



March 25, 2019

Dear Governor Kay Ivey, Chairman Albritton, and Chairman Clouse:

I am writing to express my support for funding to develop an Alabama Water Resources Management Plan. During this budgeting cycle, the Alabama Water Resources Commission—along with multiple coordinating state agencies—requested \$2,056,000 for Fiscal Year 2020.<sup>1</sup> The Alabama Rivers Alliance believes this request should be funded in full. This appropriation, which is absent from both the Governor and Senate’s current FY2020 proposal, will deliver numerous benefits to the people of Alabama, including better assessment of water resources, more efficient monitoring of water usage, and the development of a statewide water plan.

The proposed funding will protect water supplies for irrigating crops, recreation, wildlife, and drinking water. Water providers, agriculture, and businesses would all gain more certainty by operating under a better water management regime. Perhaps more importantly, this funding is vital for keeping our rivers and streams flowing and healthy—thus preserving the quality of life for our children and grandchildren. To further underscore this point, all of our neighboring states have invested far more money to manage water supplies—a fact that becomes more and more relevant as interstate water wars continue.

Past droughts have reduced water levels to all-time lows, jeopardizing economic success and our precious way of life in Alabama. By investing in our expert agencies, we have the ability to strengthen local businesses and communities and to avert future disasters.

Water management funding is no new matter in Alabama. For nearly 30 years, leaders in Alabama have called for better systematic oversight. In that time the state has spent millions of dollars and many uncounted man-hours to improve water management. For example, our agencies have spent approximately \$5.2 million to assess state water in the past five years.<sup>2</sup> Without funding to develop a better system, 30 years of hard work and taxpayer funds will largely be in vain. Essentially, that money represents a hefty “down payment” for a house yet to be built.

The Governor is familiar with this issue, as she directed relevant agencies to report their budgeting needs: “I am directing ADEC-OWR and AWRC to review...estimated funding needs to produce a water management plan... In order to request funding for the next fiscal year, I ask

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<sup>1</sup> See Alabama Water Resources Commission, “Roadmap for an Alabama Water Resources Management Plan” at p.2. [ATTACHED]

<sup>2</sup> See Tim Lockette, *Liquid Assets: after spending \$5.2 million, the state has water data, but no water plan,* ANNISTON STAR, December 9, 2018. [ATTACHED]

that you provide a report back to me no later than January, 1, 2019. I will consider a request for additional funding at that time.”<sup>3</sup>

Now is the time to invest in the people of Alabama. In a year with unprecedented attention on infrastructure, we must not forget the vital role of water infrastructure in Alabama. The following FY2020 requests are necessary for rebuilding Alabama:

- \$200,000 to support the development of the Water Resources Management Plan
- \$225,000 to acquire and place surface water flow gages
- \$126,000 to increase surface water quality monitoring
- \$250,000 to increase groundwater-use monitoring
- \$655,000 to enhance water usage tracking
- \$75,000 to improve agency communication and transparency

To learn more about these specific items, please consult the agencies’ detailed funding request.<sup>4</sup> Each of these endeavors is just one piece of the puzzle, and all are necessary to create a scientific, protective water management system.

Finally, an overwhelming majority of your constituency desires these improvements—as many as 80% of Alabamians and 77% of Republican voters.<sup>5</sup> The current budget proposals leave out this crucial funding; I urge you to protect their interests and include the above requests in the FY 2020 budget.

Sincerely,



Curt Chaffin

Policy Director,

Alabama Rivers Alliance

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<sup>3</sup> Letter from Kay Ivey, Gov., State of Alabama, to Kenneth Boswell, Dir., Alabama Dep’t of Econ. And Comm. Affairs (January 24, 2018). [ATTACHED]

<sup>4</sup> Alabama Water Resources Commission, “Proposed Water Resources Management Plan Framework” at p. A-13–B-2.

<sup>5</sup> Memorandum from Alabama Rivers Alliance to Alabama Water Resources Commission (August 16, 2018). [ATTACHED]