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For more information, contact:

Cheryl Mayerik
Atlanta Regional Commission
404.463.3296
404.310.1882 (cell)

Gwinnett County Advances its Commitment to Sustainability

(Atlanta, Ga., Jan. 30, 2015) -- This week, Gwinnett County was one of seven local governments to be recognized by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) for leadership in implementing policies and practices that contribute to efficient and sustainable use of resources in metro Atlanta. The county was honored for upgrading to a Gold level Certified Green Community at ARC's January Board meeting, which was followed by a reception where jurisdiction representatives and ARC Board members discussed the progressive initiatives undertaken to receive certification. ARC recognized Gwinnett County, along with three other counties – Cherokee, DeKalb, and Fulton, and the cities of Alpharetta, Decatur, and Sandy Springs, which either renewed or upgraded certification in ARC's five-year-old Green Communities program.

Commenting on Wednesday's presentation, ARC Chairman Kerry Armstrong said, "The seven local governments the Atlanta Regional Commission recognized today are working hard to use resources wisely and well, and I commend them for their achievements. Their efforts are contributing to cleaner air, reduced water demand, less waste going into landfills and more. As a result, we have a cleaner, greener region."

The county was first certified in 2010 at the Bronze level and recertified in 2012 at the Silver level. It becomes the first county in the region to obtain certified Gold status. Some of the actions Gwinnett took to become Gold level certified include:

- Installing bicycle parking at all 60 of its community facilities, allowing visitors to its buildings another option for getting there.
- Conducting water audits on a total of 113 government buildings by the end of 2018. The initial portion of the audit and conservation measures took place in 23 buildings in 2014. It is

anticipated that the audit and conservation measures will save approximately 1.3 million gallons of water per year – enough to fill two Olympic-sized swimming pools.

- Recognizing the key benefits offered by shared parking, joint parking, and reduced parking (including limits on the quantity of parking spaces) by including requirements for shared and reduced off-street parking in its Unified Development Ordinance.
- Pioneering Gwinnett County Senior Services’ use of a cloud-based program that searches for the most efficient delivery routes for each Meals on Wheels driver. The app is delivering big dividends – reducing fuel costs by 28 percent, increasing meals delivered by 8 percent and reducing emissions by 1.75 tons in the first year of use.

Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners Chairman Charlotte Nash said, “It took the combined efforts of many Gwinnett staff members to achieve the ARC Green Communities certification, and I’m proud that we were able to upgrade our status to gold this year. We are setting a good example by building a more sustainable future for our children and grandchildren as well as generating costs savings that benefit residents today.”

ARC developed the Green Communities Program to foster greater environmental stewardship and to recognize local governments that invest in programs leading to a more sustainable region. The nationally recognized program showcases the ways in which local governments are helping to transform the region by reducing their environmental footprint. Since 2009, 18 jurisdictions in the 10-county region have been certified. Cities and counties earn Green Communities certification by implementing practices and policies in 10 categories, ranging from energy efficiency and green building to transportation and water efficiency. ARC’s Green Communities program was the first program in the country seeking to transform a region by promoting sustainability through a “green” certification program for local governments.

Complete information about ARC’s Green Communities Certification Program, including the measures each community has implemented, is available on the agency’s website at www.atlantaregional.com/greencommunities.

The Atlanta Regional Commission is the official planning agency for the 10-county Atlanta Region, including Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry and Rockdale counties as well as the City of Atlanta and 69 other cities. The Atlanta Regional Commission serves as a catalyst for regional progress by focusing leadership, attention and planning resources on key regional issues.

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Gwinnett County Contact:

Heather Sawyer, Public Relations Manager
770.822.7035
heather.sawyer@gwinnettcounty.com