

Memorandum

To: Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Planning Council

From: Rick Brown and Brian Keel, CDM

Date: 02/28/11

Subject: Council Meeting 10 - Summary

This memorandum provides the meeting summary of the Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Planning Council Meeting 10 (CM10), held on February 23, 2011 at the Pike Creek Turf Barn in Adel, Georgia.

1) Welcome and Introductions/Recap CM9/Approve Agenda/Approve CM9 Summary

Chair Darvin Eason called the meeting to order and thanked Jimmy and Quay Allen for graciously offering the use of today's meeting facility. Chairman Eason introduced Jerry Walter, the Economic Development Director for Cook County who gave a welcome to Council. Chair Eason then asked public attendees to introduce themselves. Among those in attendance were Jerry Permenter, City Manager for the City of Adel; Ernest Crussel, Water and Wastewater Director for the City of Douglas; Ted Jackson, Georgia Department of Natural Resources; Mark Masters with the H2O Policy Center; Jed Evans with the Georgia Farm Bureau; and Carlos Herd, Dale Jenkins, and John Dinges with the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD).

The PC began by asking for approval of the CM9 Summary; Mike Edgy moved for approval, second by Andy Stone and Council unanimously approved the summary. Next the PC asked for approval of the CM10 agenda; Dan Raines moved for approval, second by Mike Edgy and Council unanimously approved the agenda.

The PC then reviewed the schedule for the completion of the Water Plan, highlighting the 45- day public comment period that begins on May 9, 2011, and the final Plan deadline to EPD of September 30, 2011. The location and possible dates for Council Meeting 11 were discussed. The PC suggested a date sometime in July, after public comments have been received, and proposed Council come back to decide the location at the end of the meeting.

The PC then gave a recap of Council Meeting 9 and continued with an overview of the following objectives for Council Meeting 10:

- Review Draft Regional Water Plan and seek Council approval
- Discuss next steps for finalizing the Regional Water Plan after Public Comment

2) Review Draft Regional Water Plan

The PC distributed copies of the Draft Plan and an index card to all Council members. The PC asked each Council member to write on the index card the 3 most important issues or facts that need to be communicated in the Water Plan and return the cards to the PC. The PC explained that the current draft of the Executive Summary would likely undergo significant revision, and the feedback provided by Council on the index cards will help guide the revisions to the Executive Summary.

The PC reminded the Council members that our general approach to media requests is to direct them to the Chair; public interest is likely to increase once the Draft Plan is released for public comment. The PC also emphasized that it's important to make this document the Council's Plan, so Council should feel free to wordsmith any parts of the document they wish. The PC explained that the Plan went longer than the original 40 page suggested length due to Council's desire to not short-change any of the important issues contained therein, and that it appears EPD will be OK with the longer Plans. The Plan's Supplemental Materials will be made available on the Council's website but only the main Plan document will undergo formal public comment.

The PC noted that there are 6 documents that will be included as supplemental materials, and that Council has reviewed much of the content of these materials over the last two years. The supplemental materials will be sent to Council in final format within the next month and if there are any comments or concerns we can address them over the coming months. The supplemental materials include:

1. Public Outreach Technical Memorandum, which includes local government advisory body contacts, and the Georgia Association of County Commissioners and Georgia Municipal Association contacts
2. Vision and Goals Technical Memorandum
3. Water/Wastewater Forecasting Technical Memorandum
4. Gap Analysis Technical Memorandum
5. Management Practices Selection Process Technical Memorandum

The PC then went through each section of the Plan with Council, highlighting the summaries at the beginning of each section and important points for Council to pay special attention to in each section. The PC reminded Council that Sections 1-5 are more foundational sections that Council already reviewed last year, and Sections 6-8 are the especially important part of the plan as they provide the Councils recommended management practices, implementation considerations and benchmarks to measure progress toward addressing regional water resource needs.

Section 1

Section 1 of the Plan presents an introduction to the water planning process, introduces council, council procedures, the planning process, and presents Councils vision and goals for the region.

CM: I think it is important to list the Council members that have worked on this Plan either here or on an acknowledgment page.

CM: Where is this wording about Vision and Goals? I think it is important to have some of this information in the Plan Executive Summary.

PC: The Vision and Goals are found on Page 1-4 and 1-5.

Section 2

Section 2 goes through the history and geography of the area highlighting surface water and groundwater resources, and general characteristics of the regions.

CM: There is a discrepancy in the Suwannee River length between page 2-1 and page 3-3 (266 miles vs. 537 miles).

PC: We will check the discrepancy.

CM: On page 2-3, change "forest industry" to "forest community".

CM: Dr. Hook said most Agricultural demands in the state are in the Suwannee-Satilla and Lower Flint-Ochlockonee regions. About 50% of the state's agriculture relies on water resources in these two regions. I think we need a hard number in here to say what percent of the state's gross domestic product is represented by Agriculture in these regions.

CM: We mention Moody Air Force Base in Valdosta, and there is a trend toward more growth Lowndes County and some other areas like Coffee County. Should we mention more of the big industries that rely on our region's water resources?

