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STATE OF ALABAMA

October 22, 2007

VIA FACSIMILE AND U.S. MAIL

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

Re: Southeastern Drought Conditions

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to express Alabama's strong opposition to the request by Governor Perdue of Georgia for certain presidential emergency actions to respond to the exceptional drought being experienced in the Southeast.

There is no question that the ongoing drought is severe and unprecedented. Alabama is suffering serious negative economic and environmental consequences as a result of the drought. While Alabama understands that it must bear its fair share of the pain from the drought, Alabama does not believe that it should bear more than its fair share.

Georgia, in essence, wants you to suspend all releases out of Lake Lanier beyond those needed for Atlanta-area water supply. That would be a radical step that would ignore the vital downstream interests of Alabama.

We trust that your legal staff has already determined that the Endangered Species Act does not provide the authority for the presidential action that Georgia seeks. Moreover, we are confident that, consistent with FEMA regulations, Alabama and all other interested states and parties will be consulted before FEMA makes any recommendation to you.

Georgia has repeatedly framed its request as a contest between people in the Atlanta area and endangered mussels in Florida. Nothing could be further from the truth. In reality, the action that Georgia seeks will have dire consequences on people and their livelihoods downstream in Alabama.

Georgia ignores the fact that the Farley Nuclear Plant sits on the banks of the Chattahoochee River and requires cooling water from the Chattahoochee. Last Thursday, the Corps stated that the releases being made from Lake Lanier are the minimum necessary to maintain the required flow for cooling water at the nuclear plant. If Georgia obtained the presidential action it seeks, then there would likely be inadequate cooling water for the nuclear plant. That is obviously something that cannot be allowed to happen. At a minimum, the lack of adequate cooling water could require a shutdown of the plant, thereby putting the reliability of the electric power grid in the region at risk. The safety and sustainability of that plant is vital to the people and economy of our region.

The action that Georgia seeks would have consequences on people far beyond the nuclear plant. There are a number of industries that operate plants along the Chattahoochee, and those plants require an adequate flow in the river in order to assimilate their discharges. If Georgia obtains the ability to curtail flow support for the river, then those plants will likely have to close. The effects on the employees, their families, and their communities will be devastating if that happens.

Georgia has repeatedly stated in recent days that Lake Lanier has less than a 90-day supply of water available for people in Atlanta. That simply is not correct. As the Corps of Engineers confirmed last week, Lake Lanier has enough water to supply the needs of Atlanta and to maintain current levels of downstream flow support for over 260 more days, and that assumes that there will not be a single drop of rain during that period. As you may know, we are about to enter the rainy season for the region, and the level of Lake Lanier has risen considerably every year during the rainy season since it was constructed, even in drought years. Thus, we believe that Georgia has overstated the severity of the crisis in the Atlanta region. Statements by Corps officials suggest that they agree that the situation is not as dire as Georgia suggests.

There is no question that this is a time for careful management of the region's water. People in Alabama have made major sacrifices already in 2007 to address these issues. For example, in Birmingham, our state's largest metropolitan area, officials implemented stringent water control limits in June. No one in the Birmingham area was allowed to use a sprinkler or sprinkler system from June through September. Businesses and residences that exceeded their allotment of water paid stiff surcharges, and many municipalities

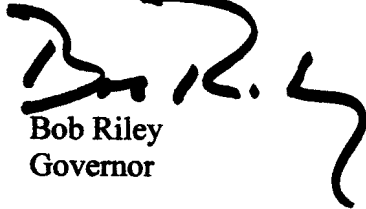
The Honorable George W. Bush  
October 22, 2007  
Page 3

fined violators. As a result of these proactive measures, the Birmingham region saved hundreds of millions of gallons of water and averted a shortage this fall.

What the State of Georgia is seeking from you is a unilateral transfer of decision-making authority over the water in the federal reservoir at Lake Lanier from federal to Georgia control. That reservoir was built with federal taxpayer dollars for certain congressionally authorized purposes, which did not include Atlanta-area water supply. While Alabama understands the needs of residents in Atlanta, we cannot stand by and allow Georgia to take control of the water in that reservoir to the detriment of the people who live and work downstream in Alabama.

Alabama has been sharing, and understands that it will have to continue to share, the pain of this unprecedented drought. Alabama is not willing, however, to cede unilateral control of waters in the Chattahoochee River Basin to the State of Georgia. Such a move would be unfair to Alabama, and we urge you to deny Georgia's request.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Riley', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Bob Riley  
Governor

BR/ds/ps

cc: The Honorable Joshua Bolten  
The Honorable Charlie Crist