

# EDITORIAL

## Infinite growth, finite water

By James E. Butler Jr.  
Special to the News

Hidden behind the mind-numbing technical detail and protestations about being "fair" to all lies the ugly core truth of the "state water plan" that will be debated in the legislature in January: The primary point is to legalize piping water to metro Atlanta from downstream rivers and aquifers. A burglar in your house or an embezzler in your bank account will steal your economic future. That's what the "state water plan" may ultimately do to downstream communities: steal their economic futures by taking the water the future depends upon.

The beginning of wisdom is to call a thing by its right name. Unless downstreamers unite and fight, what's coming is theft, pure and simple — the great metro Atlanta water theft. Water can't be piped to metro Atlanta now because Georgia is a "riparian rights" state — folks along a river and above an aquifer have the right to use the water reasonably; distant areas have no right to it at all. But the legislature can change that, and the Atlanta growth industry has been working for years to legalize piping water to Atlanta.

At one time the plan was to pipe water from the Tennessee River at Chattanooga, but the state of Tennessee nixed that. Then they tried to pass "permit trading" in the legislature — to make water a private commodity to be bought and sold, which would legalize transfers to metro Atlanta. In 2003 over 180 downstream cities, counties and development authorities, including Early County, passed resolutions against permit trading and killed the bill. So then they came up with this "state water plan" idea. No matter how the plan is eventually gussied up, it's primary purpose will be to legalize piping to metro Atlanta.

That interbasin piping of water from distant rivers and aquifers to metro Atlanta will be allowed by the state water plan cannot be denied: the Georgia EPD Director admits the planned policy will allow piping from one area of the state to another, and Atlanta's mayor and an executive of the Atlanta Regional Commission propose that desalination plants be built on the coast so Georgians there can drink desalted seawater and let metro Atlanta pipe in water from the Savannah and Altamaha rivers.

Proponents of piping water from downstream rivers and aquifers try to mask their intent behind high-minded talk about requiring conservation first, before interbasin piping is allowed, but when taking downstreamers' water is

legalized, there will be no incentive to conserve. Unbelievable amounts of water are wasted in metro Atlanta now; even leaky pipes aren't fixed because it's cheaper just to treat and pump more water. No amount of conservation can prevent the need for more water for metro Atlanta so long as growth there is unending. Infinite growth but finite water is a prescription for a mess, and taking water from downstreamers' rivers and aquifers is Atlanta's only way out unless its growth is managed.

For years, those desperate to find new sources of water for metro Atlanta have misled citizens by playing word games. "Interbasin transfers" have been allowed for a long time, they say, and piping water from distant rivers or aquifers is just another "interbasin transfer." That's a fraud. Unless we call a thing what it is, we can neither think about it clearly nor oppose it. When Atlanta's water system takes water from the Chattahoochee and pumps it over into the Flint River basin, that is an "interbasin transfer". But the "transfer" is simply incidental to the geography of the Atlanta water system and involves relatively minimal amounts of water. Massive piping for dozens or hundreds of miles of enough water to keep metro Atlanta's boom going is a whole different thing.

This is the Big Fight in Georgia. Whether interbasin piping is allowed will determine, forever, growth patterns in this state, the economic futures of all downstream communities, and what kind of rivers and streams we will leave to our descendants. All downstreamers and anyone interested in preserving what's left of our waters should be bitterly opposed to interbasin piping. There are really very few Georgians who benefit from moving water to metro Atlanta. Folks who live there are fed up with rampant growth and the mess it has created. Downstream communities want growth. Let the growth go to the water, not the other way around.

Any statewide water plan that is "fair" to all will mandate no new interbasin transfers and no interbasin piping at all. Giving EPD authority to approve interbasin piping will endanger all downstreamers, because water will then ultimately flow to power and money, which means to metro Atlanta.

It may be true, as some suggest, that downstreamers along the Chattahoochee will be protected by Florida's claims and that water piped to metro Atlanta will be mostly discharged into the Chattahoochee, maintaining downstream flows in

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## Pogo... and the buzzards

## Mumbles

Billy Fleming



Anytime you get a group of people together to discuss our community's problems and what can be done to make improvements, the word "blight" comes up.

It doesn't just come up, it dominates the discussion. You see, blight encompasses more than just eyesores, it is symptomatic of a worse problem.

No the problem is NOT poverty. Yes, poverty is a problem, but it is not THE problem. Well, you ask, what IS the problem. Here's a hint: Pogo's observation in the southwest Georgia swamp... "We have met the enemy and he is us."

The blight problem does not go away until we — not our elected officials, but WE, have a change of heart and decide we will not allow people to live in those conditions in our community!!!

**News Flash:** I just stumbled on what may be the best armadillo strategy, yet. Night vision goggles. Not for me... for buzzards!

I carved another notch on my shotgun stock early Tuesday morning after still another armadillo set off one of the alarms in Judy's flower beds.

A couple of hours later, shortly after day break, a buzzard was dragging the shelled carcass around in the yard.

