



LAKE HARTWELL ASSOCIATION. INC

Recommendation for a Comprehensive South Carolina Water Plan

A Position Paper of the Lake Hartwell Association

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To meet the water resource challenges of the 21st Century in the southeast United States as well as other parts of the country, substantial understanding of water needs and planning for the future will be required. The most recent drought ending in 2002 demonstrated that water is a finite resource. The effort to determine proper water management for the future must include a comprehensive South Carolina water management plan that will position the state's water policy to guide state, regional and local water management decisions. The plan must coordinate the many agencies, programs, and activities that affect water quality and quantity.

The Lake Hartwell Association (LHA) recommends that efforts be initiated within the state of South Carolina for the development of a Comprehensive Water Plan that includes:

1. All water needs, current and future - including surface and aquifer resources,
2. A process to determine how to decide who will get water and when,
3. A process to manage it and,
4. Laws to enable it.

LHA suggests that, based upon reviews of successful comprehensive water plans in other states within the U. S., the development of the plan should be considered in two major phases for South Carolina:

Phase 1 - A Joint Study Committee Water Evaluation resulting in Detailed Recommendations for a Comprehensive Water Plan.

Phase 2 – Development of the Comprehensive Water Plan with Supporting Legislation.

Phase 1 – The Joint Study Committee Evaluation and Recommendations

LHA recommends that funds be appropriated, via legislative action, to bring a select group of representatives from all state water related organizations (state, municipal, commercial, stakeholder and including legislators) together to form a Joint Study Committee. The committee should have the purpose of undertaking a study of all water resource issues, including water quality and quantity, facing South Carolina. Phase 1 should be directed at education on the current legal, scientific, and other aspects of water resource management and water use in South Carolina. This phase should then continue through an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses in the legal and institutional structures and a detailed assessment of water issues facing the state; and result in a report to the Governor for continuing action to be completed in Phase 2.

The Joint Study Committee Report would include the following as it relates to developing the actual Comprehensive Water Plan:

1. The essential principles for guiding the development of a comprehensive water plan. An example is: "Water quality and quantity and surface and ground water are interrelated and require integrated planning as well as reasonable and efficient use",
2. A process and schedule to prepare the details of a comprehensive water plan including:
 - a. Goals of the plan,
 - b. A suggested/recommended process to develop the plan.
 - c. The initial administrative recommendation for future water management in the state,
 - d. Benchmarks for enabling legislation,
 - e. A schedule and funding process.
3. Any other action or legislation the study committee deems appropriate

We further recommend that the Joint Study Committee be allowed to create a Water Plan Advisory Committee consisting of members of the scientific, business, agricultural communities as well as environmental advocacy groups, representative citizen's groups, and stakeholders from each of the state's river basins. The Advisory Committee should be selected by the Joint Study Committee and will have the responsibility of gathering information, preparing briefing documents, preparing recommendations including suggestions for enabling legislation.

It is anticipated that Phase 1 could take up to two or more years before agreement is reached among all parties on the Joint Study Committee. Once an agreement has been reached it will be sent to the Governor and South Carolina State Legislators to approve the recommendations included and to appropriate funds for the development of the plan. Since this is such an important activity with long-term impacts we do not feel the time to complete should be a deterrent to going forward with the Phase 1 effort.

Phase 2 – Development of the Comprehensive Water Plan for South Carolina

The actual development or construction of the Comprehensive Water Plan (CWP) would follow and possibly take several years to complete. At this point it is difficult to describe the effort required or the perceived results since it will depend heavily on the recommendations in Phase 1. However, the Plan must achieve the overriding goals of meeting future water needs while protecting aquifers, instream uses and downstream users; and meeting public health and environmental needs. Suggested Plan objectives would include minimizing withdrawals including strictly limiting interbasin transfers, maximizing returns, meeting instream and offstream needs and meeting assimilative capacity needs; including a strong emphasis on conservation throughout.

The Water Plan must also transcend state boundaries in the case of shared water basins. This will require at the least interstate consistency, and preferably interstate compacts to establish clear and consistent policy.

We would expect that the CWP development would also be under the direction of an existing or a newly formed state organization. In either case this group would have oversight responsibility for all water issues in South Carolina.

LHA firmly believes that water management must be guided by a comprehensive state water management plan, developed by a lead agency with a dedicated planning staff, in coordination with other agencies and with the participation of all interested citizens. We will continue to work towards the successful accomplishment of this objective.

LAKE HARTWELL ASSOCIATION, INC

P.O. Box 312

Fair Play, SC 29643

Phone: 1-888-200-4899

Email: mail@lakehartwellassociation.org