CM: We should mention Pilgrim's Pride in Coffee County.

CM: There is big industry in other counties and cities too, like Tifton.

CM: We can help develop language for Section 2.2.

CM: We should also include Premium Waters in Douglas.

CM: There are 4 or 5 forestry products manufacturing facilities in our region. The rest of the counties in the region supply the raw materials to these facilities.

Section 3

Section 3 introduces the current major water uses in the regions and then describes the resource assessments that were used to determine the available surface and groundwater and water quality conditions. This section is where we introduce any current resource constraints and begin to discuss some of the technical information regarding regional water use. It was noted that we'd like to improve some of the graphics such as the assimilative capacity figures, but are not sure if we'll be able to get shape files. This section also includes information about the nutrient models and we're working with EPD on how that is presented. We deal with nutrients qualitatively, recognizing nutrient standards are likely going to be proposed in the near future. This section also highlights current ecosystem conditions and instream uses. We have some additional comments we received from the Wildlife Resources Division on this subsection and we will add those here. The comments clarify some of the information we presented and we also have some useful website links where people can get more information about some of the wildlife resources in the region. We also think it might be good to add a general summary of the drivers/reasons for water quality impairments. Many of our regions impairments are from fecal coliform or dissolved oxygen and these might be from natural sources.

The PC pointed out that "Current" means different things in the forecasts and resource assessments. Council made a big recommendation for better data due to different data sources. It's important to remember that the forecasts are the foundation for demand and the resource assessments look at resource availability into the future.

CM: Will reasons for the red (assimilative capacity exceeded) reaches be presented?

PC: Yes, these are presented in the Resource Assessments. In general there are 4 reasons a segment shows up as red: there is a point source discharging to the reach that actually is causing low Dissolved Oxygen (DO), there were assumptions made as to the flow and chemical makeup of a point source discharge that need to be verified, there are non-point sources of pollutants causing low DO, or the segment has naturally low DO.

CM: It's important to also note that flow alteration could have been altered and led to naturally low dissolved oxygen even if there is no pollution source on a reach.

CM: The St. Marys River is a good example of this.

CM: The Satilla and St. Marys Rivers have some red reaches with no point sources at their headwaters. Some DO impairments are ephemeral with the tides and seasons.

CM: In the bubble tables in Figure 5-3, recommendations to enhance baseflows are potentially applicable to low DO problems. We could add Flow Enhancement Tools as a new row in these tables.

PC: How about adding a footnote to indicate this? Is Council OK with that idea? Council concurred.

CM: Does this go back to saying we should limit withdrawals?

PC: That is the potential fear.

CM: Doing this will possibly lead to criticisms that we're using too much water.

CM: We just don't know what the DO of these waters were 150 years ago. We're saying they are impaired without really knowing.

PC: Yes, and that is why it's so important to determine whether or not the low DO is naturally occurring.

CM: Edit the paragraph on Page 2-1 regarding blackwater streams to say "This water body is a blackwater stream consisting of tannins and other natural leachates, which cause the river to have a darkly stained appearance and unique physical and chemical characteristics, including dissolved oxygen dynamics."

CM: Ponds along the upstream portion of the Alapaha regularly go dry. Is this why the Alapaha is red?

PC: It's probably a convergence of several factors.

CM: Regarding the population projections, Bacon County is shown to have good growth but neighboring Ware County doesn't. Do we have a provision in the Plan to come back and revisit these projections?

PC: Yes we do, in the Section 7 summary box and the second paragraph under the Section 7 introduction.

CM: Who will do that? Bureaucrats from Washington or Atlanta?

PC: There are 2 important questions here: How is this Plan to be implemented? And how will future planning be done? The Subcommittee recommends to the State that regional planning is the best path forward in the future.

CM: Our data are assumptive. We recognized the need to go forward, but there is no money at the state level to go forward. We're not getting paid to serve on Council now, so I suggest we formally consider a motion that information gathered be continued forward.

CM: I spoke with Director Barnes and he suggested Council put this idea forward with no monetary ties.

EPD: If you put this message forward, I will carry it internally.

CM: We need to take a parallel path forward, through both EPD and the DNR Board.

CM: Florida has Regional Water Boards with local people on them. How do they operate?

SRWMD: Our Board is 9 members appointed by the Governor. Board members are volunteers and represent different basins in our District, but their authority is statutory (taxation).

CM: I think the logical move is to ask that we be continued as an advisory board.

CM: Cliff, what do you think we need to do?

EPD: It may make sense to take Council's recommendations back to the Chairs, and have the Chairs collectively develop a unified voice to present the idea to EPD.

CM: Both the Coastal Georgia and Lower Flint-Ochlockonee Councils have expressed a desire to continue.

PC: We work with the Coastal Georgia Council and they have drafted a resolution to continue their work.

The PC advised Council to pay special attention to the language on Page 7-25 in the first two paragraphs under Recommendations to the State. The PC also indicated we might need to better explain 7Q10, incorporate Wildlife Resources Division comments, and text regarding why 303(d) streams are listed as impaired (human vs. non-human causes) to this section.