I was thinking the buzzards prefer them dead, but maybe not. They sure as heck don't have to be "done." That buzzard this morning liked his fare "very rare."

Not sure which would be easier, fitting the buzzards with night goggles or trying to teach the armadillos to give up their nocturnal habits making them easier prey.

This just might be a better idea than paving a strip of asphalt down the middle of your front yard.

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*If you can read this, thank a teacher. If you are reading it in English, thank a soldier.*

## It's almost tomato time

It is almost tomato season. I have four sitting on my counter. They aren't real tomatoes, the kind ripened on the vine in the hot summer sun. They don't smell like tomatoes, but they look pretty good. If nothing else, they serve as a reminder of things to come.

We did enjoy fresh corn this weekend. It was perfect for boiling and for once I cooked it to perfection. It was, as Goldilocks would say, just right.

Lacy cornbread or biscuits would have been nice along with the ribs and potato salad, but I just wasn't up to it. I did read my collection of biscuit and hoecake recipes. I have added a new biscuit and two new cornbreads. One day, I might actually attempt to cook them again.

But, back to the fresh vegetables. June is coming up. It brings smut grass and gnats and hot, muggy afternoons. It also brings vegetables.

I feel sorry for Yankees and city folk who never get the opportunity to understand what fresh really means. Buying produce in a grocery store isn't the same

## All That's Fit to Print

Brenda Wall



as walking the field rows and picking it yourself.

When we were little, the first mess of garden vegetables was small, never enough to feed a family. My mama would take whatever was ready and make a pot of soup and pile of lacy cornbread. I can still see the soup.

The vegetables were colorful and she always served it to us on dark green plates so it would cool faster. It didn't seem odd to eat soup on days when the temperature outside soared. Of course, when you're small nothing seems odd.

But back to the fresh vegetables. I also have fresh cucumbers. I used to hate picking cucumbers. I would pick a row and I swear the cucumbers were ready to be picked again by the time I reached the end.

## Climate not the only thing changing

As Gomer Pyle used to say to his fellow U.S. Marines, "Surprise, surprise, surprise!"

Looks like the climate isn't the only thing that's changing these days.

Case in point, France. Ever since Napoleon died, the French have been known for fine wine, decent cheese, loose women, bad personal hygiene and a devotion to hollering, "I surrender," every time the German army hiccuped.

Not any more. Shortly after being elected President of France, conservative Nicolas Sarkozy undid years of pandering to France's huge illegal immigrant population and announced that France would not offer blanket amnesty to illegal immigrants.

In an even bolder step, French authorities said they would soon start rounding up illegals and shipping them back to their majority Muslim homelands in north Africa and eastern Europe.

Meanwhile, the U.S. House and Senate announced they had reached a "carefully crafted compromise" bill that would grant amnesty to

## Alex McRae

Alex McRae



some 12 to 20 million illegal aliens already in the U.S. The bill would let the lawbreakers earn "Get Out Of Jail Free" cards by paying a few dollars and promising to go home occasionally to make room for other illegal aliens.

Public response was so negative, congressional leaders caved in and said they would "refine" the bill. Maybe they should just steal the French bill instead.

Never thought I'd say this, but where illegal immigration is concerned, the French are showing more spine than our elected leaders.

By the way, the French realize their economy will take a hit when the illegals leave low-wage jobs in the agricultural and service sectors. They say they'll deal with it. I say, "Vive la France."

In other immigration news, even Iran is defend-

ing its own borders. In recent weeks the Iranian government has sent some 70,000 illegal alien Afghans back home. Their goal is to send as many as 1 million Afghans back in the coming year.

Complaints by legal French and Iranian citizens have been minimal.

The U.S. Congress was shocked at the angry outburst against its amnesty programs. Maybe they should send a few illegal alien lawbreakers back home and see what happens.

In other "you don't say" news ... one presidential candidate can't seem to stop making money off the "less fortunate." A few weeks ago, poster boy and former senator John Edwards revealed that after he was appointed to head the Center on Poverty, Work and Opportunity at the University of North Carolina, he decided the best way to understand poverty was to make more money.

So he went to work for a New York-based hedge fund and made a few zillion bucks trading stock futures. Edwards said he

was studying financial markets and their relationship to poverty. Right.

"It was primarily to learn, but making money was a good thing, too," he explained.

Money-making continues to be "a good thing" for Edwards. Which explains why he accepted a \$55,000 speaking fee for a December 2006 lecture at the University of California, Davis.

Here's the best part: Edwards spoke about poverty. He didn't mention soaring college tuition rates, caused in part by paying people like Edwards to mouth off at taxpayer expense. Edwards' fee could have paid the entire four-year school tab for a UC Davis student.

Guess he needed the extra cash to keep paying for those \$400 haircuts.

By the way, Edwards only charged \$40,000 to soak the students at private Stanford University. All told, Edwards collected \$285,000 speaking on nine college campuses in 2006.

I wonder if they held a spelling bee at any of his lectures. Edwards would have scored big with "hypocrite."

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