

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

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March 18, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Council Members

FROM: Bill Martello & David Ashley, Jacobs Engineering

SUBJECT: Meeting Summary
Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Water Plan
Council Meeting 9

CC: Jeff Larson, GA EPD
Brian Baker, GA EPD
Bill Martello, Jacobs
David Ashley, Jacobs
Inga Kennedy, PEQ

Georgia Comprehensive Statewide Water Management Plan Regional Water Planning

Meeting Summary

Meeting Date: March 18, 2011
Location: Talk of the Town Café; Washington, GA

1) Introductions

Ron Cross, Chair thanked Mike Eskew with the City of Washington for hosting the meeting. Mayor Burns of the City of Washington welcomed everyone to the City and thanked the Council members for their efforts. The City of Washington has two water plants that withdraw water from the Savannah Basin. These plants are being upgraded at a cost of \$9 million, funded by the SPLOST and support from GEFA with no additional city tax revenues. Mayor Burns thanked the Council for their efforts and encouraged everyone to enjoy their visit to the City of Washington.

Ron announced that Bill is retiring with his last full day being April 15, 2011. David Ashley will

be taking on the role of working with the Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Council. Bill commented that there was still great continuity on the project because the two have worked closely as David was leading the Middle Ocmulgee efforts. Bill expects to complete the first draft prior to retirement.

There was a count of Council members in attendance. There were 17 members which constitutes a quorum.

The meeting attendees introduced themselves.

2) Comments from the Chair

Ron noted that he had received several comments on the Draft Regional Water Plan from Council members and agency staff. For example, it was mentioned that future water needs and biomass would need to be added to the report. Biomass to generate electricity is probably more important in the southern counties and the Plan should account for cooling water. Ron asked to note where in the report this should be added. The Planning Contractor (PC) noted that there is a section on energy generation that would account for biomass. There was a comment from the Council that there are other types of biomass facilities that could also use significant amounts of water (growing algae, ethanol, etc.). The Council commented that Section 8.3 does cover the future water needs associated with biomass facilities. There was a recommendation that biomass facilities be specifically identified in the list of future energy uses for water.

Ron mentioned that the purpose of this meeting is to review and discuss the final draft Regional Water Plan for submission to EPD. The Council should be satisfied that the draft is ready for submission by the end of the meeting. This will be the last planned meeting aside from a public meeting, unless there are changes from EPD that merit an additional meeting.

The PC reviewed the meeting agenda:

- Discuss the committee activities
- Review the revised goals
- Draft plan review & concurrence
- Schedule for completion
- EPD has established \$100,000 in Section 319(h) grants for a project selected by each Council. The City of Augusta has submitted a 319 grant project proposal and no other communities have recommended a project. The PC suggested that the Council consider recommending the City of Augusta's 319(h) grant project to EPD. A motion was made, seconded and unanimously approved.

3) Committee activities

Tom Wiedmeier chaired the Technical Committee and gave a brief report. The Technical Committee has provided significant input and feedback on the current draft. Tom added that the committee focused on the gaps identified by the resource assessments and management practices to fill the gaps. There are two sets of recommendations in the Draft Regional Water Plan. Table 6-1A includes measures that are mandated by State Law and/or those to address gaps. There is a second tier of suggested management practices that are good practices that everyone in the Council should consider.

The PC added that the tables in Section 6 have been reconfigured from the original December

2010 draft. The Council wanted to prioritize the activities, so that 6-1A includes these priority practices. Table 6-1B presents the measures that are good practices. It is likely that the practices in Table 6-1B will be re-evaluated during the first plan update in 5 years. Table 7-1 shows the parties responsible for implementing these management practices. The draft Regional Water Plan also includes an implementation schedule and benchmarks for evaluating progress.

Ron asked if the Council members had any specific comments and/or concerns. None were expressed.

Bruce Azevedo chaired the Plan Review Committee and gave a report. This committee reviewed the format and flow of the draft plan. The committee focused on ensuring that the Regional Water Plan was easy to read by the general public.

The PC reminded the Council that this is the Regional Water Plan “Version 1.0” and that it provided a great starting point to the future.

