

## Praying for Rain: Media Framing of Water Allocation in the Apalachicola-Flint-Chattahoochee Basin

On September 28, 2007 Level 4 Drought Restrictions were placed on 61 Georgia counties by the Georgia Environment Protection Division based on predictions that less than three months of water remained in Lake Lanier, one of the primary sources of water in metropolitan Atlanta. Among other responses, Georgia Governor Sonny Purdue called for the allocation of further water withdrawals from the Chattahoochee River by the US Army Corps of Engineers. This study draws from Framing Theory to investigate how the watershed management issues in the Apalachicola-Flint-Chattahoochee Basin were represented by the Atlanta Journal-Constitution and the Tallahassee Democrat in the three-month period following the drought restrictions. Lake Lanier is part of a wider watershed that connects a variety of stakeholders, and decisions to allocate flows are based on a balance of scientific understanding and the needs of various stakeholders. However, newspaper coverage of the event often reduces the scientific complexity of watershed management into "frames" by channeling facts into simplified social or cultural perspectives that resonant with the newspaper's readers. This study illustrates how media coverage frames the biophysical and social science underlying watershed management issues and lead to different stakeholders perceiving the scientific rationale behind decisions differently.