

# **Georgia Department of Natural Resources**

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May 16, 2011

## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Council Members

**FROM:** David Ashley, Jacobs  
Tai-Yi Su, Jacobs

**SUBJECT:** Local Governments and Utilities Information Meeting  
Meeting Summary  
Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Water Planning Council

**CC:** Jeff Larson, GA EPD  
Brian Baker, GA EPD

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## **Georgia Comprehensive Statewide Water Management Plan Regional Water Planning**

### **Local Governments and Utilities Information Meeting Summary**

**Meeting Date:** May 5, 2011

**Location:** Savannah Rapids Pavilion  
3300 Evans to Locks Rd.  
Martinez, Georgia 30907

#### **1) Introduction**

Chairman Ron Cross welcomed the group to the local government and utility outreach meeting. He indicated that this is one of the last meetings of the Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Council, and that the focus of the meeting was to present the final recommendations resulting from the regional planning process. Chairman Cross recognized the Council's Planning Contractor David Ashley (Jacobs), Jeff Larson (EPD), Brian Baker (EPD), Tom Wiedmeier (Technical Committee Chair), and Bruce Azevedo (Plan Review Committee Chair) who were seated at the front of the room. At Chairman Cross's request, all attendees introduced themselves to the group.

Chairman Cross encouraged all attendees to pick up a copy of the Executive Summary that was available as a meeting handout, and he directed attendees to page ES-3 of the document. This page presents the main points of the document. Population projections and water demands were estimated through 2050, and based on these projections, Resource Assessment results show that source water needs can be met throughout the Region, assuming the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) does not change current operational protocols for reservoirs in and upstream of the Region. Chairman Cross defined “gap” for the group and stated that he was thankful that the Savannah River Basin portion of the Region was one of the few basins without a water availability gap [Note from Planning Contractor: The Ogeechee River Basin portion of the Region is predicted to have an instream flow shortage after meeting projected 2050 consumptive water needs (mostly from agricultural irrigation)]. In addition to surface water supplies, groundwater aquifers in the Region also have ample supply for needs projected through 2050.

Chairman Cross indicated that Dissolved Oxygen (DO) is the major water quality issue facing the basin because of its relationship to the Savannah Harbor deepening. A DO Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is being developed that will set a total allowable amount of discharges to the Savannah River, and all dischargers along the Savannah River will have to implement controls to ensure that water quality is maintained.

Chairman Cross indicated to the group that the public comment period for all plans will begin on May 9<sup>th</sup> and will extend through June 23<sup>rd</sup> (45 days). He requested that if anyone has concerns, they please relay them to EPD during the comment period.

Chairman Cross thanked the Council members, and Council Co-Chair Charles Newton, for their service throughout this planning period.

## **2) Overview of the Initial Recommended Regional Water Plan and Recommended Water Management Practices/Implementation Responsibilities**

David Ashley thanked Chairman Cross and Columbia County for the use of their facility for this meeting.

Ashley indicated that the Councils have done a lot of work over the last 2 years, and that the presentation will provide a brief overview of the planning results.

Ashley showed a map highlighting the ten Water Planning Regions plus the previously existing Metro North Georgia Water Planning District.

### **Population and Water Demand Forecasts**

Ashley reviewed the population forecasts for the Region and indicated that growth throughout the Region is projected to reach nearly one million by 2050. The Region’s current water withdrawals were estimated at 325 MGD in 2010, and future demands are projected to reach 462 MGD by 2050.

Ashley stated that much of the Region uses septic systems for wastewater needs, so wastewater flows are lower than water demands; wastewater flows are estimated at 200 MGD for 2010 and are projected to reach 289 MGD by 2050. The Vision and goals defined by the Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Council were discussed.

#### Resource Assessments

Ashley reviewed the surface water availability modeling, provided an overview of how EPD performed modeling and identified the planning nodes. He stated that EPD had evaluated water availability against estimated demands to identify any availability gaps.

