

OPINION

Widespread problems of environmental negligence

Recent reports have brought to light the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's malfeasance for failing to properly enforce amendments intended to protect environmentally at-risk communities under the Civil Rights Act. EPA's rejection of 95 percent of "complaints" – justifiable precautions – filed since 1993 is harsh testimony to the agency's negligence, putting reckless profiteering ahead of public health and environmental quality.

Unfortunately, this regulatory breach is just the tip of the iceberg.

After investigating environmental enforcement by both state and federal agencies, with profound deficiencies caused by political concessions made in the opportunistic exploitation of public resources in the guise of "economic development."

Consider the use of water in producing power. As Georgia spends millions of tax-payer dollars on legal fees in fighting the interstate "Water Wars," the Georgia Environmental Protection Division approves the vaporization of millions of gallons of water a day in cooling power plants, despite the availability of far less wasteful alternatives.

In a similar manner, EPD has issued thousands of buffer "variances" that reduce the protective benefits of undisturbed boundaries along Georgia's marshes, rivers and creeks. The impacts caused by buffer disturbances over several decades have never been scientifically evaluated. Continuing to issue such variances on a wholesale basis without understanding their cumulative environmental impacts is willfully negligent.

Another woeful example is that the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Coastal Advisory Council has never evaluated or even discussed environmental consequences of the

Palmetto Pipeline, offshore drilling, coal-ash disposal near Jesup, or the processing and export of natural gas at Elba Island near Savannah.

What kind of "Coastal Management Program" is it that turns a blind eye to such fundamental threats to our region? Surely there's reason to doubt that the \$2 million a year in federal tax dollars granted to DNR is money well spent.

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