

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
08/08/2024
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ORK TO SUBMIT OFFICIAL COMMENTS TO GA EPD ON WELLS

Draft permits do not address known concerns and issues

Ogeechee Riverkeeper (ORK), a nonprofit focused on preserving water quality in the Ogeechee River basin, plans to submit comments to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) regarding draft groundwater withdrawal permits for Bryan and Bulloch Counties, intended to supply the Hyundai Megasite and other users. ORK is concerned that the EPD's review of these permits is inadequate, particularly regarding the impact on the Floridan Aquifer, the effectiveness of conservation measures, and the management of the Well Mitigation Fund.

Key concerns include:

Impact on Aquifer and Rivers: ORK questions the EPD's assumptions about the lack of hydraulic connection between the Floridan Aquifer and local rivers and springs. Reductions in aquifer levels could negatively affect the Ogeechee and Savannah Rivers and tributaries, as well as endangered species like the Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon.

Conservation Measures: The draft permits lack substantive water conservation plans, relying instead on promises of future actions. ORK urges the EPD to require detailed, actionable conservation measures before issuing permits.

Mitigation Fund: ORK insists the plans for the Well Mitigation Fund need detailed, effective mechanisms for addressing adverse impacts on local wells and water users. There is also a need for stronger enforcement provisions and clear definitions of terms related to impacts.

Transition to Alternative Sources: ORK argues that the proposed 25-year timeline for transitioning to alternative water sources is too long and suggests a shorter, more urgent timeline similar to successful projects elsewhere.

Overall, ORK requests that the EPD deny the permit applications until these issues are resolved, ensuring that all potential impacts are thoroughly reviewed and mitigated.

The public are encouraged to submit their own comments to EPDComments@dnr.ga.gov by Tuesday, August 20.

A copy of ORK's full comment letter will be available after August 20, 2024.

About Ogeechee Riverkeeper: *Ogeechee Riverkeeper 501(c)(3) works to protect, preserve, and improve the water quality of the Ogeechee River basin, which includes all of the streams flowing out to Ossabaw Sound and St. Catherine's Sound. The Canoochee River is about 108 miles long and the Ogeechee River itself is approximately 245 miles long. The Ogeechee River system drains more than 5,500 square miles across 21 counties in Georgia. More at ogeecheeriverkeeper.org.*
