



WaterFirst: Recognizing Communities for Excellence in Water Stewardship

What is WaterFirst?

- Voluntary partnership between local governments, state agencies and other organizations working together to enhance the quality of life through the wise management and protection of water resources;
- Proactive approach to water resources connecting land use and water quality and quantity;
- Approaching water resources beyond political boundaries, recognizing the links of shared water resources in a watershed;
- Pursuing and rewarding environmental excellence **beyond** what is required by law; and
- Establishing a network of water professionals and leaders in the industry; and
- Protecting valuable water resources for both environmental and economic benefits today and for future generations.

Some communities may already qualify for designation and recognition as WaterFirst, having met specified criteria, while others will require assistance in addressing the complex and challenging water issues that exist within their region. There are seven major components of the WaterFirst Program and the extent to which the participants have demonstrated they have addressed each one based upon their size and the water-related services they provide will determine if they are designated a WaterFirst Community or selected to participate in the WaterFirst class (a group of communities striving to achieve the designation). The seven WaterFirst components are:

- Watershed Assessment;
- Stormwater Master Planning;
- Water Supply Planning;
- Water Supply Protection;
- Water Conservation;
- Wastewater Treatment Systems and Management; and
- Water Reclamation and Reuse

Participation Benefits

- Resources, tools, and support to help meet water management goals.
- State-wide recognition for being environmental stewards.

Designation Benefits

In addition to the Participation Benefits, designated communities receive:

- A 1% interest rate reduction for Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority water related loans.
- Annual eligibility for DCA Community Block Development Grants for water related projects
- Priority for EPD 319 Grant funding;
- State-wide recognition, including road signage and authorization to use the WaterFirst trademarked logo.

For more information, contact Deatre Denion by e-mail at deatre.denion@dca.ga.gov or by phone at (912) 704-4136

“Application of WaterFirst principles has broadened public awareness of why and how to conserve fresh water, and helped us reduce per capita consumption. The one per cent discount on our GEFA loans for infrastructure improvements has significantly reduced our capital outlay and enabled us to complete several major projects. Participation in WaterFirst has definitely had a positive impact on our community.”

- Paul Wolff, Councilman,
Tybee Island City



“WaterFirst designation for Cobb County reinforces our commitment to responsible environmental stewardship. Ongoing participation in the program as advisors and adjudicators gives us the opportunity to work with like minded communities throughout Georgia. Designation as a Georgia Department of Community Affairs WaterFirst Community helps us to meet our mission as good environmental citizens.”

- Kathy Nguyen, Water Conservation Coordinator,
Cobb County Water System



WaterFirst Communities

Designated 2003

Gwinnett County
City of Savannah

Designated 2004

Columbus Consolidated Government and Columbus Water Works
City of Hartwell

Designated 2005

Cobb County
Cobb/Marietta Water Authority
City of Tybee Island

Designated 2006

Town of Braselton

Designated 2007

City of Griffin
City of Rome
City of Tifton and Tift County

Designated 2008

Oconee County
City of Gainesville
Douglasville-Douglas County Water Sewer Authority

Designated 2009

City of Hinesville
City of Roswell

Designated 2010

Forsyth County
City of Winder
Henry County/Henry County Water and Sewerage Authority
Coweta County
City of Cornelia

WaterFirst Communities (continued)

Designated 2011

City of Garden City

Designated 2012

City of Loganville

Newton County with Cities of Covington, Mansfield,
Newborn, Oxford and Porterdale

Designated 2013

City of Auburn

Athens-Clarke County

Designated 2014

Fulton County

Designated 2016

City of Thunderbolt

City of Pooler

Communities Working for Designation

WaterFirst Class Participants

City of Americus

City of Austell

City of Darien

City of Canton

City of Cartersville

City of Clarkesville

City of Fairburn

City of McDonough

City of Monroe

City of Richmond Hill

City of Rincon

City of Valdosta

City of Waycross

City of Woodstock

Floyd County

Pickens County

Walker County

“Three major goals the City of Canton would like to achieve as participants of the WaterFirst program:

- 1. Assessment of all water and sewer lines in the city.*
- 2. Determine from the assessment, prioritize the areas for improvements and upgrades.*
- 3. Develop short term and long term Capital Improvement Program including.”*

-Joby A. West, P.E. City Engineer, City of Canton

The major goals Athens-Clarke County would like to achieve as participants of the WaterFirst program:

“Wastewater: Provide waste water collection service to 90 percent of water customers.

Stormwater Management:

- Educate the general public, the business & industrial communities, and children about stormwater management and involve these groups in hands on projects that reduce water pollution and protect our local water supply.*
- Monitor, maintain, and improve our stormwater infrastructure through land inspection & stormwater design standards, drainage improvement projects, and a regular maintenance schedule of public streets and storm drains.*
- Develop comprehensive watershed management plans for the 17 watersheds located within Athens-Clarke County.*

Water Conservation: Maintain and build on the significant achievements that resulted from the community's drought response.”

-Marilyn Hall, Water Conservation Coordinator, Athens-Clarke County