

It is an honor to have you here in the RiverCenter, one of our super regional assets. This facility came about due to a "public-private partnership" resulting in over \$100,000,000 being raised to endow the arts.

In fact, many of the things in our region are due to this partnership where the public sectors work with the private sectors to find a "win-win". Which is what we would hope could finally happen with the "WATER WARS"a public-private partnership for water.

Columbus was a planned City. Being the most northern location for river traffic, its very beginning is due to the Chattahoochee River.

Today, we are more aware and sensitive to the importance of the River than we have ever been. Just as the 20 plus mills that used to depend upon it for power, we depend upon it for even more.....our drinking, some of our water recreation and certainly business needs. When you come back next year you should see a 2.5 mile whitewater course in our central business district. This is just another reason that we have rediscovered the Hooch. In 1992, our city was faced with a major problem of Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO).

Once a plan was developed and carefully explained, the citizens of this community voted to tax themselves to the tune of over \$60,000,000 to fix the problem; combined with other local funds, over \$80,000,000 was spent on the \$100,000,000 problem.

Today, Columbus does not have a CSO problem. In fact, we used the opportunity to construct a 15 mile river walk which is actually a nice covering for the gigantic CSO sewer collection system along the River.

We hold this up as an example of having the political will to fix a long-term problem through an innovative and bold effort to make it better than it was. In fact, thanks to some financial support from Congress, in 1995 we were able to build a Combined Sewer National Demonstration Project that was one of the first in the nation and is now being held up

as an international model for dealing with the treatment of wastewater solids.

I hope that it doesn't appear that I am bragging about these accomplishments. Instead, I am trying to illustrate the point that we can be good stewards, not have to break the bank but it takes a commitment and some partners who are willing to find solutions and not just identify problems.

Unfortunately, some cities in our state and nation have chosen to pay fines or try a "patch work" approach instead of being responsible and accountable to take care of their own problems. However, in spite of what we have done to fix our CSO, it helps us and the people downstream.

Wouldn't it be appropriate or even make sense to require everyone using the rivers to do the same?

Simply using average annual stream flows are questionable as to the adequacy. That may be like the guy who said if he stuck his head in an oven and his feet in a freezer, that on the average he should be ok. During these periods, the cost of treatment before a discharge occurs could be many times over what it should be if minimum flows are met and maintained year round. Frankly, we support quality growth and development. We are glad that other areas of the state and Region are growing but we don't think that it should be AT THE EXPENSE of others.

There are other parts of the state in addition to Lake Lanier and Apalachicola River who are just as interested in protecting the environment while ensuring that the future of our citizens in regards to having ample water to sustain their quality of life are enhanced. For example, the more septic tanks that are put into operation in our state cause the flow and return to our rivers to be impacted. Should cities and counties with policies or lack thereof of usage versus minimum returns simply be ignored regardless of the impact on people downstream?

It probably sounds too simple to ever work. Maybe that is part of the problem, we have made this too complicated. Imagine, or some may say hallucinate, with me for a moment. What would happen if every user were required to do the following two things?

1. Put back at least 90% of what is withdrawn on an annual basis out of the rivers.

2. Return this cleaner than when it was withdrawn.

If every user had to adhere to these two items, everyone up and down the rivers would have plenty of water to drink or play on, while still ensuring that the environmental issues were also taken care of. This should not pit one city or state against another. Instead, each would be forced to adhere to the two rules that everyone withdrawing and discharging would operate and live by.

If it were easy, perhaps it could have been fixed a long time ago. But does anyone think that it ever will become easier?

We applaud your interest in this critical issue. We thank you for coming to Columbus for this hearing.

We look forward to your leadership in what we think is one of the most vital issues for the future....sustainable water standards.