

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Environmental Protection Division, Watershed Protection Branch
4220 International Parkway, Suite 101, Atlanta, Georgia 30354
Linda MacGregor, P. E., Branch Chief 404/675-6232
FAX: 404/675-6247

December 23, 2010

DRAFT MEMORANDUM

TO: SUO Council Members

FROM: Jeff Larson, GA EPD
Bill Martello, Jacobs

SUBJECT: Council Meeting #8 Summary
Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Water Planning Council (Council)

Georgia Comprehensive Statewide Water Management Plan Regional Water Planning

Council Meeting 8 Summary

Meeting Date: December 14, 2010
Location: The Thomson Depot, Thomson, Georgia
Attendees: See attached list

1) Welcome and Introduction, General Topics

Ron Cross, Council Chairman, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending. Council members, EPD staff, planning contractor (PC), partnering agencies, and other attendees introduced themselves.

Chairman Cross discussed that the EPD Director had allowed a 90-day extension to all planning councils. It was suggested that the councils use this time for additional public outreach efforts. In particular, outreach to newly elected mayors and county commissioners.

Chairman Cross asked about the regulatory aspects of the Regional Water Plan (Plan). Mr. Bill Martello (Planning Contractor for the SUO Council) responded that the draft Plan included an implementation schedule and benchmarks for priority management practices, which included updates to local water and wastewater master plans, and that these could be used in permitting. Mr. Jeff Larson (EPD) responded that the Plan would be used as a guide for permitting. Mr. Martello suggested that EPD consider setting future performance goals and let local water resources plans outline their approach to implementing the management practices for meeting these goals. The Council discussed how the Plan may affect water

utility permitting and questioned how EPD would use the management practices in the Plan in a regulatory context. The Plan was discussed as a document to help guide local water and wastewater master planning.

Chairman Cross discussed the new Water Stewardship Act and that in his community the outdoor watering schedules contained in the Act would not allow them to continue with their previously successful odd/even outdoor watering ordinance. He believes that his community had finally found something that all the residences were following and the change in legislation would likely have a negative effect on something he believed was working well. Ms. Deatre Denion (Department of Community Affairs) responded that the new legislation was promoted by the green industry in an effort to expand conservation programs beyond outdoor irrigation and that they endorsed the provisions of the Act.

Chairman Cross asked if the Council would like to develop a future organization to monitor implementation progress of the Plan and continue with regional planning efforts. Mr. Larson advised that there has been no official plan for the Council to continue beyond the current term. However, the Council could decide to develop a future organization. Chairman Cross suggested that there be a group for the Savannah River basin including parties from Georgia and South Carolina. Chairman Cross stated his desire for the development of a Savannah River basin coalition. He is planning on contacting all bordering governments in Georgia and South Carolina to form a permanent group. His thoughts were that the group would begin as a public sector entity with county commission chairs and mayors. They would then decide if they wanted to add other potential stakeholders.

Q: How is this Plan going to affect future utilities coming into the region (specifically power utilities)?

Chairman Cross responded that similar to the old way of determining future water availability but the Plan would be used as a starting point. The thermoelectric facility in the region, Plant Vogtle, will double its water use in the next 10 years. EPD incorporated water withdrawals associated with Plant Vogtle into the future water use projections.

Mr. Martello commented that grant money is available through the 319 program with \$100,000 designated for each planning council (application deadline January 31, 2011). The grant money must be matched with 40% local funding (60% grant). EPD suggested that projects proposed to be partially funded through the 319 program be included with the Plan. Ms. Denion pointed out local governments could use in-kind services for the funding match. Sam Booker (public) suggested the local adopt-a-stream programs promoted by EPD. He stated that if a county already had a program, the current budget could be used as the matching fund for the grant. Mr. Martello stated that interested members could contact Chris Faulkner (EPD 319 coordinator) at 404.675.1628 and an EPD prepared handout was provided to the Council.