Scott MacGregor chaired the Interstate Coordination Committee and presented his report. There has been a great deal of interaction with South Carolina. He thanked Scott Willett from South Carolina for being in attendance today. South Carolina is modeling their water planning process on the efforts in Georgia. A Council member stated that it was important for Georgia to continue working on issues and avoid conflicts with South Carolina. Several Council members warned that the focus should remain on water supply planning and not get derailed by the Savannah Harbor and other issues. There is an ongoing committee composed of representatives selected by the Governors of South Carolina and Georgia to work on water issues. The committee will meet in the next 2 months and the hope is that the Savannah Harbor issue does not impact the ongoing coordination related to water issues. EPD noted that the coordination with SCDHEC and SCDNR has been very productive and helpful. South Carolina did not have detailed forecasting data, but EPD worked with SC to develop water use projections to include into the resource assessments. EPD stated the coordination process will continue.

Council members reported that the only legislative issue that is likely to be adopted by the General Assembly is the public-private partnership (PPP) legislation to support reservoirs (SB 122). The IBT legislation will likely not pass.

4) Revisions to the Goals

The Chair and the PC presented the changes to the goals included in the draft Regional Water Plan.

Goal #2 Discussion

Goal number 2 was previously “Prohibit interbasin transfers”. EPD has requested that this be revised as it is in conflict with State Rules.

Proposed: “Provide support for current state laws regulating interbasin transfers in OCGA 12-5-584(f) and OCGA 12-5-31 and further described in EPD Rule 391-3-6-.07. Promote the development of a comprehensive evaluation process that protects donor basins from adverse impacts from proposed interbasin transfers between State Water Planning Districts.”

The Chair stated that this is a very important part of the Council’s Regional Water Plan. The

Council needs to be comfortable that the language is clear and strong enough. The Chair commented on the difference between “should” and “shall” in terms of the review of the impacts. The Council strongly encourages the assessment of all impacts.

The PC commented that the new DNR Board rules state that the Director of EPD “should” review this. There is a proposed legislation to change that language to “shall”. There was a comment that the flexibility in the regulations allows relief for a small scale transfers with no impacts.

A Council member added that the Council’s view was somewhat addressed in the last sentence. A Council member suggested adding the word “*mandatory*” prior to “comprehensive evaluation”. There was agreement that the Council needed to emphasize the word *mandatory*.

There was concurrence that adding the word mandatory addressed the concern. There was a motion and a second. The vote was unanimous.

There was a comment that the goal says “current law”. If the rule changes to allow the transfer of water from the Savannah River that would present a problem. Change this statement to “current (2011) law” to make sure it is a snapshot in time versus something that could change.

There was a question whether this was needed or not, because there is an adoption date for the Plan. There was another comment that the Council will have to comply with State law regardless. The Chair was concerned that statements may be taken out of context in the future. The Council concurred that there was no reason not to include the date 2011. There was a motion and a second to add (2011). The vote was unanimous.

Revised: “Provide support for current (2011) state laws regulating interbasin transfers in OCGA 12-5-584(f) and OCGA 12-5-31 and further described in EPD Rule 391-3-6-.07. Promote the development of a mandatory comprehensive evaluation process that protects donor basins from adverse impacts from proposed interbasin transfers between State Water Planning Districts.”

Goal #7 Discussion

Goal #7 previously stated “Form a permanent Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Water Council as the conduit for bringing together all stakeholders and assisting the State with implementation of water resource goals.”

Proposed: “Form a SUO regional water planning organization to coordinate water resource management issues in the basin.”

EPD may not be able to financially support any ongoing work and asked that the word “Council” be changed to the word “organization”. The Council asked if the Lower Savannah has a similar recommendation. The PC responded that the Coastal Council has a similar recommendation. The PC also commented that the Middle Ocmulgee also had a similar goal but it was more generic.

The Chair asked if the Council feels that the organization should continue and/or combine with another group. The Council asked what the Chair meant by “combined”. The Chair thought that involving the County Commission Chairmen and City Mayors would help with implementation

and future funding. Several Council members felt that, moving forward, the SUO Council and the Lower Savannah River portion of the Coastal Council should work together, and therefore the goal should share similar language. The issues throughout the Savannah basin are shared so the language should be in common. A comment was made that the revised goal uses the word “basin” which could include the upper and lower portions of the Savannah basin.

There was a recommendation that the Director of EPD meet with the chairs for all of the Councils to determine the best path forward for the existing Councils.

The PC added that the state is concerned about funding ongoing efforts. The Chair stated that engaging the elected officials would allow the new organization to leverage funding. A Council member commented that the Council had invested significant effort into the Regional Water Plan and was concerned that EPD would misinterpret the Council’s recommendations. At a minimum, the Council should be available to respond to EPD questions and provide interpretations where needed.

