

# Atlanta Constitution

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## Columbia researchers: Drought? What drought?

By [Alexis Stevens](#)

Remember when every vehicle in town was filthy and even Gov. Sonny Perdue prayed for rain?

The [drought](#) in 2007 that nearly wiped out our water supply and forced Georgians to conserve really wasn't that bad, according to Columbia University researchers. And it had nothing to do with global warming.

"It actually was not unprecedented," says [drought](#) researcher Dr. Richard Seager. The researchers studied the 2005-2007 [drought](#) that affected the southeastern U.S.. The findings appear in the October issue of the Journal of Climate

A [drought](#) during 2000 was actually worse than the recent one, Seager said Friday. Researchers looked at rain gauge data for the last 100 years, tree ring data and climate model simulations.

So why did it seem so bad? Seager said that's because of poor planning. As the population in the area until increased, government leaders failed to make sure water resources were adequate. From 1990 until 2007, Georgia's population grew 46 percent, he said

"What made it special this time was not the climate, but that the population was going up," Seager said. "It was a two-year long [drought](#), but there have been three or four of those in the last century."

But what the study doesn't factor in is Lake Lanier, says Bert Brantley, spokesman for Gov. Perdue.

"It was a natural [drought](#), but a man-made crisis," Brantley said.

The [drought](#) was worsened by the amount of water released from Lanier by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, he said.

It's likely the southeast will see [drought](#) conditions again in the future. But hopefully, all of the water conservation lessons Atlantans learned two years ago will pay off.

"We'll be smarter," Brantley said. "And the Corps will be ready."

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