The Council discussed revising the goal that restricts interbasin transfers. Chairman Cross recommended no interbasin transfers out of the Savannah River for supporting economic growth of communities outside the river basin, especially to the detriment of communities within the basin. The available water should be used to continue meeting future basin needs. It was pointed out that interbasin transfers already exist with those near Greenville, South Carolina, from Lake Keowee (owned by Duke Power). Also, a proposed biomass electric generation plant in Warren County (in the Ogeechee River Basin) plans to use reclaimed water from the City of Thomson (Savannah River Basin) for cooling purposes. Chairman

Cross talked about how we could discourage interbasin transfers from the Savannah River. Mr. Martello noted that there is a Public Notice on an EPD proposed rule change regarding interbasin transfers with a DNR board public hearing scheduled for Jan 5th, 2011. Chairman Cross mentioned that some believed that the language of the proposed rule should be changed from “should” to “shall” to make the statements more mandatory. Mr. Larry Walker suggested that the Council send a letter and include comments on interbasin transfer. Mr. Pat Goran brought up that the Council had already said they were adamantly against interbasin transfer. Chairman Cross said that the Plan’s language would need to be reworked concerning interbasin transfer for adoptability of the Plan. The Plan still could show that the Council is against interbasin transfer, but the Council would not be allowed to ban it entirely. Chairman Cross received consensus that the Council would provide comments to EPD on the proposed rule change.

PC Martello discussed the meeting agenda and objectives.

2) Committee Review & Updates

Mr. Martello stated that the Plan Review Committee (chaired by Bruce Azevedo) had been working with the PC on reviewing the draft Plan as sections were updated.

Tom Wiedmeier noted that the Technical Committee had been involved in selection of management practices for the Plan. The committee is aware that EPD has responded to the initial proposed management practices and has requested additional conservation measures be specified. Braye Boardman suggested that Georgia and South Carolina share the Savannah River and everyone needs to be conscious of efficient water use. Mr. Wiedmeier discussed management practices and how the management practices were selected based on the goal to closing gaps within the region. Vice-Chair Charlie Newton was concerned that if management practices not required for closing gaps were included in the Plan, those management practices would be used for permitting conditions and may end up hurting local governments. Mr. Goran indicated there had been some confusion within the Council regarding the relationship between planning and regulatory compliance and how the Water Stewardship Act fits into the State Water Planning effort.

The Council’s Interstate Coordination Committee has been involved with the Savannah River Basin Advisory Council and Scott McGregor attended the last meeting in South Carolina on December 8. Scott Willett of Anderson Regional Joint Water System summarized the key items that were discussed: a presentation from the USACE on the Comprehensive 2 Plan, Level 4 Drought Operating Plan (which would be their emergency action plan during severe drought), and the expansion of the Savannah Harbor. There was a presentation from the Thurmond Institute (Clemson University) on their analysis of lake level impacts on the economy for communities surrounding Lake Hartwell, and a presentation from Duke Power on relicensing process for the facility at Lake Keowee and the stream modeling being done in conjunction with the USACE.

Mr. Martello discussed the ad hoc meeting held on December 7 concerning Environmental Flow policy. EPD currently allows three options on minimum instream flow (monthly 7Q10, percentage of mean annual flow, or site specific studies) and this issue is receiving further study and analysis. Minimum instream flows are typically determined based on either monthly 7Q10 flow or natural flow (whichever is less). This is how current water withdrawal permits are issued but this may change in the future.

It was noted that the TMDL stakeholders group has met, selected a facilitator, and are moving forward toward a mutually agreeable TMDL implementation plan.

3) Draft Plan Review and Management Practices

Mr. Martello provided an overview of the management practices specific to surface water quantity gaps at the Eden Node and at the Little Tennessee Node. Management practices for closing assimilative capacity (surface water quality) gaps were also discussed. Programmatic and regulatory management practices were reviewed, especially those critical to implementing water conservation and water use efficiency. Management practices are divided in the draft Plan as *Priority Practices* and *Additional Recommended Practices*.

