

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF WATER AVAILABILITY AND RECEPTIVITY TO WATER CONSERVATION IN GEORGIA

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Abstract. This study investigated public perceptions of water availability in Georgia to identify factors that influence receptivity to water conservation technologies and practices. A receptivity model comprising four components – Awareness, Association, Acquisition and Application – was used to compare and contrast data collected through two different studies conducted in 2002 and 2010. The results suggest that public concern for water availability in Georgia did not change markedly over the eight years separating the two studies, with approximately half of Georgia residents expressing concern for water quantity. Factors found to influence citizen perceptions of water quantity issues and receptivity to calls for water conservation include: the difficulty in ‘seeing’ water availability challenges under normal water conditions, drought, confidence in water authorities (institutional trust), and a perception that other consumers are also conserving water (inter-personal trust). These findings have important implications for the design and implementation of water conservation programs.