

Allocation, conservation, and efficiency matter

The Upstate has been blessed with plentiful water for our communities... until now. Increasing populations, booming development, and global warming are placing unprecedented pressures on our water supplies. Many of our beloved rivers and lakes are shrinking; some are even drying up. Anyone who has seen the Reedy River or Lake Hartwell during our persistent drought knows this.

new source of water, a hidden reservoir, in the drought-stricken Upstate. This is the promise of water conservation and efficiency. Our water utilities must encourage users to avoid using water when possible (conservation) while also using the water we do have wisely (efficiency).

Water conservation and efficiency policies and practices will enable South Carolina to do the same things with less water. Utilities must modify their rate structures, most of which are currently based on the principle, "the more you use, the less you pay." Greensboro, North Carolina provides a good model with their rate structure that includes an incentive to conserve



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In My Own Words

By JOHN TYNAN AND GERRIT JÖBSIS

In 2007, state hydrologist Bud Badr earned front page coverage with this statement: "[South Carolina] can run out of water... We can't just keep doing things the way we did 50-100 years ago." Mr. Badr is absolutely correct. In a state where population increases by 150 people per day and whose land is being developed at the rate of 300 acres per day, the time has come for South Carolina to manage its water resources effectively. The cornerstones of effective water resource management are allocation, conservation, and efficiency.

Allocation is a policy that controls how much water can be taken out of our waterways. During the last two legislative sessions, several water allocation bills were debated, but none passed. This year, the General Assembly must demonstrate leadership by allocating the use of water in our state through water withdrawal permits.

A water allocation bill will enable South Carolina to protect downstream users, attract new businesses, and confront long-term precipitation variability due to global warming. It will also greatly strengthen our position in the ongoing disputes with Georgia and North Carolina. A key factor examined by the courts in resolving these disputes is whether each state has adopted policies to protect its own water supplies. Sadly, the answer to that question in South Carolina is no.

Water conservation and efficiency are the most cost-effective and immediate ways to ensure safe, clean, and abundant water for our families, communities, and rivers. Imagine finding a brand

while also protecting the water utility's revenue. The Greenville Water System and other Upstate water utilities must also establish water conservation and efficiency departments, offer incentives or assistance for water efficient appliance installations, and require a certain level of water efficiency for new connections and construction.

Developing water allocation, conservation, and efficiency policies will ensure adequate water in the Upstate's rivers and lakes. For example, allocation, conservation, and efficiency would ensure that more water is left in the Saluda River to support recreation and fishing, that less water is taken from Lake Keowee and Hartwell to help reopen the many drought-caused boat ramp closings, and more opportunities for taking advantage of the economic potential for outdoor recreation - already a billion dollar industry in South Carolina.

Our water resources are truly the lifeblood of South Carolina. This year the General Assembly must enact the Fair Share Water Bill, S.275, which will establish reasonable limits on how much water can be taken out of our rivers and lakes. In addition, Upstate water utilities must adopt and implement conservation and efficiency programs and policies to protect our region's water supplies. Our economy, environment and quality of life depend on these actions. ■

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