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A Perspective on the Politics of Water

The tri-state water war between Georgia, Alabama, and Florida is a prime example of a worldwide water supply issue resulting from the combination of politics with an ongoing fight over water. The 'war' involves six rivers, with the Chattahoochee, Coosa, Flint, and Tallapoosa rivers accounting for roughly 92% of Atlanta's Metro Water District's source of water. Each state has its own interests regarding proper allocation of sufficient amounts of water; according to the Southern Environmental Law Center, Georgia's focus is continued growth, Alabama concentrates on power generation use and fisheries, and Florida's goal is to sustain its multimillion dollar shellfish industry.

Specifically, Georgia has taken formal steps to manage water usage. The 2004 Comprehensive Statewide Water Management Planning Act and Statewide Water Plan of 2008 provide incentives and infrastructure to measure water resources and identify regional solutions. As of January 9th, 2013, the majority of Georgia falls under the Exceptional, Extreme, and Severe categories of drought intensity, confirming the need for water planning implementation. In 2005, 41.5% of U.S. Freshwater withdrawals were for thermoelectric power and 37% for irrigation; in Georgia, a high water demand for irrigation exists as the agriculture sector generates the largest portion of Georgia's income.

Sustainable solutions to political issues surrounding water supply incorporate a balance of environmental, public, and economic factors. As thermal-electric power plants withdraw 40% and consume 3% of US fresh water, and 90% of power plant water demand is due to cooling systems, exploring power plant water use reduction technologies is natural. In doing such, water risk areas for electric power generators are physical, regulatory, reputational, and financial,

according to the Electric Research Power Institute in 2012. Currently, water research centers function as industry resources for power plant water management technology research and development.