SB 447 – 'Muddy Waters' Bill

Legislative Rubric from Science for Georgia

SB 447 - This bill would roll back requirements in the Georgia Erosion & Sedimentation Control Act (1975), intended to keep Georgia waterways clear from mud. The "E&S Act" was passed in the 1970s to keep Georgia's red clay from filling up our creeks and rivers with mud. The proposal reduces new, shorter 14-day timelines for local governments to review complex construction plans on large residential communities, build-to-rent projects, warehouses, and data centers and provide clear reasons for denial of permits based on unambiguous criteria.

Criteria	Variables			
Impact **Who is going to be impacted? Is it equitable? List stakeholders & opinions.**	**Negative**		Positive	
	The bill would reduce local control by introducing shorter timelines for review, reducing the ability of local areas to plan and reduce pollution. Local governments are limited in their ability to adopt stringent building codes, and short timelines reduce the ability of localities to address incomplete submissions, poor plans, and revisions that often cause delays, according to the Georgia Municipal Association. The timeline also limits the ability of municipalities to conduct environmental oversight to protect waterways. The bill is intended to speed up housing permitting to address a lack of affordable housing but applies broadly to large commercial projects like data centers, creating more complexity than simply addressing housing.			
Reach **Does it reach its target audience?**	0 - No impact on target audience.	1 - Impacts narrow segment.	2 - Impacts Majority; Exceptions	**3 - Impacts entire target audience**
	This bill extends to all Georgia municipalities, imposing a shorter timeline for review. The bill was intended to address housing shortages, but the language extends beyond its target audience of housing into large commercial projects, such as data centers, creating a very broad and wide impact.			
Scientific Merit **Does it utilize scientific research accurately?**	YES - this does follow scientific research accurately. Here's why....		**NO - this does not present scientific research accurately.**	
	Sedimentation from construction is the leading source of non-point source pollution to rivers in Georgia. Excessive sediment decreases viability for aquatic life, including blocking light for plants, decreasing food and oxygen for fish, and decreasing fish reproduction. It also increases water treatment costs, clogs pipes and increases flooding, and causes property damage. As Georgia's population increases, these issues become increasingly important, and rollbacks to sediment protection have large impacts on Georgia waterways.			
Financial Feasibility	0 - Extremely high costs	1 - Expensive but can be done	**2 - Slight**	3 - No financial burden

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Is it financially feasible? or does this have burdensome finances (higher taxes, future costs, etc)?	In Georgia, the average cost of permitting delays is less than one percent of the final purchase price.			
Political Feasibility Level of opposition and partisan disagreement.	0 - Majority disagreed, regardless of party.	1 – Split along party lines	**2 - Minimal Opposition**	3 - Complete consensus (zero to five 'Nays').
	The bill is fully Republican sponsored, but passed the Senate with 46 yeas and 4 nays.			
Measurable Metrics? We recommend looking at these 3 metrics. Is the data available or being measured?	0 - no data	1 - some data / not accessible	2 - most data / somewhat accessible	**3 - complete transparency**
	Sedimentation levels and environmental effects are measurable in data, and average costs of permitting delays are also available.			