The Chair suggested adding language that stated that the “original Council” would be part of any new organization. The Council recommended using the original language but substituting the word Council with the word organization. That addresses the Council’s continuity concerns.

The Chair asked if there should be continuity between this Council and any future organization. A Council member concurred that this was an important concept. The Chair suggested adding an additional sentence that stated that some form of the Council should continue. The Council member concurred that this was important. There is a lot of institutional knowledge that would be lost if this organization was passed to the elected officials.

A member of the Forestry Commission commented that the Upper Oconee Council stated that they would like to retain 6 to 8 members of the existing Council into any new organization. A Council member recommended 25%. There was a discussion on the percentage of the Council members.

A Council member recommended “As a further goal, maintain one-third of the current Water Planning Council members on the following organization.” There were questions from the Council regarding whether this group would assist with implementation, as the Council was really an advisory body.

The Council felt that the language still didn’t capture the “entire” basin concept. There was a suggestion to add the word “entire” in front of the basin. There is a way to help the state find funding for ongoing Council support. If the Council chairs can agree on a future organizational structure, the state would likely find funding to help support ongoing efforts.

Additional suggestions from the Council included changing the language to read “Savannah and Ogeechee basins”. There was also a comment to change the language to “grandfathering” instead of “maintaining”.

Revised: “Form a permanent Savannah and Ogeechee water planning organization as the conduit for bringing together all stakeholders and assisting the State with implementation of water resource goals in the entire basin. Grandfather one-third of the current Water Planning Council

on the permanent organization.”

The motion to approve was made and seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

5) Proposed Section Changes

Section 3 changes: Most of the edits were suggested by the Wildlife Resources Division (WRD). Information was provided regarding streams designated as “fishing” and additional information was provided on trout streams, endangered fish recovery programs, and the presence of rare mussel species. This language has been reviewed by the committees.

There was a motion to approve the revisions and seconded. The motion was passed unanimously.

Section 4.4 changes: The thermoelectric power forecasts were edited based on additional information on the statewide use of electricity. Future planning for new power generating capacity should consider the Savannah basin. Additional withdrawals should evaluate the downstream impacts. Although electricity needs will increase across the state, it is not clear yet where new power generating facilities will be located.

A Council member asked if the revisions included Council Member Pat Goren’s input. It was confirmed they did. It was suggested that language be added to require the impacts of any proposed thermoelectric projects be considered prior to permitting. The PC read the specific language from this section. The Council recommended that the statement “*prior to permitting*” be added at the end of the statement.

There was a motion to approve the amended language and the motion passed unanimously.

Section 5 & Section 7 changes: EPD has refined the groundwater availability models since the previous version of the draft Plan. The section was modified to reflect the new modeling results which show that there is water available in the Cretaceous Aquifer.

Section 5.2 on surface water availability now includes a better discussion of 7Q10 in terms of flow regime gap. There is a discussion of the Corps lakes evaluation and Phase 2 of the Savannah River Basin Comprehensive Study (Comp 2). The section states that adaptive management strategies that minimize the use of conservation storage are preferred. The gap analysis at the Little Tennessee node was updated based on new modeling results that better reflect how water is used in the basin. There is still a gap, but it is much smaller than it was previously. Figure 5.1 was revised to reflect these changes.

A Council member has some concerns regarding the language for the Corps that was suggested on page 7-13. There are specific recommendations to the state and EPD. He is uncomfortable with #5 where it suggests that the Corps look at reducing the minimum flows because downstream communities rely on the 3,600 cfs flows and all of the impacts would need to be considered. Stating such a specific recommendation without additional study may not protect all downstream uses. The intent of the language was to re-evaluate the drought management plan and the minimum release flow to optimize storage, looking at lower flow releases during the cooler months and establish a downstream indicator, such as DO, to serve as the basis for

releases. However, reevaluating this flow target it already encompassed in the recommendation to reconsider the flows in the basin. Others Council members concurred. Several felt that including this statement in the Regional Water Plan would give the perception that the Council supported lower releases without a full evaluation of downstream impacts. There are other factors besides DO that should be considered. The PC noted that the TMDL for the harbor, water supply, DO, minimum instream flows, flood control, etc. would all need to be considered. It was also noted that this statement only addresses the economic impacts to those on and upstream of the Lake, but it should consider all economic impacts, both upstream and downstream of the dams.

A Council member stated that the Corps doesn't know what the correct DO should be and agrees that we do not know what number to recommend. He asked if the Council agrees that the issue needs to be studied further so that the economic impacts are appropriately defined. The Chair recommended "continue to evaluate the releases below Thurmond dam" because the releases fluctuate during different times of the year.

