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### *Section I*

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# Introduction

## **What Is the Purpose of This Plan?**

This document presents Georgia's river basin management plan for the Suwannee River, which is being produced as a part of Georgia's River Basin Management Planning (RBMP) approach. The purpose of this plan is to provide relevant information on the Suwannee River basin characteristics, describe the status of water quality and quantity in the Suwannee River basin, identify present and future water resource demands, present and facilitate the implementation of water protection efforts, and enhance stakeholder understanding and involvement in basin planning.

This plan has been produced by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Environmental Protection Division (EPD), based on data and information gathered by EPD, other state and federal agencies, universities, utilities, consultants, and environmental groups. A basin team made up of representatives from the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission (GSWCC), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Georgia Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Resources Division (WRD), Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC), and EPD's Water Resources Branch, Water Protection Branch, and Geologic Survey Branch compiled the information to generate the plan. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the EPD Geologic Survey Branch created the majority of the figures in this report using geographic information system technologies.

## **River Basin Management Planning**

RBMP is designed to coordinate management of water quantity and quality within river basins by integrating activities across regulatory and non-regulatory programs. The

RBMP approach provides the framework for identifying, assessing, and prioritizing water resources issues, developing management strategies, and providing opportunities for targeted, cooperative actions to reduce pollution, enhance aquatic habitat, and provide a dependable water supply. RBMP includes opportunities for stakeholders in the State's river basins to participate in developing and implementing river basin management plans. These plans will benefit from the collective experience and combined resources of a variety of stakeholders.

A separate document is available from Georgia EPD that describes the RBMP approach in greater detail.

## **Initial Efforts for the Suwannee River Basin**

Begun in 1993, RBMP is a new approach to the management of Georgia's water resources. This is the first river basin management plan produced under RBMP for the Suwannee River (Figure 1-1). Under the RBMP approach, the Suwannee River plan will be updated every five years. During the first iteration of RBMP in Georgia, much effort and resources are being dedicated to making programmatic changes, building the infrastructure of RBMP, cataloging current water management activities and beginning to coordinate with the many agencies, organizations, and individuals that have a stake in river basin management. As a result, some portions of the RBMP cycle have had to be condensed during this first iteration; in particular, it has not been possible to spend as much effort on developing management strategies as is planned for future iterations. Future iterations of the basin planning cycle will provide a better opportunity for developing new, innovative, and cost-effective strategies for managing water quality and quantity.

## **What's Inside?**

This plan is organized into the following sections:

### **Executive Summary**

The executive summary provides a broad perspective on the condition of the basin and the management strategies recommended to protect and enhance the Suwannee River basin's water resources.

### **1.0 Introduction**

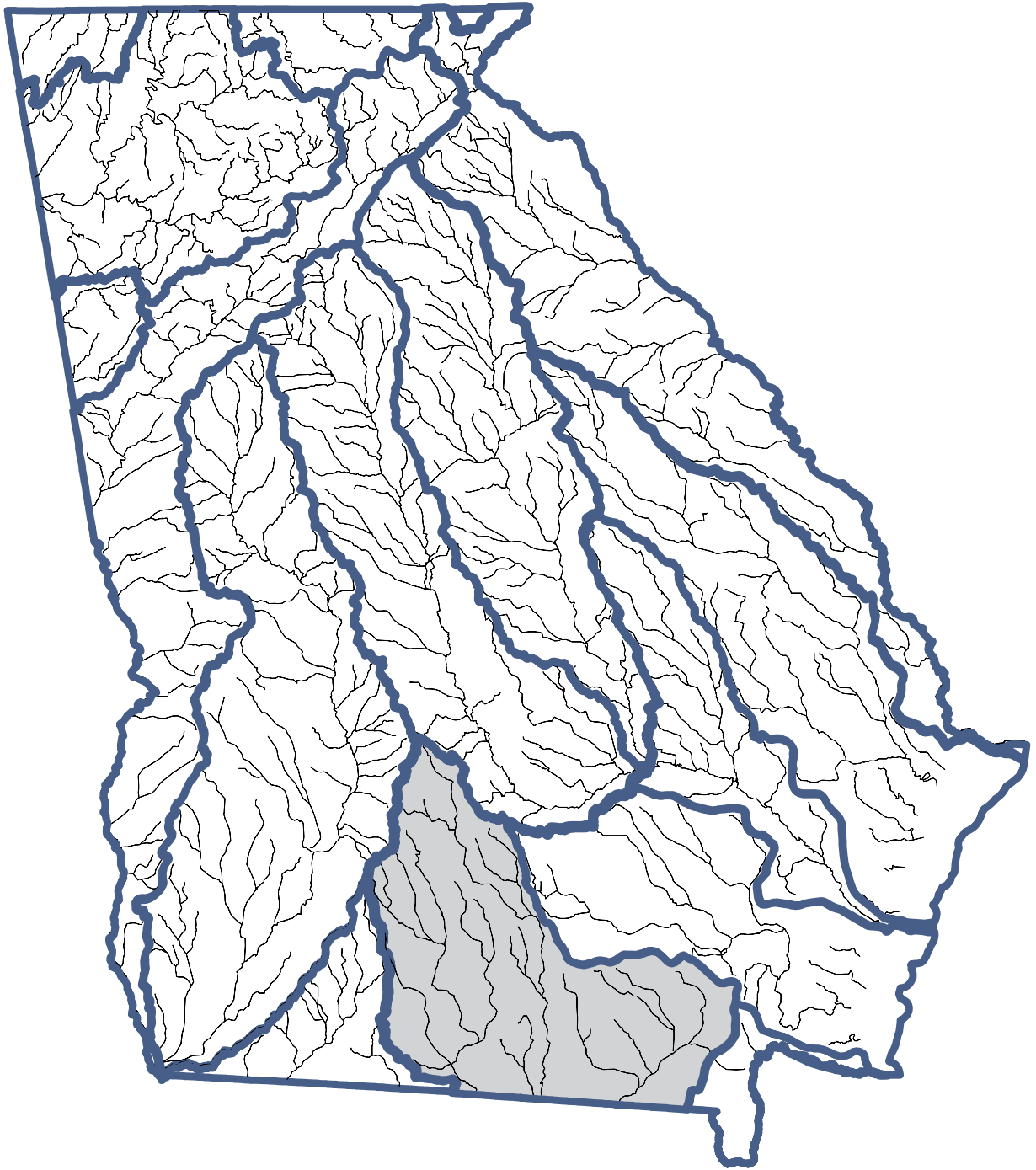
The introduction provides a brief description of Georgia's River Basin Management Planning approach, the planning cycle for the Suwannee River basin, opportunities for stakeholder involvement, and a description on how to use this document.

