



Alabama Rivers Alliance
Water Is Life

December 17, 2007

Governor Bob Riley
600 Dexter Avenue
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

Dear Governor Riley,

The Alabama Rivers Alliance (Alliance) would like to express our gratitude for your efforts with the “water wars” negotiations with Georgia and Florida in the Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa (ACT) basin and the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) basin. During this time of drought it is paramount for Alabama to stand strong and protect our valuable water resources.

Representing more than 800 individual members and 50 grassroots organizations throughout the state, the Alliance is a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to the protection of our water resources. We have been involved in water policy issues for more than 10 years and are committed to improving state water quantity policy through the Alabama Water Agenda (www.AlabamaWaterAgenda.com).

Although the ACT and ACF “water wars” have been the focus of much attention during the exceptional drought ravaging the southeast, Alabama has numerous other river basins that need protection. This time of extraordinary public awareness about the importance of our water resources is a great opportunity to begin working on permanent policies and protections for the many uses of our waters all across the state.

We would like to encourage you to work with the Office of Water Resources, Alabama Water Resources Commission, the State Legislature, other state agencies, and stakeholders to create a process to develop comprehensive state water policy for flows in our state’s waters. The citizens of Alabama need to know that we will have enough water in the coming years for our growing population, our globally significant ecosystems, and our economy.

Georgia is not the only threat our waters face. Unsustainable growth and unmanaged water withdrawals may eventually lead Alabama cities to be in the same situation Atlanta is in: a desperate search for secure water sources. If we act now, Alabama can develop policy that will protect our water resources and help our cities plan ahead.

We understand that a sound water policy cannot be developed overnight; indeed we would prefer a well thought-out plan rather than a hastily developed one. However, the urgency of the matter cannot be more apparent, with articles, letters, and commentaries in so many of Alabama’s papers and with water policy experts across the state starting to take up the cause.

The Alliance hopes that you will take a leadership role in the development of water policy. We ask that you help the Legislature and our state agencies develop a study committee and a

transparent process that will result in a draft policy for the public to review. By starting in the 2008 legislative session, we can reasonably hope to see a draft policy in 2009 or 2010. There really is no time to waste. With predictions of the drought lasting for several years, Alabama needs to take the first steps to protect our water resources now.

Basic state-wide policies can and should be developed now, with basin-specific policies developed as more data is gathered and analyzed. We cannot afford to wait several more years while data is collected. Overarching policies and programs can begin to take shape, even as we determine the unique applications of the policies in each of our 14 major river basins.

Thank you for your dedication to this issue. If we can be of any assistance to you or your office please call upon us. We look forward to hearing more about your plans to protect Alabama's waters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "April Hall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

April Hall, P.E.
Watershed Protection Specialist