



What is a Regionally Important Resource?

A Regionally Important Resource (RIR) is a natural or historic resource that is of sufficient size or importance to warrant special consideration by the local governments having jurisdiction over that resource. The Georgia Planning Act of 1989 (the same law that requires comprehensive planning by local governments) authorizes the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to identify RIRs statewide and to coordinate the preparation of a regional resource plan for each RIR. Once designated as an RIR, activities sponsored by a local government (such as issuing a permit, building a public facility, etc.) that may have an impact on the resource will be subject to intergovernmental review for consistency with the plan for that RIR.

Nominating an RIR

A resource may be nominated at any time by submitting an application to DCA. Any organization or individual is eligible to nominate a resource for RIR designation. Each application is evaluated and the Board of Community Affairs selects resources for further work towards RIR designation.

Regional Resource Plan

Once a resource is selected as an RIR candidate by the Board of Community Affairs, the process of developing a regional resource plan for the RIR is begun. The plan consists of:

- a boundary map and description
- a list of activities (such as rezonings, development permits, sewer tap-ons) subject to intergovernmental review
- general policies to guide decision making regarding the resource
- enhancement activities that may be undertaken to improve protection and management of the resource.

Examples of policies or enhancement activities that might be incorporated in a typical regional resource plan include: discouraging land uses which are incompatible with resource protection; encouraging beautification activities, such as litter or sign control; providing incentives (tax breaks, infrastructure improvements, etc.) to encourage desirable types of development in and around the RIR; and directing publicly funded infrastructure improvements (water lines, roads, etc.) to enhance the resource.

All affected local governments, state and federal agencies, property owners, and other interested parties are given an opportunity to have input into the preparation of the plan, and public meetings are conducted for each plan prior to being officially adopted.

Local Government Role

Once the plan has been adopted by the Board of Community Affairs and the resource thereby becomes a formally

designated RIR, local governments will be responsible for:

- Taking the RIR into account in their local comprehensive plans.
- Submitting any local government actions that may impact the RIR to their regional development center for intergovernmental review. Examples of local government actions that may be subject to review by the regional development center include: issuing a building permit, taking action on a rezoning request, extending a road, etc.

Intergovernmental Review Process

The intergovernmental review process for each proposed local government action potentially affecting an RIR consists of the following:

- The regional development center distributes a summary of the proposed action to other affected local governments and public agencies, asking for their comments.
- The regional development center evaluates the likely impact of the proposed action, and determines whether the action is consistent with the regional resource plan.
- Based on the evaluation of impact and comments received from affected parties, the regional development center determines whether the proposed action will have negative impacts on the RIR, and notifies the local government of this finding.

The regional development center's report on the results of intergovernmental review process is advisory in nature, designed to help the local government anticipate possible effects of its proposed action on the RIR. The local government is encouraged to take this information into account in deciding whether to proceed with the action as originally planned, or to modify its action to mitigate any undesirable impacts uncovered in the RIR review.

For more information about Regionally Important Resources, please contact [Winnis Preece](#) with the Office of Planning and Quality Growth at 404-679-5279.



Georgia Department of
Community Affairs

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Accessed in March, 2005