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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**23 LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND WATER AUTHORITIES
SURPASS 10 PERCENT WATER USE REDUCTIONS SINCE 2007**

***Celebrate County Government Week, May 3 – 9, 2009
“Greening Our Future”***

ATLANTA, Ga. (May 7, 2009) – For the last two years, Georgia has endured severe drought conditions that have resulted in the implementation of the State Drought Management Plan and required local governments, businesses and residents to change their water use habits. The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) continues to closely monitor water use across the state, but especially in the counties where a level IV drought response remains in effect. As part of the drought response, local governments and their associated water authorities were charged with reducing their water usage by 10 percent. Since November 2007, 23 communities achieved an overall 10 percent reduction in water use, and 16 achieved a reduction of 15 percent or more (see attached table). The Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) celebrates these efforts as part of County Government Week, May 3 – 9, 2009, which focuses this year on “Greening our Future.”

“Local governments and water authorities are a critical partner in our water conservation efforts,” said EPD Director Dr. Carol Couch. “They have achieved water savings in a number of ways, including outreach and education about outdoor water use schedules, maximizing system efficiency through monitoring, making repairs and improvements to infrastructure, and working directly with large water uses in their communities.”

Following the declaration of a level IV drought response in much of the state in September 2007, Governor Perdue directed EPD to modify water use permits to achieve a 10 percent reduction in water use for permit holders in the affected area. This requirement was implemented on November 1, 2007. Georgians met that goal during the winter of 2007-2008 when outdoor water use is minimal by conserving water indoors.

“While local water providers were responsible for achieving the targeted reduction in water use, this was no small task because it required the counties and their water providers to change the habits of those that used their water supplies,” said ACCG Executive Director Jerry Griffin. “I hope that these conservation habits will become the new ‘norm’, as it is more cost effective to generate water through more efficient use than through new the development of new infrastructure.”

As an example, **Newton County Water and Sewage Authority** was one of the water providers that surpassed the targeted 10 percent water use reduction by achieving a 24 percent overall reduction.

Mike Hopkins, Director of the Newton County Water and Sewage Authority, attributes these water use reductions to several proactive steps that were taken both internally and externally. According to Hopkins, the facility conducted a thorough assessment of its operations and eliminated leaks in its treatment and delivery systems which reduced its unaccounted water loss from 12 percent to 5 percent. They also implemented water conservation rates for customers and initiated a water conservation public education and outreach campaign.

“Water conservation here has been a community effort, and it is saving the county and its citizens money in the long run,” said Hopkins. “We are trying to meet the demands of our growing community with conservation and our existing infrastructure and supplies, thus delaying water supply expansion projects further into the future.”

Gary Howe, the Executive Director of the **White County Water Authority** agrees that encouraging conservation also has made a difference in his community. Howe credits the Authority’s customers for helping them achieve a 15 percent reduction in water use.

“We reached out to our two largest water customers, the Board of Education and a local poultry plant, and asked them to make some changes that would reduce their water use which they did,” said Howe. “Our homeowners also stepped up by reducing their water use.”

While 2009 has so far brought a more normal pattern of rainfall across much of the state, the drought level and associated water use restrictions will remain in place until it is determined that a relaxation of restrictions can take place without jeopardizing local water supplies. Georgians can learn more about the drought and water use schedules at www.georgiaepd.org. They can also find tips on outdoor water conservation and drought-tolerant planting at www.conservewatergeorgia.net.

“This drought has taught all important lessons,” said Griffin. “Water conservation and making more efficient use of our water supplies are critical to meeting our future needs. County government must continue to serve as leaders in this area.”

First celebrated in 1991, National County Government Week (NCGW) was created by the National Association of Counties (NACo) to raise public awareness and understanding about the roles and responsibilities of the nation’s 3,068 counties.

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Editor’s Note: ACCG encourages you to contact your county officials and the water providers listed on the attached document to learn more about how they have achieved their water conservation goals. For more information on water conservation, please contact Deron Davis, WaterSmart Director for the Environmental Protection Division at deron.davis@dnr.state.ga.us or call (404) 675-1752.

About ACCG: It is the mission of the Association County Commissioners of Georgia to enhance the role, stature and responsiveness of county government in Georgia. Since counties are the level of government closest to the people and serve all the people of the state, ACCG will promote the ability of Georgia counties to provide public services responsibly, efficiently, and cost effectively through cooperative legislative action, education of public officials, provision

of quality member services and technical assistance, and increasing public awareness of critical local government issues. For more information, go to www.accg.org.