Groundwater availability was modeled by aquifer, and the aquifers of Region include the Crystalline-Rock Aquifer above the Fall Line and the Cretaceous and Floridan Aquifers south of the Fall Line. Aquifers were not modeled per Council region, but based on usage state wide. The aquifers that lie within the Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Region show abundant water supplies, considerably greater than their current usage.

Ashley provided an overview of the water quality modeling performed by EPD. The model defined assimilative capacity (the amount of wasteload that can be discharged without impairing water quality). Some streams with low assimilative capacity were identified within the Region, but most were in the southern parts, where streams have naturally occurring lower DO levels. For most of the Region, the streams can support the wasteload projected from future wastewater flows; however, 14 counties in the Region may need some additional wastewater treatment capacity and other wastewater collection infrastructure.

The 303(d) list identifies known stream impairments that are mostly a result of non-point source pollution. Approximately 875 miles of stream segments are listed as impaired water within the Savannah - Upper Ogeechee Region. The most common impairments are fecal coliform, Mercury in fish tissue, and biota impairments.

#### Summary of Water Resources Issues

Ashley presented a summary of major water quantity issues for the Region. Two issues were identified, as follows: 1) EPD's Future Resource Assessment showed that in-stream flow targets may not be met in the Ogeechee River Basin; and 2) additional water withdrawal and wastewater treatment capacity may be needed in fast-growing counties.

Ashley also gave a summary of the major water quality issues for the Region. The main issues include: 1) additional wastewater planning and monitoring is needed to address and verify the extent of limited assimilative capacity in stream segments; 2) additional wastewater treatment capacity is needed in fast-growing counties; and 3) significant organic load reduction targets are likely for the Savannah River and Harbor for both Georgia and South Carolina dischargers.

#### Management Practices and Implementation Responsibilities

Ashley indicated that the plan provides an overview of all identified water issues by county within a summary table in Section 5. To help address these issues, the Council recommended a total of 16 priority management practices, and 14 additional management practices across the basin. Management practices consist of demand, supply, and water quality management practices as well as educational initiatives. Implementation of these practices will be through local governments, municipal and industrial permittees, agricultural water users, and partnering agencies.

Ashley detailed the implementation schedule, including Plan adoption by September 30, 2011. The selected management measures will be implemented per the schedule outlined in the Plans with “Initial Steps” slated for implementation by 2011-2012. “Short-term Actions” are slated for implementation by 2012- 2016, and “Long-term Actions” are slated for 2017 (after the next Plan revision process) and beyond.

#### Recommendations to the State

Ashley indicated that the Council also made recommendations to the State to address some Council concerns. Included in these recommendations were considerations for long-term funding for plan implementation; encouragement of collaboration with Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission, the US Army Corps of Engineers, USGS, and South Carolina Environment and Natural Resources agencies. Additionally, the Council recommended that the state continue to study and evaluate existing in-stream flow policies, and encouraged EPD to assist in streamlining the reservoir permitting process.

Ashley stated that there was also additional data that the Council would like to see made available for future planning, including an additional planning node in the Upper Ogeechee Basin, an agricultural metering program, additional flow monitoring and studies for in-stream flow needs/policy, and continued monitoring on streams with anticipated assimilative capacity issues.

#### Plan Update and Amendment

Ashley indicated that State Water Plan requires that the Plan be updated every 5 years. The current planning schedule includes opening of the public comment period by May 9<sup>th</sup>, collection of comments through June 23<sup>rd</sup>, and plan finalization by September 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **3) Review of EPD’s Web Comment Collection Tool**

Ashley introduced Katherine Gurd to review the comment process for the Initially Recommended Regional Water Plans. Gurd referred attendees to a 1-page web comment tool fact sheet that was available as a meeting handout. She indicated that the Savannah Upper-Ogeechee Initial Recommended Regional Water Plan would be (and was) released on May 9, 2011 through a variety of websites: these include [www.georgiawaterplanning.org](http://www.georgiawaterplanning.org), [www.savannahupperogeechee.org](http://www.savannahupperogeechee.org), and [www.gaepdcommentcenter.org](http://www.gaepdcommentcenter.org). She indicated that the primary means for public comment will be through the Georgia EPD Comment Center ([www.gaepdcommentcenter.org](http://www.gaepdcommentcenter.org)). Gurd reviewed the process for accessing and downloading these plans, as well as the process for public comment.

