

## **Georgia SWPBA Newsletter 2011:**

### Georgia State-wide Water Plan Update

In 2008, Georgia passed the Georgia Comprehensive State-wide Water Management Plan, which set up 10 planning councils (in addition to the existing North Metro District in Metro Atlanta) that were charged with developing water plans for their regions. Using data from assessments of Georgia's water resources, which included surface water availability, groundwater availability, and surface water quality along with forecasts of future water needs (municipal, industrial, agriculture, and thermoelectric water use), Councils evaluated whether gaps were expected in the capability of Georgia's water resources to meet the forecasted needs. Using this information, paired with the Council's vision and goals, each Council developed recommended regional water plans. These plans are currently available for public comment at the website [www.georgiawaterplanning.org](http://www.georgiawaterplanning.org). Upon completion of the public comment period, the Director of the Georgia Environmental Protection Division will either adopt the plans, return them to the Council for revision, or adopt the plan with conditions.

### Monitoring

The Watershed Planning and Monitoring Program (WPMP) is in its second year of state-wide monitoring, moving away from the old Basin Rotation Plan. In 2011, the WPMP monitoring staff are collecting monthly data at 186 stream, 54 lake, and 8 estuarine sites. This includes the addition of the TVA lakes in north Georgia and three routine monitoring locations along Georgia's coast from 2010. It is anticipated that by 2012 the WPMP will be able to monitor all of Georgia's major lakes and sounds monthly each year. The monitoring staff are also currently conducting periphyton, zooplankton, and macroinvertebrate collections around the state. This information is also being used in the development of nutrient criteria for streams, lakes, and coastal areas in Georgia.

### Wetlands

In April 2011, a new Wetlands Management Unit was formed within the Watershed Planning and Monitoring Program (WPMP). Jennifer Welte joins Keith Parsons and Dale Caldwell in the Wetlands Management Unit, which is responsible for reviewing and issuing all individual and general CWA Section 401 water quality certifications within Georgia. The unit also participates with the Corps and other state/federal partners in the Interagency Review Team, the group responsible for overseeing CWA Section 404 permit reviews and mitigation banking requirements. The Wetlands Management Unit will be working with WPMP monitoring staff on

Georgia EPD's wetland monitoring and assessment efforts, with the long-term goal of developing wetland-specific water quality standards for Georgia. EPD is currently conducting National Wetlands Condition Assessment monitoring work throughout summer 2011, and will begin its first year of a multi-year ecoregional wetland monitoring and assessment effort in late summer 2011.

#### 305(b)/303(d)

Georgia's 2010 305(b)/303(d) Integrated Report was approved by U.S. EPA on November 10, 2010. GA EPD is already hard at work on developing its 2012 305(b)/303(d) Integrated Report. Data to be used in assessing the State's waters is to be submitted by June 30, 2011. One challenge for this listing cycle is that GA EPD is planning to change about a quarter of our Reach IDs (Assessment Units). Georgia Reach IDs are based on the HUC 10 in which the assessed water is located. The HUCs in Georgia have been revised recently and approximately 500 of our assessed reaches are now in new HUC10s.