Q: Concerning WS1, Mr. Walker was not sure if a feasibility study could be considered a management practice and that this management practice may need to be removed or written in the Plan in a different way.

Vice Chair Newton asked if the feasibility study is needed to determine cost, who would be responsible for such a cost? He commented that the way the management practice is written gives agricultural stakeholders flexibility in the management practice.

Mr. Martello presented the *Implementation Schedule* and *Benchmarks* for all of the priority management practices and discussed how they were organized.

Q: What about groundwater wells affecting river level?

Mr. Martello responded that this was why site specific investigation is necessary for groundwater sources.

Q: Is the Little Tennessee gap a future gap and not current gap?

Mr. Martello responded that the gap does not currently exist. The water demand forecast assumed future demand using the capacity of an existing Rabun County withdrawal permit for municipal or industrial use and this may affect the available instream flows in the future.

Mr. Wiedmeier expressed concerns about the management practice suggesting moratorium on septic systems being too harsh and suggested the language be revised. There was general consensus from the Council.

Mr. Boardman questioned the definition of “Master Plan” in WQ1 and WS6.

Mr. Martello responded that it refers to community/system specific Water and Wastewater Master Plans and not a Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Walker brought up the fact that Rabun had high unaccounted for water (UAW) and wanted to make sure UAW is addressed in the management practices. Ms. Denion discussed new requirements on programs (annual water audit) for UAW in the Water Stewardship Act.

Mr. Boardman asked why the 90-day extension was given? Mr. Martello stated that other councils requested more time.

Chairman Cross suggested that the Council hold a joint meeting with the Coastal Georgia Council in January.

4) Schedule for Completion

Mr. Martello closed the meeting by asking everyone to review the draft Plan and submit comments to him. It is proposed that the next council meeting be scheduled during the first week in February. He proposed several interim milestones:

- Week of January 10 – Technical Committee and Plan Review Committee meet to compile preliminary comments.
- Week of January 17 – Compile all Council comments and suggest modifications. Distribute revised draft Plan to Council (end of January).
- February 3 – Hold Council Meeting #9. Review and discuss proposed modifications to draft Plan. Obtain Council concurrence with changes.
- February 15 – Prepare final draft Plan for submittal to EPD.

5) Elected Official and Public Comments

Chairman Cross asked if there were any final comments, and there were none.

6) Meeting Wrap-up

Chairman Cross thanked the Council members for attending the meeting. Chairman Cross thanked Vice Chairman Newton for coordinating the meeting space and the meeting was adjourned.

7) Action Items

- PC to draft response to EPD on proposed interbasin transfer rule change
- PC to provide location for Council Meeting #9
- PC to draft modified language for the interbasin transfer goal for Council review

CM#8 Meeting Attendees

Council Members in attendance

Ron Cross, Chair
Braye Boardman
Jerry Boling
Don Dye
Mike Eskew
Dan Fowler (Alternate)
Pat Goran (Alternate)
Toye Hill
Tom Jordan
Chris McCorkle
Tim McGill
Charlie Newton
Larry Walker
Lee Webster
Tom Wiedmeier

Council Members not in attendance

Bruce Azevedo
Charles Cawthon
Deke Copenhaver
Barry Cronic
Patricia Goodwin (Alternate)
Larry Guest
Ralph Hudgens (Ex-Officio)
Robert Jenkins
Scott MacGregor
Eddie Madden
James H. Newsome
Lewis Sanders
Stan Sheppard
Tom McCall (Ex-Officio)
Tenia Workman

Staff in attendance

Jeff Larson, EPD
Brian Baker, EPD
Bill Martello, Jacobs
Rita Kelly, Jacobs

Partnering Agencies in attendance

Robert Amos, Georgia Soil & Water Conservation
Patti Lamford, Georgia DNR, Water Resources Division
Deatre Denion, Department of Community Affairs

General Public in attendance

Doug Fulle, Oglethorpe Power Corporation
Frank Carl, Savannah River Keeper
Sam Booker
Scott Willett, Anderson Regional Joint Water
Katherine Cummings, FACE