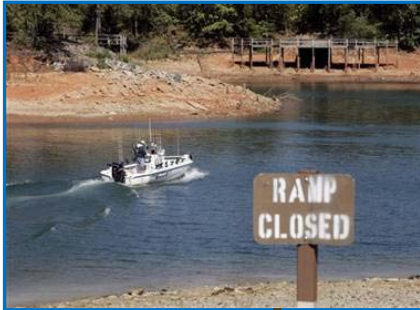




washington dc update

Water Wars in the Southeast

August 17, 2009



WESTCAS members may wonder why we keep sending reports on what is happening in Georgia with regard to whether the City of Atlanta has the right to draw its drinking water supply from Lake Lanier. After all, this issue is playing out 1,000 or even 2,000 miles from most WESTCAS members.

But what is happening with Lake Lanier will have a profound impact on how water resources are managed in all parts of the country. The fact that the Governors of Georgia, Alabama, and Florida, the Congressional delegations of the three states, and the Federal courts are all involved with the Lake Lanier issue makes this all but certain.

Much of the current water resources related legislation pending in Congress and also the policy-related activities of the White House Council on Environmental Quality and other agencies such as USEPA, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the Corps of Engineers, can be traced to a perceived lack of a national, coherent Federal water policy.

We believe that the role WESTCAS must play involves helping to guide this policy trend through the expertise of our membership and not simply to be “against” this process.

We have attached two excellent articles which provide background on the water issue in the Southeast. Lake Lanier has served for many years as the water supply for the City of Atlanta and its neighboring suburbs. But this Corps reservoir was never authorized to provide drinking water. And now “downstream” users in Alabama and Florida are taking issue with the City’s use of the lake for its drinking water supply. A Federal judge recently ruled that the City had no inherent right to this supply and this has thrown the issue into the laps of the Governors of Georgia, Alabama, and Florida and the Congress.

Can you think of a worse or more frightening prospect if you are the City of Atlanta? And should you think this only applies to Georgia, a recent review of Corps reservoirs has found evidence that 77 other Corps reservoirs in 26 other states also provide drinking water without apparent authorization. Sounds like a reason and an opportunity for the Federal government to provide some “national” standards for everybody to follow.

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