The Chair asked if the Council needs to add a suggestion that the Corps consider raising the normal pool at Hartwell and Thurmond for additional storage. This would be normal pool, not just the winter pool, to increase storage. He suggested that #2 should be changed to be more similar to #5, to be more consistent. Basically, #2 should be changed to remove the numbers.

EPD would like to share the Council's language with the Corps as soon as possible. The language deals with minimum flows but does it affect pulses and other considerations. EPD commented that the Nature Conservancy was working with South Carolina. The pulsing considerations may be part of the Comp 2 study, although it is currently not in the work plan. Currently the Corps is looking at the drought contingency plan. Minimum flows might not be related to drought. The Corps will look at both upstream and downstream economic conditions. The Council should mention any considerations they would like the Corps to address in the Regional Water Plan.

A Council member commented that the ecological pulses don't appear to be covered in the current language. A Council member recommended that the language be changed to say "appropriate flow releases". This language would cover everything including the seasonal need to support ecological flows during spawning.

We want to address the minimum flow concerns, understanding that the ecological issues will also be considered. EPD commented that adding the word ecological may help address the concern. Revise the text to consider further economic and *ecological* impact studies. For #4, need to make sure that the downstream economic and ecological impacts are studied in addition to those related to lake levels. A suggestion was made to revise the language to read "communities that have developed around the Corps projects and downstream in the Savannah basin".

The Council recommended changing #5 to read "Continue to evaluate the current minimum flow release below the Thurmond dam with considerations of the ecological impacts." Then it was recommended to have a separate bullet for ecological impacts like the separate bullet for economic impacts. The Council also recommended removing the word minimum, because it is possible that sometimes there should be a maximum limit. A Council member commented that

we should show that the ecological issues are important to the Council within this Plan.

A Council member recommended “Re-evaluate the current minimum flow during drought periods” with an additional bullet on ecological issues.

In Section 7, add “7. Continue to evaluate the ecological impacts of any modifications to the management operations strategy”.

Section 7.4 Recommended Changes:

2. Evaluate potential revision to the rule curves for Lake Thurmond and Hartwell. Evaluate whether the pool elevations could be beneficially raised.

4. Consider further economic impact studies and protection of the economic well being of the communities that have developed both around the Corps projects and downstream in the basin as one of the goals of those projects.

5. Continue to evaluate the current minimum flow release below Thurmond dam.

7. Continue to evaluate the ecological impacts of any modifications to the management operations strategy.

Also in Section 7, the Chair mentioned that there was a suggestion to add a recommendation to the state that the development should be focused where there are adequate resources. If Kia can be constructed on the Chattahoochee River, then opportunities should be pursued in the Savannah basin. “The State should consider and encourage economic development activities in areas with adequate resources.”

The PC stated that goal #1 was to plan for sufficient resources to meet future economic needs. It was suggested that the new sentence be added to this goal.

Goal #1 Revised: “Plan for sufficient water supplies to support planned economic development while providing residential, industrial, agricultural, recreational, and utility services in a sustainable manner. Request that the State consider and encourage future economic development in areas with adequate water resources.”

The motion to make the changes to Sections 5 & 7 were made, seconded and unanimously approved.

Section 6 proposed changes: The priority management practices were re-configured into four categories (Water Demand Management, Water Supply Management, Water Quality Management, and Educational Initiatives). The applicable areas were added to the table.

The motion was made, seconded, and Section 6 was unanimously approved.

Section 7 proposed changes: In addition to the previously discussed changes, the implementation table was changed to match the revision to the measures. No substantive changes were made, only organizational changes.

The motion was made, seconded, and Section 7 was unanimously approved.

The PC also noted that the Cretaceous aquifer modeling work that was previously recommended

has been completed, so this work was removed from the recommendations table.

Section 8 proposed changes: Table 8-1 was revised to be consistent with the changes in Sections 6 and 7. The final paragraph at the end and future organization will need to be modified based on the change in goals today. Identical language will be incorporated into the text.

An editorial note was made: WD-2 thermoelectric power generation, add the open parenthesis in front of the word “including” and delete the comma.

The motion was made, seconded, and Section 8 was unanimously approved.

6) Next Steps

The PC commented that the Draft Plan is located on the EPD website and showed the Council how to download information from the State Water Plan website. The new revised Plan plus the supplemental documents (7 or 8 technical memorandums) will be published on the website. The new draft should be on the website in approximately 2 weeks from today.

