

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 31, 2007

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave
Washington, DC 20502-0001

Dear Mr. President,

We are writing in strong opposition to the request by the Governor of Georgia for a Presidential intervention to drastically limit water releases from Lake Lanier. This step would be extreme and have a devastating effect on the residents in Alabama.

The drought throughout the Southeast is of historic proportions. Alabama, Florida, Georgia and other southeastern states are suffering with water levels in reservoirs and rivers at extraordinarily low levels. However, to grant the request of Governor Perdue to suspend all water releases out of Lake Lanier beyond those needed for Atlanta would ignore, and in fact exacerbate, the problems of those living downstream.

While the State of Georgia has framed its argument by making this an issue of people versus mussels and sturgeons, that is simply a fallacy. A further limitation of water releases threatens to have serious consequences for vital downstream interests. For example, the Farley Nuclear Plant near Dothan, Alabama, requires the water flowing in the Chattahoochee River for adequate cooling. The current releases from Lake Lanier into the river are already at the minimum levels required to maintain adequate cooling. If you were to grant this request, Farley would shut down, putting the region's power grid at risk.

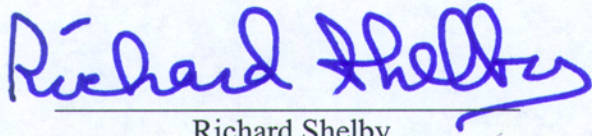
This is just one example. In fact, there are many industries with facilities along this river that require adequate water flow for their operations. If these facilities shut down, a significant portion of our populations, communities, and economies would be affected.

Most importantly, contrary to recent statements from Georgia officials, the water in Lake Lanier is not Georgia's water. These are federal lakes and the water should be allowed to fairly flow to all along the river, either upstream or down. This reservoir was built with federal taxpayer funds for certain authorized purposes, which did not include the Atlanta-area water supply. Clearly, Georgia wants to reallocate the water because it has not done a good job in anticipating and responding to long-festering water supply problems in the state. As a result, it wants to limit Alabama's and Florida's allocation of water to compensate.

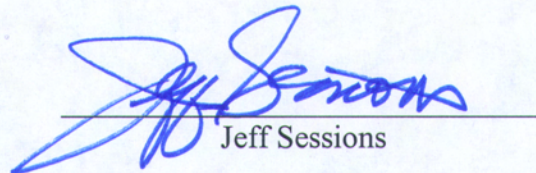
While we and our constituents understand the needs of the people of Atlanta, we cannot support a decision that would adversely affect Alabamians who are clearly in a similar position. Further, it is our understanding that the legal authority does not exist to waive the requirements within the Endangered Species Act that have been requested. However, even if this authority did exist, clearly the consequences of such an action would be severe and far reaching. Our constituents need this water for all the same reasons that the citizens of Georgia do and any action to waive the Endangered Species Act would have repercussions far beyond Georgia's single-minded intentions.

If you were to grant this request, you would not be "siding with people" instead of mussels and sturgeons. You would be valuing the well-being of the people in Georgia over the citizens of Alabama and Florida. When considering the dramatic effect on water supply, water quality and economic viability that Alabama will experience if water release is further limited, we would urge you to deny Georgia's request.

Sincerely,



Richard Shelby



Jeff Sessions