

Mr. Maholland,

Thank you for providing comments from the Georgia Ecological Services regarding the draft Regional Water Plans. We value your expertise and input. Each of the 10 Regional Water Planning Councils have considered your comments, and they have authorized EPD to provide this collective response.

In general, your comments address items that the Councils would benefit from learning more about directly from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In particular, more detailed information about how the Endangered Species Act, Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, and Georgia Natural Heritage Program intersect with the management of water resources in the planning regions would be helpful to the Councils. More detailed information will also enable to Councils to more fully consider how the Plans can reference and address the various species and habitats that your comments identify (including those that are terrestrial). Several of the Plans address the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), but the Councils would also benefit from learning how they can more thoroughly and uniformly address the high priority items in the SWAP. Those Plans that reference the SWAP have already benefited from participation and information provided by representatives of the Georgia Wildlife Resources Division.

Based on your comments, we would like to invite you or other U.S. FWS staff to attend, and possibly present it to the Regional Water Planning Councils during their future meetings so that they can more fully consider this information in the next planning cycle. Each Council meeting also includes time for public comments. A list of the planning regions (with County boundaries) is available at <https://waterplanning.georgia.gov/water-planning-regions> and you or your team can self-subscribe to receive notices about upcoming Council meetings at <https://waterplanning.georgia.gov/subscribe-email-updates> (either by region, or for all 10 regions). If you have any questions or need more information on how to get involved with the Councils, please contact Clete Barton at [clete.barton@dnr.ga.gov](mailto:clete.barton@dnr.ga.gov).

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