

## **Georgia Department of Natural Resources**

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**For Immediate Release**

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### **Georgia EPD Will Not Make Flint River Drought Declaration This Year**

A severe drought declaration in southwest Georgia's lower Flint River Basin will not be made this year in accordance with the Flint River Drought Protection Act, according to Carol A. Couch, Director of the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD).

The EPD Director is authorized, in consultation with the state climatologist, to issue a severe drought declaration to implement the Flint River Drought Protection Act. The Act established a fund to compensate farmers in the Flint River Basin who voluntarily stop irrigating their crops with surface water during a severe drought year.

Current stream flows, groundwater levels and soil moisture conditions in the lower Flint River Basin do not justify a severe drought declaration. Flint River flows are currently near to slightly above normal, groundwater levels for the majority of wells in the area are at normal levels and soil moisture is near normal.

The spring (March – May) climate outlook from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center has too much uncertainty associated with it to support a severe drought designation, according to State Climatologist David Stooksbury.

EPD and the Office of the State Climatologist monitor data from the U.S. Geological Survey <http://ga.water.usgs.gov/>, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration <http://www.noaa.gov/> and the University of Georgia <http://www.georgiaweather.net/>. Stream flow, groundwater levels, winter precipitation and three-month precipitation outlooks are used for drought monitoring and to determine its severity.

Climate models are not able to consistently predict several months in advance the timing or occurrence of short-term droughts. Agricultural droughts can develop over a two to three-week period. Short-term agricultural droughts can be devastating for farmers; however, the hydrological impacts of short-term agricultural droughts are minimal.

This is the fourth year in a row that a severe drought declaration has not been necessary in the lower Flint River Basin.

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