This draft is scheduled to be submitted to EPD in April. EPD will put the plan out for public comment in May. The Council will hold a Public Information Meeting that will include a power point presentation that Council Members could use for additional outreach. On May 9, 2011 the draft Plan will be available for public comment. The Plan will be posted for a minimum of 45-days. The comments will be addressed in the September timeframe.

The Chair has asked for a one-page summary of the Regional Water Plan with bulleted items for the Council use. He believes there is a good story to tell--few gaps and effective recommended management practices.

The PC gave an overview of the public information meeting.

- Target attendees include the municipality and utility managers who are responsible for implementation in addition to state representatives, DNR board members, elected officials, etc. The PC asked if there were others to include. The Chair suggested that everyone should be invited.
- The Chair stated that the meeting should be in a central location, such as Augusta or Thompson.
- The Chair recommended that the Council members sit at the front. He does not want the elected officials to lead the discussion but rather be in attendance.
- The Chair suggested an informal presentation with opportunity for questions from the public for the Council members to answer (with the support of the PC). The Chair also suggested that some copies of the Plan be available.
- The Chair suggested that invitations be sent directly to the City Mayors and County Commissioners and they decide who should attend. The invitations should request RSVPs so the room is arranged based on the number of attendees.
- It was suggested that outreach to the agriculture interests be extended through the Soil & Water Conservation Commission.
- A press release should be published ahead of time that shows the link to the Plan on the website.
- The PC recommended the beginning of April (following the Masters) for the meeting. Many schools end in mid-May and several Council members suggested that the meeting

be prior to the end of school. The Council recommended meeting at the end of April or early May.

- The Chair asked whether the meeting should be from 10am to noon or from 5 to 7pm and then suggested late afternoon. To respect the Council members and attendees that need to travel, a start time of 5pm and end time of 7pm was recommended.
- The Council recommended the Savannah Rapids as a meeting location.

The Chair and PC will address the details related to the public meeting.

The Council asked if there would be an opportunity for public questions. It was clarified that the meeting is a public outreach and education meeting and not a public hearing, but there would be opportunities for questions. The PC added that there will be an opportunity to comment through the public comment period. A Council member noted that the first week of May is a good time for the public meeting as it is close to the time the draft Plan will be available for public comment.

It was recommended that an opportunity be given to make changes from the Plan based on public input. The Chair felt that an amendment could be made but only if there was something critical that needed to be changed based on public comment.

The Chair asked for a final motion to approve this draft with the changes approved today. A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously carried.

6) Public Comments- None

The Council thanked the Chair for his personal commitment and leadership to this process.

David Ashley with Jacobs Engineering will be taking over for Bill Martello when Bill retires in mid-April and added that if the Council has any concerns about the draft Plan when it is published on the Council web site, they should contact him and he will make sure the necessary corrections are made.

Meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:30 a.m.

Lunch was provided.

CM#9 Meeting Attendees

Council Members in attendance

Ron Cross, Chair
Bruce Azevedo
Braye Boardman
Don Dye
Mike Eskew
Dan Fowler (Alternate)
Patricia Goodwin (Alternate)
Toye Hill
Robert Jenkins
Tom Jordan
Scott MacGregor
Chris McCorkle
Tim McGill
Stan Sheppard
Lee Webster
Tom Wiedmeier
Tenia Workman

Council Members not in attendance

Jerry Boling
Charles Cawthon
Deke Copenhaver
Barry Cronic
Pat Goran (Alternate)
Larry Guest
Ralph Hudgens (Ex-Officio)
Eddie Madden
Tom McCall
James H. Newsome
Charlie Newton
Lewis Sanders
Larry Walker

Staff in attendance

Jeff Larson, EPD
Brian Baker, EPD
Bill Martello, Jacobs
David Ashley, Jacobs
Inga Kennedy, PEQ
Kim Shorter, AECOM

Partnering Agencies in Attendance

Robert Amos, Georgia Soil & Water Conservation
John Colberg, Georgia Forestry Commission
Patti Lamford, Georgia DNR, Water Resources Division
Adriane Wood, Department of Community Affairs

General Public in attendance

Ed Bettros
Dennis Black, Georgia Farm Bureau
Nancy Bobbitt, Sen. Isakson's Office
Sam Booker
Frank Carl, Savannah River Keeper
Doug Fulle, Oglethorpe Power Corporation
E. Scott Miller, MEAG Power
Scott Willett, Anderson Regional Joint Water