### **2.0 River Basin Characteristics**

This chapter provides a description of the basin and its important characteristics, including boundaries, climate, physiography and geology, geochemistry, soils, surface water resources, ground water resources, biological resources, population and land use, local government and jurisdictions, and water use classifications.

### **3.0 Water Quantity**

This chapter describes current surface and ground water availability, as well as forecasts for future demand. This chapter also includes sections on historic, present and possible proposed permitting activities pertaining to water availability.



**Figure I-I. The Suwannee River Basin**

## **4.0 Environmental Stressors**

This chapter describes the major stressors in the basin that may impair water or habitat quality. The stressors are divided into point sources (i.e., NPDES permitted discharges) and nonpoint sources.

## **5.0 Assessment**

This chapter provides an assessment of water quality and quantity in the streams, lakes, estuaries, and groundwater along with an assessment of the basin's biological integrity. The data sources and analysis techniques for these assessments are also discussed.

## **6.0 Concerns and Priority Issues**

This chapter summarizes and prioritizes the issues of concern that were identified through the assessment in Chapter 5.

## **7.0 Implementation Strategies**

This chapter presents strategies for addressing the issues of concern in the order that they appear on the priority list in Chapter 6 with a description of each issue, goals and objectives of management, overview of alternatives considered, and descriptions of recommended options for implementation.

## **8.0 Future Issues and Challenges**

This chapter discusses long-range goals to set the stage for further improvements in managing water resources and water quality. Due to limited resources (data, time, funding, etc.), some issues will be addressed in future iterations of each basin planning cycle.

## **Appendices**

The appendices contain technical information for those interested in specific details involved in the planning process.

## **How Do I Use This Plan?**

This river basin plan will serve as the road map for managing the water resources in the Suwannee River basin. It contains useful information on the health of the Suwannee River basin and recommended strategies to protect the basin now and in the future. The document can be used as a reference tool for watershed conditions in the basin, as well as a planning guide for implementing key guide actions throughout the basin cycle.

Chapter 7 contains the key management strategies that have been identified to address the priority issues and concerns in the basin. The earlier chapters show the reader how the issues were identified and where the specific stressors in the basin occur. Each chapter in this river basin plan builds upon the previous ones. For example, the recommended management strategies in Chapter 7 were formulated based on the priority concerns identified in Chapter 6. Similarly, the priority issues in Chapter 6 were derived as a result of the assessment in Chapter 5.

## **Links to Other Chapters**

Because issues are discussed across several chapters, an explanatory paragraph at the beginning of chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 will alert the reader that an issue may be discussed

elsewhere. For example, Chapter 4 discusses stressors to the water body from various point and nonpoint sources. Chapter 5 provides an assessment summary of water quality and water quantity based on the sources of environmental stressors. Next, Chapter 6 combines the assessment information from Chapter five to identify priority issues for the development of management strategies. Finally, Chapter 7 provides general goals and strategies to address the most significant existing and future water quality and quantity issues within the Suwannee basin.

