

UPDATES FROM PREVIOUS DIRTY DOZEN REPORTS

2019: GEORGIA'S PUBLIC HEALTH

Legislative budget writers keep stealing from environmental funds

As noted in the introduction to this report, earlier this month, Georgia voters passed a constitutional amendment that finally allows legislators to dedicate fees collected for specific purposes for their actual intended purposes. This is the first step to ensuring that fees citizens pay to fund the state's Solid Waste and Hazardous Waste Trust Funds will be used to cleanup illegal tire dumps and hazardous waste sites and support local clean community programs. Over the past three decades, more than \$500 million in fees has been collected from citizens and businesses for these funds, but legislators have redirected more than \$200 million of those fees to other portions of the state budget. Dedicating these fees will prevent legislators from continuing this practice.



Included in multiple Dirty Dozen reports since 2011, the problem of legislators diverting funds from the state's Hazardous Waste and Solid Waste Trust Funds was addressed earlier this month when voters approved a constitutional amendment allowing legislators to dedicate fees for specific purposes. This is seen as the first step in ensuring that fees that citizens and businesses pay into these trust funds will be used for their intended purposes...like cleaning up illegal tire dumps like this one.

2019: ST. MARYS RIVER

Legislative loophole invites out-of-state toxic coal ash to Georgia landfills, including one in Charlton County

During the 2020 General Assembly session, Sen. William Ligon (R-White Oak) introduced SB 123 that would raise the surcharge that local governments can charge landfill operators per ton of coal ash from \$1 to \$2.50, bringing it level with surcharges for ordinary household garbage. The measure passed both chambers and was signed into law. The higher fee for coal ash should make Georgia landfills less attractive disposal options for out-of-state coal ash producers.



2019: LAKE LANIER

Chronic pollution at private sewage treatment plant highlights state's failure to enforce clean water standards

Shortly after the publication of the 2019 Dirty Dozen report, Georgia's Environmental Protection Division (EPD) took enforcement action and ordered corrective measures at a small private, wastewater treatment facility that was polluting Lake Lanier. EPD's action forced the operator to reduce phosphorus discharges to the lake which should improve the health of the lake.

This aerial view shows the Baker & Glover Mobile Home Park's sewage treatment pond near Lake Lanier. Since being included in the 2019 Dirty Dozen report, Georgia's Environmental Protection Division has required the facility to reduce its phosphorus discharges to Lanier which should improve the overall health of the lake.

2018: OFFSHORE DRILLING

Governor Nathan Deal's silence on Trump administration proposal to drill for oil off Georgia's coast betrays coastal communities

During the past several years, Georgia's coastal communities have strongly voiced their opposition to opening Georgia's coast to offshore oil drilling. In 2018, more than 5,000 Georgians petitioned Gov. Nathan Deal to take a stand against offshore drilling. Likewise, in recent years, 22 cities and counties on the Georgia coast have adopted resolutions opposing the practice while Georgia's coastal legislators sponsored and endorsed similar legislation in the General Assembly. In September, President Donald Trump responded to this opposition by announcing that he would extend a moratorium on offshore drilling on the Georgia coast for 10 years.

2017: WHITEWATER CREEK

Reservoir proposal a bad deal for Southwest Georgia

Like many bad ideas, a proposed plan to build two reservoirs covering some 26,000 acres of land along Whitewater Creek in Southwest Georgia, has landed in the trash heap of history. Pitched as a way to "solve" the ongoing water wars between Georgia and Florida by supplementing flows into the Flint River, the reservoir project developers could find no suitors among local or state authorities to secure the publicly-backed funding needed for the project. Strong local opposition played a role in dissuading support.



An angler casts his fly on the Flint River. In 2017, a proposal to build reservoirs on Whitewater Creek, a major tributary of the Flint River, in Southwest Georgia was included in the Dirty Dozen report. The project was opposed by local residents, and the developers of the reservoir were never able to find suitors at the local or state level to invest tax dollars in the proposal. Thus, fish habitat on Whitewater Creek and the Flint River was spared.

2014: FLINT RIVER

Textile manufacturer's pollution, state water policy create conundrum

When Tencate's land application sewage treatment system near the Flint River in Upson County began polluting the property of neighbors, Flint Riverkeeper and local property owners took action to stop the pollution. The textile manufacturer ultimately reached a settlement agreement that all parties believe will ultimately lead to a cleanup. Furthermore, the legal action prompted EPD to improve its policies for the land application of sewage and industrial waste.

2011: FLINT RIVER

Flint River sucked dry as EPD allows too many withdrawals

The need to restore flows to the Flint River was highlighted in the inaugural Dirty Dozen report and was revisited in subsequent reports. Sometimes, it takes time to change the narrative. During the past nine years, EPD has changed its policies to encourage the return of highly treated wastewater to the upper Flint, and on the lower Flint, it has stopped issuing new agricultural water withdrawal permits. The state is now working with Southwest Georgia farmers and other stakeholders to improve the efficiency of crop irrigation and approving permits for sewage treatment plants in metro Atlanta that return flows to the river.