

A Resolution Requesting the Georgia Environmental Protection Division to Timely Publish Pollution Spill Reports

WHEREAS, clean water is a basic right of all Georgia citizens and a basic mission of the Georgia Water Coalition and all its partners; and

WHEREAS, pollution spills unknown to the public could represent public health hazards; and

WHEREAS, pollution spills unknown to the public cannot trigger further water quality monitoring by entities such as Georgia Water Coalition partners to detect public health hazards and other potential effects; and

WHEREAS, there are thousands of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits for entities in the state of Georgia; and

WHEREAS, that is too many permit holders for it to be practical for any private entity to poll all of them for spill reports, even weekly, much less daily, even in a single watershed; and

WHEREAS, Georgia NPDES permits require the permit holders to timely inform the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GA-EPD) of spills at least of certain sizes; and

WHEREAS, the GA-EPD has received more than four thousand reports of pollution spills since the beginning of the year 2015; and

WHEREAS, many of those spills are below permit thresholds requiring public notification; and

WHEREAS, many if not most of those spills have not been reported to the public; and

WHEREAS, it is in the public interest for the public to know of point sources of pollution in our waters; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) publishes spill reports on its website the same day it receives them, in a spreadsheet, with signup for email alerts, plus an online interactive map of spills for the past thirty days; see prodenv.dep.state.fl.us/DepPNP/reports/viewIncidentDetails; and

WHEREAS, the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) provides online signup for email alerts of spills the same day ADEM receives them; see adem.alabama.gov; and

WHEREAS, the Atlanta office of GA-EPD will return a spreadsheet of spills it has received in response to a Georgia Open Records Act (GORA) request; see <http://wwals.net/?p=45934>; and

WHEREAS, publishing that spreadsheet or one like it daily should require little extra work or expense by GA-EPD while providing great value to the public; and

WHEREAS, adding an email notification system should be possible and not difficult, for example by slight adaptation of how either Florida or Alabama does it; and

WHEREAS, both Florida and Alabama started publishing spill reports the same day they receive them without or before any law was passed requiring such action; and

WHEREAS, nonetheless the eventual Florida Statute 403.077 could be of use as a model; see <http://wwals.net/?p=37541>; and

WHEREAS, customer satisfaction of GA-EPD's most basic and populous customers, the people of Georgia, would benefit by GA-EPD deciding to publish spill reports the same day it receives them; and

WHEREAS, there is great concern downstream in Florida about Georgia spills, especially that Georgia permit holders are not informing the public of all spills; and

WHEREAS, timely spill publication by GA-EPD would also be of great benefit to the people of the neighboring state of Florida;