## What Is the Schedule of Activities for the Suwannee River Basin?

The schedules of activities for the first two Suwannee River basin cycles, i.e., 1997-2002 and 2002-2007, are provided in Figures 1-2 and 1-3.

Step	Action	Months	Year	
1. Organize Basin Team		Jan-Mar	1997	← Stakeholder Meetings
2. Review Basin Planning Goals and Objectives		Apr-Jun		
3. Compile and Review Preliminary Information/Data		Jul-Sep		
4. Develop Strategic Information Collection Plan		Oct-Dec		
5a. Implement Monitoring Plan		Jan-Mar	1998	
5b. Compile Detailed Information/Data		Apr-Jun		
		Jul-Sep		
		Oct-Dec		
		Jan-Mar	1999	← Stakeholder Meetings
6. Analyze and Evaluate Detailed Information		Apr-Jun		
		Jul-Sep		
		Oct-Dec		
		Jan-Mar	2000	
7. Update Basin Assessment and Priority Issues List		Apr-Jun		
		Jul-Sep		
		Oct-Dec		
8. Develop Strategies for Priority Issues		Jan-Mar	2001	
		Apr-Jun		
9. Prepare/Update Draft River Basin Plan		Jul-Sep		
		Oct-Dec		
10. Agency and Public Review/Hearings		Jan-Mar	2002	← Stakeholder Meetings
11. Finalize River Basin Plan		Apr-Jun		
		Jul-Sep		
12. Implement River Basin Plan		Oct-Dec		

**Figure I-2. Suwannee River Basin Planning Schedule, 1<sup>st</sup> Cycle, 1997-2002**

Step	Action	Months	Year	
1. Organize Advisory Committee and Basin Team		Jan-Mar	2002	← Stakeholder Meetings
2. Review Basin Planning Goals and Objectives		Apr-Jun		
3a. Compile Preliminary Information/Data		Jul-Sep		
3b. Review Preliminary Information/Data		Oct-Dec		
4. Develop Strategic Information Collection Plan		Jan-Mar	2003	
5a. Implement Monitoring Plan		Apr-Jun		
5b. Compile Detailed Information/Data		Jul-Sep		
		Oct-Dec		
6. Analyze and Evaluate Detailed Information		Jan-Mar	2004	← Stakeholder Meetings
		Apr-Jun		
7. Update Basin Assessment and Priority Issues List		Jul-Sep		
8. Develop Strategies for Priority Issues		Oct-Dec		
		Jan-Mar	2005	
		Apr-Jun		
		Jul-Sep		
		Oct-Dec		
9. Prepare/Update Draft River Basin Plan		Jan-Mar	2006	← Stakeholder Meetings
10. Agency and Public Review/Hearings		Apr-Jun		
11. Finalize River Basin Plan		Jul-Sep		
12. Implement River Basin Plan		Oct-Dec		
		Jan-Mar	2007	← Stakeholder Meetings
		Apr-Jun		
		Jul-Sep		
		Oct-Dec		

**Figure I-3. Suwannee River Basin Planning Schedule, 2<sup>nd</sup> Cycle, 2002-2007**

## How Do Stakeholders Get Involved in the Basin Planning Process?

A major goal of RBMP is to involve interested citizens and organizations in plan development and implementation. This is intended to improve the identification and prioritization of water quality and quantity problems, maximize the efficient use of resources and expertise, create better and more cost-effective management strategies, and be responsive to stakeholder perceptions and needs. The opportunities for stakeholders to get involved in river basin management planning include the following:

### Support the Basin Team

Every basin planning cycle begins with the organization of the basin team. The Suwannee River basin team will began reorganizing itself in 2002.

Members of the basin team are from EPD programs and branches, and other interested governmental partners (e.g., the Department of Community Affairs, GFC, GSWCC, NRCS, and WRD). Emphasis is placed on technical knowledge, available resources, and potential implementation responsibilities. Other agencies may act as partners in the RBMP process, contributing resources and expertise, while not being directly involved in Basin Team activities. Support and provide input to the agency that represents your interests.

## Support the Local Advisory Committee

The local advisory committees provide advice and counsel to EPD during river basin management plan development, representing a forum for involving local stakeholders. These local advisory committees form a link between EPD and the regulated community and local watershed interests. The local advisory committee will be reorganized simultaneously with the basin teams.

