



CHARLIE CRIST
GOVERNOR

October 24, 2007

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20502-0001

Dear Mr. President

Florida is strongly opposed to the request by the State of Georgia to suspend, indefinitely, the operating rules for the reservoirs on the Chattahoochee River. This request is improper as there exists no legal basis to support the action sought by Georgia. More importantly, if granted, this request would withhold water needed in Florida's Apalachicola River and would have serious, adverse effects on the River and Apalachicola Bay resulting in a profound disruption of the socioeconomic foundation in Florida's Panhandle region.

The Florida Panhandle is facing economic peril as a result of insufficient water flows. The Apalachicola River and Bay support a multi-million dollar commercial fishing industry. The total commercial fishing industry in the Apalachicola Bay is estimated to contribute \$134 million in economic output and an additional \$71 million in value added impacts. Recent data shows this industry is already being jeopardized as a result of reduced inflows. Further reductions would only hasten the decline of this important component of Florida's economy. The resulting loss of jobs will devastate a people who have relied on this industry for generations.

The current, and not unforeseen, crisis underscores the position Florida has taken from the beginning. Alabama, Georgia and Florida need to work together to adequately plan for and provide water for the people of Atlanta as well as the millions of residents in communities downstream. Florida, for example, has enacted comprehensive water supply legislation to ensure water is available to meet the needs of its communities, prior to development. The legislation provides the plan and funding for developing alternative water supplies such as desalinization, reuse, and conservation as well as adding new requirements for regional water supply plans to make them more useful to local governments and enhance consumptive use permitting. By ensuring water is available prior to development, Florida is, and has been, less vulnerable to periods of drought.

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Discussion of these issues has been ongoing for nearly two decades with little progress. Presently six separate lawsuits are pending in the federal courts involving the same parties. With that said, it is important to allow the water sharing issues of the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint Basin to be resolved among the States of Florida, Alabama, and Georgia, together with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Florida remains willing to work together to develop and implement comprehensive short- and long-term strategies for the water resources available. In doing so, we can protect the people of all three states as well as the environmental resources we all have been elected to safeguard.

Reacting to the concerns of an upstream State to suspend environmental laws unilaterally at the expense of a downstream State's ecology and economy cannot be justified in any circumstance. In addition, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is actively engaged in discussions with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, concerning appropriate measures to protect listed species in the Apalachicola River while giving due consideration to the water supply needs of upstream communities, including those in the metro-Atlanta area.

We can all see the effects the drought is taking on our region, and Florida remains steadfast in its desire to come to an equitable solution amid the circumstances we are facing together. But, we are unwilling to allow the unrealistic demands of one region to further compromise the downstream communities. As a result, we urge you to deny the State of Georgia's request.

Thank you for your careful attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Charlie Crist

CC:ee

CC: The Honorable Sonny Perdue
The Honorable Bob Riley
Members of the Florida Congressional Delegation

