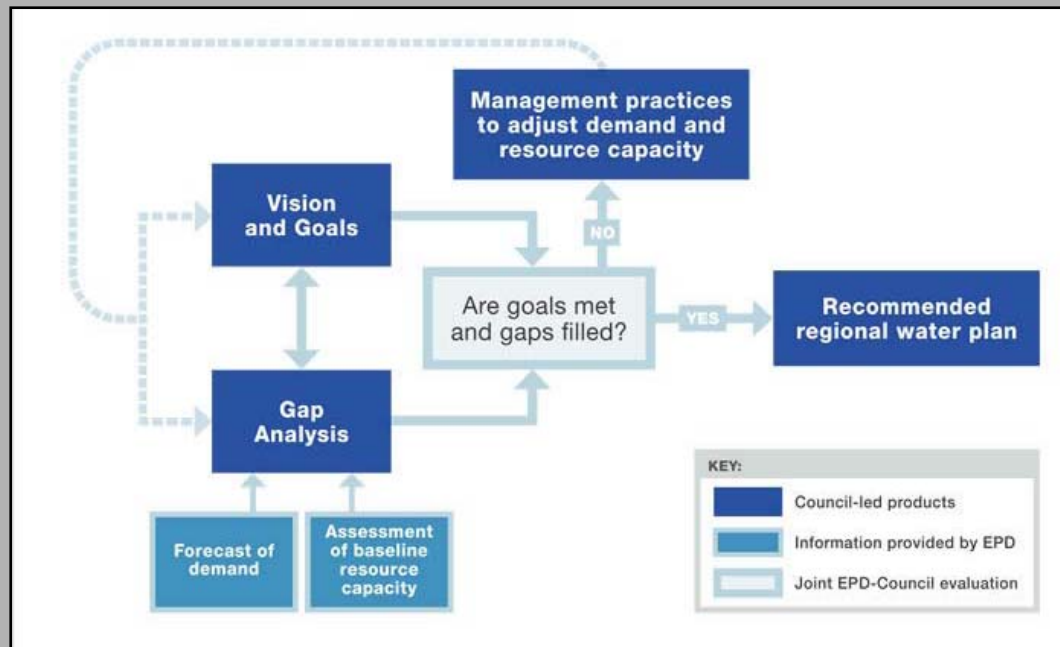
Why in the World Did this Work?

- There were constant feedback loops.
- Everyone that wanted to have a say got the opportunity.
- No single entity dominated the process.
- Access to technical information from experts in the field.
- Highly professional facilitators, from the outside.
- State investment in the process.
- We listened.



Where Are We Now?

Ten water planning councils were created and charged with proposing Water Development and Conservation Plans by June 2011.



Is Public Input in Environmental Policy Reform a Good Thing or Does it Just Slow Us Down?

