

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 18, 2007

The Honorable Peter Geren
Secretary of the Army
U.S. Department of the Army
102 Army Pentagon, Room 3E588
Washington, D.C. 20310

Dear Secretary Geren:

As you know, Georgia is facing one of the worst droughts in history. Reservoirs within the ACT-ACF basin are all 15 feet below full pool, and the conservative estimate for the end of the year by your Mobile District is that Lake Lanier, the basin's largest reservoir could drop to 1,039 feet if conditions do not improve. Using the Corps own model and current Interim Operating Plan (IOP), these levels would provide water to Georgians for only 80 days. The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) has declared all of North Georgia, including metro Atlanta, in a Level 4 drought; the strictest category the agency can independently impose. On day 81, the State of Georgia will be forced to operate within a disaster imposed declaration and through the Georgia Emergency Management Agency, provide adequate water supply for the state's most dire needs, our hospitals.

As Members of the Georgia Congressional Delegation, we take seriously our responsibility to do everything that we can to address the situation. To that end we are contacting you today to insist that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers immediately reduce the water release flow from the basins in accordance with the current Level 4 drought situation and not simply for the benefit of any species protected by the Endangered Species Act (ESA), political threats, or power generation.

Upon review of the current IOP, under which the Corps is operating the ACT-ACF basins, we feel certain that the Corps has the authority to coordinate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and modify the IOP to accommodate the livelihood of human life and provide adequate protection to threatened species. We are confident that upon the agencies' review of the Biological Summary of the current IOP, a reduced flow can be implemented. We implore the Corps to work with the USFWS to reduce the flow immediately.

We have long supported common sense wildlife conservation and animal protection, but a key factor of that common sense is an operational principle that the health and livelihood of millions of human beings should not be outweighed by endangered mussels. The ESA was not intended to force federal agencies to protect a species when the direct livelihood of millions of humans is hanging in the balance.

As you know, the current conditions take place against the backdrop of the ongoing struggle between Georgia, Alabama and Florida over rights to water resources in the region. The tremendous change which has occurred within the ACT-ACF basins over the past 30 years warrants the need for improved access to the water supply, all the while protecting an estimated annual economic impact of \$5.5 billion to Lake Lanier alone. It has become imperative that the water control plans be updated to allow for better water resource management. There has been slow movement towards resolution of this struggle, and a number of roadblocks have impeded adequate progress.

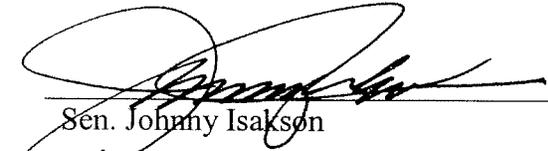
In 2006, the former Secretary of the Army informed Members of the Georgia Delegation that the update of the water control plan would begin immediately. However, we asked you in our recent personal meeting if the update had begun, you replied that it had not because your predecessor had given his word that as long as federal mediation was making progress, the update would not begin. For your convenience, we have enclosed correspondence, dated October 13, 2007 from Mr. Charles Renfrew to Judge Karen Bowdre, which informs the Court that mediation between the Georgia, Alabama and Florida has reached an impasse.

Mr. Secretary, the underlying drought conditions have raised the stakes for the people of Georgia. We will continue to do everything we can to ensure that no legislation prevents the funding of this essential water control update, while ensuring our state's water interest are not hijacked by a poor interpretation of the ESA. It is our sincere hope that you will be able to manage the Corps in a manner that is consistent with addressing the Level 4 drought and in keeping with the most basic of the reservoirs original purposes.

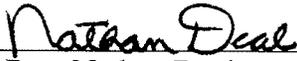
Respectfully,



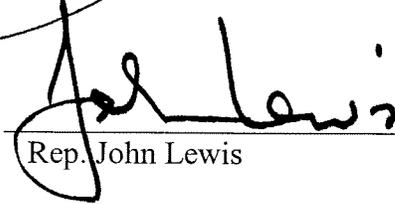
Sen. Saxby Chambliss



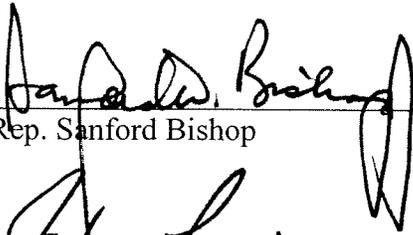
Sen. Johnny Isakson



Rep. Nathan Deal



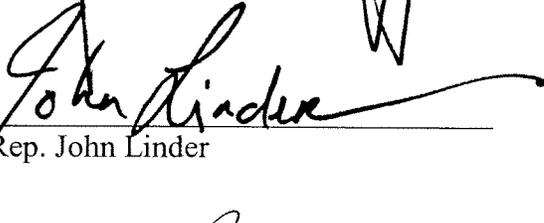
Rep. John Lewis



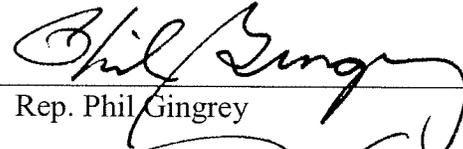
Rep. Sanford Bishop



Rep. Jack Kingston



Rep. John Linder



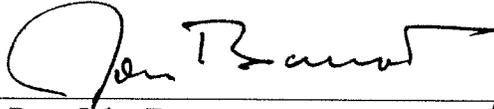
Rep. Phil Gingrey



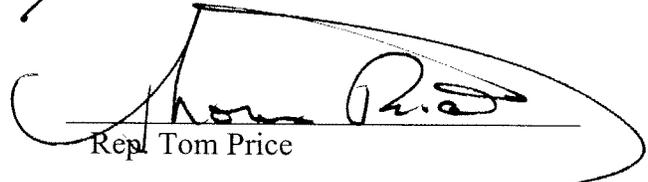
Rep. Jim Marshall



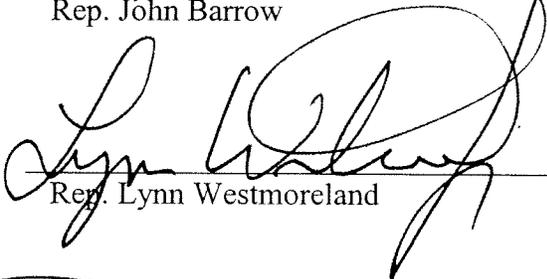
Rep. David Scott



Rep. John Barrow



Rep. Tom Price



Rep. Lynn Westmoreland



Rep. Hank Johnson



Rep. Paul Brown