The great water divide

Severe drought exposed Alabama's and Georgia's mismanagement of water resource

By JOE COOK and APRIL HALL

In the midst of our region's worst drought on record, Georgia and Alabama's governors have engaged in a battle of finger-pointing. The heart of the fight stems from operations of dams owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

But what our rivers and reservoirs need is a lot less finger-pointing and a lot more action on the part of our states' leaders and citizens.

As the drought has worsened, the Corps of Engineers has managed to appease neither Georgia nor Alabama.

Indeed, earlier this month, Alabama Gov. Bob Riley sent a scathing letter to the corps in response to reduced flows at Georgia dams. He reiterated his stance last week at a press conference on the grounds of the Farley Nuclear Plant near the Alabama-Georgia border.

Meanwhile, Georgia Gov. Sonny Perdue continually leverages U.S. congressional delegates to intervene on his state's behalf.

In fact, Georgia is now trying to leverage the president to declare a state of emergency and thus bypass the federal Endangered Species Act and keep more water in Lake Lanier. Gov. Riley followed up with his own letter to the president warning of impacts to downstream industries and communities.

Regardless of the back-and-forth of state-level political ploys it appears that a federal judge will ultimately decide how these waters are divvied up. In September, multi-year court-ordered mediation sessions aimed at reaching a water-sharing agreement for the Alabama-Coos...
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