



GEORGIA

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DIVISION

Richard E. Dunn, Director

EPD Director's Office

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Suite 1456, East Tower
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Received: 7/24/17

Mr. Tom Wiedmeier
Director
Augusta-Richmond County Utilities
360 Bay Street, Suite 180
Augusta, Georgia 30901

Mr. William Clayton
Division Director
Columbia County Water Utility
2140 William Few Parkway, Building A
Grovetown, Georgia 30813

Mr. John Sawyer
Bureau Chief
City of Savannah Public Works and Water Resources Bureau
P.O. Box 1027
2 East Bay Street
Savannah, Georgia 31401

RE: Savannah River Clean Water Fund

Dear Mr. Wiedmeier, Mr. Clayton, and Mr. Sawyer:

As we detailed in our letter to you dated October 24, 2014, the Savannah River Basin downstream of the Clarks Hill/J. Strom Thurmond hydropower facility is a complex and vital resource for both Georgia and South Carolina. The basin is a drinking water source for thousands of customers, it provides assimilative capacity for wastewater treatment facilities located along its main stem and tributaries, it supports a fishery which includes the endangered shortnose sturgeon and the basin contains critical wildlife habitat of a diverse ecosystem (e.g., the Augusta Shoals). In addition to the above components, the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project widens the array of complexities facing the river basin as mitigation projects are being designed and installed to address the effects of harbor deepening. Protection of the Savannah River Basin is no less important than it was in 2014, and with all of the recent activities surrounding the basin, the notion now is that the need for environmental protection has only gained in significance.

Municipal and Industrial wastewater treatment facilities are now submitting applications to EPD as the 5R process has been approved by EPA. While the distribution of BOD loading has been agreed to by the dischargers (a much smaller amount when compared to previous permits), it only serves to highlight how assimilative capacity (i.e., dissolved oxygen) has now become a very limiting factor

for the basin. And, with the 2013 EPD groundwater withdrawal moratorium on the Floridan Aquifer in place for the coastal Red and Yellow Zones, cities and industries will be evaluating use of surface water as an alternate source of drinking water, potentially creating more capacity challenges.

While point source management strategies are highly important for basin protection, so equally are those related to non-point source management. This is where the Clean Water Fund comes in. The Fund benefits water quality via permanent land protection (e.g., conservation easements, deed restrictions), land management practices designed to reduce non-point source pollutants, and by funding science and research that helps determine the effectiveness and selection of appropriate best management practices. As EPD further develops its water quality trading strategies, the Fund can also assist in water quality management by ultimately championing projects that demonstrate effective point/non-point source trades that benefit the river.

EPD appreciates the investment made in the Clean Water Fund by the City of Savannah, the Columbia County Water Utility and by Augusta-Richmond County Utilities. Your efforts in enhancing water quality in the Savannah River Basin by partnering with the Clean Water Fund addresses a vital piece in the complex puzzle of comprehensive environmental protection. To that end, EPD fully supports the work of the Clean Water Fund and those investing in this critical endeavor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard A. Dunn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and a long, sweeping tail.

Richard A. Dunn
Director