

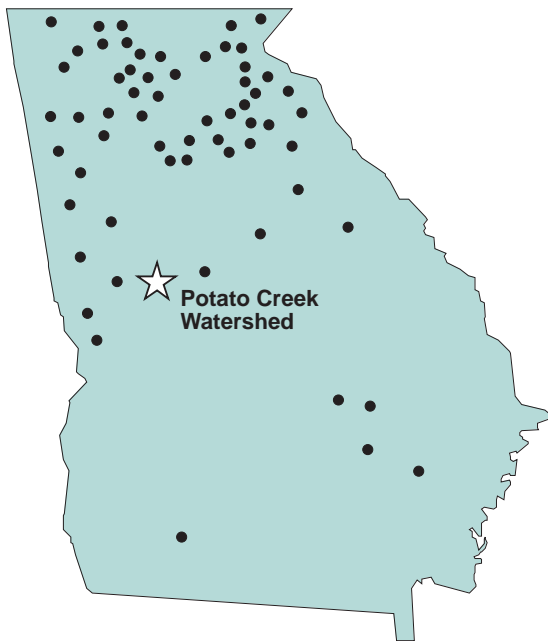
# THE CASE FOR REINVESTING IN THE POTATO CREEK WATERSHED



THE SITUATION: INCREASING  
WATER SUPPLY DEMANDS AND  
GEORGIA'S SAFE DAMS LEGISLATION  
HIGHLIGHT THE NEED FOR A DEPENDABLE  
AND SAFE WATER SUPPLY IN WEST  
CENTRAL GEORGIA.

In July 1994, Tropical Storm Alberto released over 27 inches of rain in, and around, the Potato Creek Watershed. The water supply reservoir for Barnesville, Georgia (pop. 5,438), which is located in an adjacent watershed, collapsed and left the town without a dependable source of quality water for months.

This event brought two important infrastructure needs to light for the citizens of west central Georgia: 1) Safe dams with high design standards, and 2) alternate water sources.



*The Potato Creek Watershed is one of 74 watershed or subwatershed projects in Georgia. More than 357 project dams have been built in Georgia; however, only 19 dams were built with water supply as a purpose.*



## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- Size:** Covers 154,000 acres in portions of Spalding, Lamar, Pike and Upson Counties in West Central Georgia.
- Number of dams:** Nine, none for water supply.
- Project start:** April 1959
- Project end:** 1970
- Primary Purpose:** Flood control and land treatment
- Population served:** About 15,000



## PARTNERS

- Towaliga Soil and Water Conservation District
- United States Forest Service
- United States Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service

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*“If a dam wasn’t build according to NRCS [design standards], it probably broke [during Tropical Storm Alberto].”*

**Geraldine Pippen  
Local Farmer**

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### POTATO CREEK WATERSHED: AN INVESTMENT WORTH PROTECTING AND ENHANCING

The damage to real and personal property associated with Tropical Storm Alberto amounted to the worst natural disaster in Georgia’s history. Watershed dams and conservation practices installed as a result of the PL-566 projects withstood much of the damaging effects of this event.

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*“The watershed dams were responsible for protecting resources and property, preventing more damage to local roads and infrastructures, and we have an interest in NRCS designing more practices in the future.”*

**Lamar, Monroe, and  
Pike County Commissioners**

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In contrast, unprotected cropland and dams not built to Natural Resources Conservation Service [NRCS] standards, sustained heavy damage. Estimated benefits to all resources through flood protection provided by the nine dams in the Potato Creek Watershed is \$364,000 annually. An initial total investment of \$485,000 was required to install these nine dams.

By adding water supply to dams in the Potato Creek Watershed, the benefits realized at the local level will greatly increase. The nine watershed dams could store in excess of 467 million gallons for water supply. This will ensure a viable, productive, and improved standard of living for the communities in this four-county area.



*Watershed dams can be modified to provide water supply.*



### STATEWIDE PERSPECTIVE ON WATER SUPPLY AND DAM SAFETY

Interstate management of water resources historically has received little attention. However, recent studies in this region indicate that competing water demands will outpace current water availability with increasing frequency in the future. Existing dams have the potential for providing alternative sources of water.

Georgia’s Safe Dams Law impacts many existing dams. Currently, 141 of Georgia’s 357 project dams have been classified as high hazard by the State requiring varying degrees of rehabilitation in order to comply with the legislation.

Reinvesting in Georgia’s watersheds has the potential to create alternate sources of water for local communities and address the requirements of Georgia’s Safe Dam Law. This is a win-win situation for the residents of Georgia.

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## The Bottom Line:

**BY NOT UPGRADING THESE DAMS, WEST CENTRAL GEORGIA IS MISSING OUT ON OPPORTUNITIES TO KEEP COMMUNITIES AND THEIR WATER SUPPLIES SAFE.**