Investing in Georgia’s Energy, Land, and Water Resources

Georgia WaterFirst Program
2020 CIFA SRF Workshop

Ansley Jones
December 1, 2020
GEFA Introduction

- GEFA is a state authority founded in 1985.
- GEFA’s mission is to conserve and protect Georgia’s energy, land, and water resources.
  - GEFA has provided more than $4.3 billion in low-interest loans
  - GEFA has funded approximately 1,600 projects

Investing in Georgia’s Energy, Land, and Water Resources
What is the WaterFirst Program?

• A voluntary certification program for local governments

• Requires a comprehensive approach to water planning and management, measured by achievement of checklist items under 9 overarching categories

Investing in Georgia’s Energy, Land, and Water Resources
WaterFirst Principles

WaterFirst communities…

• Work with local and state partners to increase the quality of life through the wise management and protection of water resources
• Take a proactive approach to water resources planning by connecting land use and water quality and quantity
• Pursue environmental excellence beyond what is required by law
• Protect valuable water resources for both environmental and economic benefits today and for future generations

Investing in Georgia’s Energy, Land, and Water Resources
Designation Benefits

Financial Incentives

• 1% interest rate reduction for SRF loans.
• Annual eligibility for Community Block Development Grants for water-related projects.
• Priority for EPD 319 Grant funding (bonus points on application).

Investing in Georgia’s Energy, Land, and Water Resources
WaterFirst Savings on SRF Loans

2 examples…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community, Loan Amount, Amortization Period</th>
<th>Total Interest at Standard Interest Rate</th>
<th>Total Interest at WaterFirst Interest Rate</th>
<th>Total Savings over Amortization Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Griffin: $8 million, 20 years</td>
<td>$1.94 million</td>
<td>$1.04 million</td>
<td>$900,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newton County WSA: $25 million, 30 years</td>
<td>$12.60 million</td>
<td>$7.95 million</td>
<td>$4.65 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Investing in Georgia’s Energy, Land, and Water Resources*
Designation Benefits cont’d

Other Benefits

• State-wide recognition, including road signage, and authorization to use the WaterFirst logo.

• Free attendance to WaterFirst workshops and other networking opportunities.

Investing in Georgia’s Energy, Land, and Water Resources
WaterFirst History

Founded in 2002

- Partnership between Georgia Department of Community Affairs and Keep Georgia Beautiful
- Involvement of other entities: Association of County Commissioners of Georgia, Georgia Municipal Association, Georgia Environmental Protection Division, UGA Carl Vinson Institute, GEFA
- Administration of the program moved to GEFA in 2018

*Investing in Georgia’s Energy, Land, and Water Resources*
Community Participation

- First designees: City of Savannah, Gwinnett County
- Partnerships required when an authority is the applicant
- It is also possible to apply as a multi-jurisdictional partnership (e.g. multiple municipalities within a county)
- 39 designees to date (multijurisdictional partnerships count as 1 designee)
- GEFA’s administration of the program has revamped interest, with 7 designations in the last 2 years

Investing in Georgia’s Energy, Land, and Water Resources
WaterFirst Designees

Investing in Georgia’s Energy, Land, and Water Resources
WaterFirst Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper Application Submission</th>
<th>Onsite Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Application + Water Management Audit (WaterFirst checklist)</td>
<td>• Community holds a presentation, covering its work under the 9 WaterFirst categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>available on GEFA website</td>
<td>• Community gives a tour of somewhere of interest (to highlight WaterFirst efforts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Applications accepted on a rolling basis</td>
<td>• Peer reviewers (a team of WaterFirst designees) provide evaluations with numeric score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Application committee determines if applicant is accepted into</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WaterFirst Class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Investing in Georgia’s Energy, Land, and Water Resources
# Water Management Audit

## WaterFirst Checklist

Please indicate date completed or start date for program elements. For questions about the WaterFirst checklist, please email waterresources@gefa.ga.gov.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Watershed Assessment</th>
<th>Date Completed</th>
<th>In Progress (Start Date)</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
<th>Write a short explanation of what has been completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate existing stream conditions and threats to water quality.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify watershed boundaries and organizations currently working within the watershed to improve and protect water resources.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement a water quality monitoring program to include biological integrity and chemical and physical measures.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine areas where protection is critical as important wildlife habitat.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopt stream corridor protection and buffer requirements.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement and enforce an effective sedimentation and erosion control program.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Require incorporation of water quality improvement measures in stormwater best management practices.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinate land use planning and zoning to promote water quality protection.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopt an open space preservation program.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopt the Part 5 Environmental Criteria.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish parking lot/road width standards to minimize impervious surfaces.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Investing in Georgia’s Energy, Land, and Water Resources**
Checklist Categories

- Watershed assessment
- Stormwater master planning
- Wastewater treatment and management
- Water conservation
- Water supply protection
- Water supply planning
- Water reclamation and reuse
- Educational outreach
- Regional water planning

Investing in Georgia’s Energy, Land, and Water Resources
Technical Assistance

Investing in Georgia’s Energy, Land, and Water Resources
Technical Assistance cont’d

2020 Webinar Series
- 4 sessions with presentations by WaterFirst designees
- Topics covered:
  - Water Supply & Wastewater Master Planning
  - Stormwater Master Planning
  - Water Conservation & Education
  - Watershed Assessment

Investing in Georgia’s Energy, Land, and Water Resources
WaterFirst Community Responsibilities

**MOA holds communities accountable**
- Minimum requirements
- Community-specific goals
- Renewal required after 5 years

**Continual Improvement**
- Communities report on their residential water consumption patterns over the 5-year term
  - Typically we see that conservation practices are working!
- Communities report if the number of residents on private wells or septic tanks has changed over the 5-year term

*Investing in Georgia’s Energy, Land, and Water Resources*
State Water Plan

Investing in Georgia’s Energy, Land, and Water Resources
WaterFirst helps with…

- State-local planning coordination
- Communities’ pursuit of fiscal and environmental sustainability
- Awareness of GEFA and SRF programs
- Interest from other entities, including citizens and nonprofits

Investing in Georgia’s Energy, Land, and Water Resources
Ansley Jones
Water Resources Project Manager

233 Peachtree St NE
Ste 900
Atlanta, GA 30303
gefa.georgia.gov/waterfirst