

DEVELOPMENT OF WATERSHED MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR THE METROPOLITAN NORTH GEORGIA WATER PLANNING DISTRICT

Doug Baughman and Heather Dyke

AUTHORS: CH2M HILL, 115 Perimeter Center Place, NE, Suite 700, Atlanta, Georgia 30346, dbaughman@ch2m.com, hdyke@ch2m.com.

REFERENCE: *Proceedings of the 2003 Georgia Water Resources Conference*, held April 23-24, 2003, at the University of Georgia. Kathryn J. Hatcher, editor, Institute of Ecology, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia.

Abstract. The Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District (District), created in 2001, is required to develop a District-wide watershed management plan to address the need for comprehensive stormwater and watershed management in the rapidly developing North Georgia area. A total of 16 counties in the metropolitan Atlanta area are included in the District encompassing over 6,700 square miles. There are six major river basins within the District including the Coosa/Etowah, Chattahoochee, Oconee, Ocumulgee, Flint, and Tallapoosa river basins. Specifically the watershed management plan must provide recommendations for programmatic measures that should be applied across the entire as well as watershed specific measures to address existing or anticipated watershed conditions. In addition, the watershed management plan must be coordinated with the water supply and wastewater management plans being developed concurrently.

Development of the comprehensive watershed management plan focused on leveraging existing programs, where appropriate, and identification of additional management measures required to maintain or improve water quality and aquatic habitat conditions. The overall goal was to develop a long-term program that met multiple objectives including meeting water quality standards, TMDL implementation, source water protection, and reduction in downstream flooding. To meet these goals, a change in overall philosophy was required from the traditional stormwater end of the pipe engineering approach to one that eliminates the causes by proactively preventing stormwater problems before they occur. Greater emphasis on site planning and design to better mimic the natural hydrologic regime will be needed to reduce downstream hydrologic impacts and associated non-point source pollutant loads. In addition, significant watershed restoration activities will be needed in the already developed areas to improve stream conditions to meet designed uses. This proactive watershed management approach will require a greater coordination at the regional level to ensure consistency in and implementation of local watershed management programs.