The committees consist of local people representing a variety of stakeholder interests including local governments, agriculture, industry, forestry, environmental groups, land-owners, and citizens. Committee members and chairs are appointed by the EPD Director following a nomination process at the beginning (step 1) of each river basin planning cycle. The committees meet periodically during the planning cycle, and provide input to EPD in the creation of river basin management plans. Meetings are called at the discretion of the chairman of the local advisory committee, and all meetings are open to the public. Table 1-1 lists the members of the Suwannee River Basin Local Advisory Committee serving for the first planning cycle (through April 2002).

**Table 1-1. Suwannee River Basin Local Advisory Committee Members**

Mr. John H. Flythe, City Manager City of Adel P.O. Box 658 Adel, Georgia 31603-1125	Mr. Larry Hanson, City Manager City of Valdosta P.O. Box 1125 Valdosta, Georgia 31603-1125	Mr. Joe Hopkins, President Toledo Manufacturing Company P.O. Box 488 Falkston, Georgia 31537
Mr. Buck Wynn District Forester Georgia Forestry Commission 5003 Jacksonville Hwy. Waycross, Georgia 31503	Mr. Bill Oettmeier, Jr. Superior Pine Products P.O. Box 278 Fargo, Georgia 31603	Mr. Andy Slocum Union Camp Corporation P.O. Box 410 Waycross, Georgia 31502
Mr. Dan Bollinger, Sr., Executive Director Southwest Georgia RDC 30 W. Broad Street P.O. Box 346 Camilla, Georgia 31730	Dr. Brag Bergstrom Valdosta State University, Biology Dept. N. Patterson Street Valdosta, Georgia 31698	Mr. Bill Miles Worth County Farm Bureau 139 Whiddon Mill Road Poulan, Georgia 31781
Mr. Mack J. Bowen Route #4, Box #74 Quitman, Georgia 31643	Mr. Mark Fleetwood Colquitt County Farm Bureau 1899 Sylvester Highway Moultrie, Georgia 31768	Honorable Wink Strickland, Chairman Clinch County Commission 100 Court Square Homerville, Georgia 31634
Mr. Bob Kenny Jefferson Smurfit P.O. Box 1884 Waycross Georgia	Mr. Dave Mitchell Champion International P.O. Box 1884 Fargo, Georgia 31631	Mr. Ron Simpson Georgia Conservancy P.O. Box 5782 Albany, Georgia 31706
Mr. M. Skippy Reeves, Refuge Manager Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge Route 2, Box 3330 Folkston, Georgia 31537		

## **Participate in Stakeholder Forums**

While River Basin Advisory Committees operate at the major basin level, there is an opportunity under RBMP for more localized stakeholder forums to play an important role in the creation and implementation of water resources management strategies. Some strategies, such as best management practices (BMPs) to control pollutant runoff from urban, agricultural or forestry areas, are best managed at the city, county, or sub-watershed level. These local forums might already exist in the form of conservation districts or watershed associations, or may be created as an outgrowth of RBMP.

## **Attend a Stakeholder Meeting**

The RBMP approach includes regularly-scheduled stakeholder meetings, which provide the opportunity for the general public to learn about the status of water-related issues and management activities in their river basin, as well as contribute input that can influence basin management planning.

Figures 1-2 and 1-3 show the timing of stakeholder meetings that have been and will be held as part of the Suwannee basin RBMP cycles. EPD hosted the initial stakeholder meeting in Valdosta in early 1998 to invite and encourage stakeholder input early in the planning process for the Suwannee River basin. Focused monitoring in the Suwannee River basin was conducted in 1998. The data was assessed in the 1999 and waters not meeting water quality standards were public noticed in February, 2000. This work along with priority issues was presented to and discussed with the Local Advisory Committee in October, 2000. Draft strategies to address priority issues were presented to and discussed with the Local Advisory Committee in June, 2001. Due to the extended monitoring program and compressed schedules for problem listing and strategy development, the second stakeholder meeting was not held. A third group of stakeholder meetings—to give stakeholders the opportunity to review this river basin management plan—is planned for the March-April 2002. A final group of meetings in late 2002 will give stakeholders a chance to discuss implementation of management strategies. The next set of stakeholder meetings after the implementation phase of the first cycle is planned for 2002, providing stakeholders an opportunity to be involved in the planning for the next cycle of RBMP in the Suwannee basin. The dates of ensuing stakeholder meetings are indicated in Figure 1-3.

## **What's Next?**

This draft plan will be reviewed by governmental partners, the Suwannee River Basin Advisory Committee, and the public. A public meeting will be held to solicit comments and recommendations regarding the river basin management plan. Following the review, appropriate modifications will be made to the plan, and the final plan will be submitted for review and acceptance by the Board of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. After approval and an initial implementation period, partners will enter into the next 5-year cycle iteration to evaluate and update the plan as necessary.