4) Question/Answer and Comment Period - Ron Cross, Chair and David Ashley, Planning Contractor

Chairman Cross recognized all Council members in attendance and encouraged attendees to talk to them after the meeting and ask questions. He then opened the floor for questions.

Q: James Henry (Jenkins County) inquired if all Counties within the Region would get a copy of the full Plan?

A: Chairman Cross indicated that full plans would be available online Monday, May 9th.

Comment: Tai-Yi Su indicated that some copies of the plan were also available after the meeting, and that EPD is printing 100 copies of each Plan for each Council, so copies can be requested through the Council or EPD.

Q: Duncan Johnson (DNR) asked how much water is available in the basin?

A: Ashley indicated that this varies by location within the Region and by seasons. He indicated that the regulated low flow in the Savannah River below Lake Thurmond was around 3600 cfs or approximately ~2.3 billion gallons per day. Average annual flow at Augusta over the last 60 years has actually been over 9000 cfs, or 5.8 billion gallons per day.

Comment: Chairman Cross noted that this is a large quantity of water in relationship to the Region's needs.

Comment: Johnson indicated that he would like to see the emphasis on USACE changing their protocols on in-stream flow. Treatment capacity and interconnectivity are important issues for the basin, but also runoff is a large factor when compared to municipal discharges.

Comment: Chairman Cross agreed with the comments, and indicated that he felt that the water the Region puts back in the Savannah River is cleaner than what they take out, but as regulations change, this level of treatment still may not be enough.

Comment: Bruce Azevedo noted that both projected water needs and shortages by county are included in Section 5 of the Plan. This data will help counties within the region determine how to work together.

Comment: Su noted that the Plan's Supplemental Documents, which will also be available online, have county-level forecasts & analysis.

Comment: Jeff Larson (EPD) encouraged the public to review the Initial Recommended Regional Water Plans, and stated that EPD values their input and is looking for feedback.

Comment: Chairman Cross agreed with Larson and encouraged review and comments. He asked each attendee to consider how the Plan might affect their City or County.

With no additional questions, Chairman Cross adjourned the meeting and stated that Open Stations would be available after the meeting for a review of materials and opportunities to ask additional questions.

**Meeting Attendees**

*Public In attendance*

Charles Allen  
Larry Anderson, City of Wrens  
Lindsay Averett, Oglethorpe Power  
Herman Baker, City of Wadley Mayor  
Henry Brown, City of Lincoln  
Frank Carl, Savannah Riverkeeper  
Margaret Doss, Columbia County  
James Henry, Jenkins County  
Duncan Johnson, DNR  
Wade Johnson, Lincoln County

Beth Connell, DSM Chemicals  
John Leonard, DSM Chemicals  
Harris Little, City of Carnesville  
Bill Morris, Columbia County  
George Patty, Augusta Planning and Zoning  
Robert Pavey, Augusta Chronicle  
Rhett Bickley  
Robert Perry  
David Quebedeaux (USACE-Thurmond  
Lake)  
Mark Quebedeaux

*Council Members in attendance*

Bruce Azevedo  
Charles Cawthon  
Ron Cross  
Donald Dye  
Dan Fowler

Tim McGill  
Charles Newton  
R. Lee Webster  
Tenia Workman  
Tom Wiedmeier

*Staff in attendance*

Jeff Larson (EPD)  
Brian Baker (EPD)  
David Ashley (Jacobs)  
Tai-Yi Su (Jacobs)  
Katherine McLeod Gurd (AECOM)