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## Rivers Draw Law Is a Start

### State permits needed for new, big users

It seems entirely reasonable that a new power generating plant or a public water system should have governmental permission to draw millions of gallons of water from a river or stream and that will be the case when a new S.C. law takes effect. No state review of any kind has been required for users to take all the water they wanted.

One of the accomplishments of the General Assembly is passage of a law that will put some control on the volume of water pumped from rivers around the state. The compromise measure has been in the works five years and has involved agriculture, big business and conservation interests. No one group is entirely pleased, but the measure looks like a start. Sen. Paul Campbell of Berkeley County says the measure sent to Gov. Mark Sanford, which he is expected to sign, "is good legislation" and ultimately "should help job creation" as well as protect fish and other wildlife.

State permits from the Department of Health and Environmental Control will be required for new water users to draw more than 3 million gallons a month. DHEC, which will make regulations for the permits, could reject a request if a proposed draw would take too much from a river basin, as reported by Sammy Fretwell for McClatchy Newspapers. The law would help maintain minimum seasonal flows and requires better reporting for existing large users of water. Existing users of water will be grandfathered in; the law guarantees them permits. According to **Upstate Forever**, a Greenville conservation group, one of the law's faults is that it promises water forever to existing industries.

On the other hand, Otis Rawl, chief executive of the S.C. Chamber of Commerce, frets about the law hampering industrial expansion, although he says "Most people believe it was better to get something."

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