Section 4

The PC noted that Section 4 has the most changes since Council last reviewed the preliminary draft in September/October. Originally this section was longer and based on feedback we got from Council and EPD we shortened the section and added some additional summary information, but we did not make any major substantive changes. Specifically, you will note there is more information on the water stewardship act and how demand reduction was incorporated into our forecast. A little more information on the baseline and alternate forecasts was added, and the information on the regional thermoelectric forecast was added based on direction from Council in CM 9.

Section 5

The PC reviewed the resource assessment content of Section 5 and reminded Council that the assessments likely are not sufficient for planning at the individual utility level of detail. The PC also emphasized the importance of sustainably managing our groundwater and walked Council through the surface water gap information presented in Figure 5-1.

Section 6

The PC explained Figure 6-1, noting that the figure depicts the Council overall approach to management practices and highlight that the process is meant to be adaptive and incremental, and reminded Council of the phased implementation of recommended management practices that Council approved in CM9.

CM: I think we need to add "Agricultural" before "storage" in the second-to-last bullet in Short-Term practices.

CM: In 4th bullet in Short-Term practices, reword the end to read "...do not contribute to 7Q10 gap conditions."

CM: I still struggle with 7Q10 low flow. How could any surface water permit not worsen 7Q10? Any surface water withdrawal will get us to 7Q10 quicker.

PC: Our recommended practices are not intended as a prohibition on surface water withdrawals. What we're saying is if you want to use surface water, it cannot make low flow conditions worse and there may be limitations on how much can be withdrawn during dry period. In some years and parts of the year water would be available but you may also want to have an alternate source (groundwater) and/or storage to carry through dry periods if you are in the areas where there is not sufficient water to meet both instream needs and off-stream needs.

CM: Surface water is an unreliable source anyway.

CM: During dry times can anyone use surface water?

PC: As long as you're not contributing to low flow gaps.

CM: It's OK to withdraw during flows near the hydrograph peak because otherwise that water will end up in the ocean before low flow occurs.

CM: We don't want to preclude dual-source permits.

CM: But we're charged with closing gaps and that's what the language in our management practices is about.

CM: Some industries, like power companies, know their surface water supply is interruptible and they plan for it.

The PC next walked Council through the progression of management practices in Tables 6-1, 7-1, and 8-1, demonstrating how each practice is carried through these 3 tables.

CM: We need to revise management practice GW-4 in Table 6-1 to reflect a partnership.

CM: Does the Altamaha Council recognize incentives-based wetlands restoration as a management practice?

PC: Yes, as more of a mid-term practice.

The PC then explained the potential need to perform quantitative modeling of the management practices, and the challenges associated with quantifying gap responsibility by region and percent gap closure provided by each management practice. We do not yet know if this will be needed but we are prepared to do it if we need to.

CM: Referring to TMDL-1 in Table 6-1, I think we need to make a recommendation to EPD to develop a new dissolved oxygen standard for blackwater streams.

PC: This is something we can add in Section 7.4.

Section 7

The PC encouraged Council to look closely at Sections 7.3 and 7.4. The PC also mentioned that we should probably add recommendations to the Wildlife Resources Division and Coastal Resources Division of DNR under Section 7.4.

Section 8

The PC encouraged Council to pay special attention to the second paragraph under Section 8.1 and make sure Section 8.2 includes specific Suwannee-Satilla Council considerations.

Draft Plan Approval

The PC explained that if Council was comfortable moving forward, the PC would make changes to the draft Plan based on Council member feedback, distribute the Plan electronically to Council in a red-line format for final review, and if there are no remaining issues, submit the final draft Plan to EPD for public comment. The PC explained that if Council was not comfortable moving forward with the draft Plan, another meeting could be scheduled prior to submittal to EPD.

The Chairman asked Council if anyone saw any fatal flaws in the draft Plan in its current state. Dan Raines made a motion to approve the draft Plan for submittal to EPD, contingent on revisions to reflect Council comments. Gordon Rogers seconded the motion. A discussion followed before Council voted on approving the draft Plan.

CM: We need specific bullet points to highlight our region's water resources, projected growth, issues, and management practices to address them somewhere in the Plan.

CM: That's what the 40-page original goal was, but we expanded it because we didn't feel it was comprehensive enough.

PC: We will capture this summary in the Executive Summary. We'll send it to you to review in the next few weeks.

CM: We need to make sure to capture these key points in the Executive Summary.

Following on the motion and second to approve the draft Plan, Council voted unanimously to approve the draft Plan for submittal to EPD contingent upon revisions to address Council comments and incorporation of the Executive Summary.

3) Next Steps for Finalizing the Regional Water Plan

The PC reviewed the timeline of remaining steps to complete the Plan.

CM: We need to send a message to continue our work in 2 ways: a message from the Council and a unified message from the Chairs of all Councils. We can't let this Plan go dormant for 5 years. It needs to be continued now but we can't have money tied to it or it won't go forward.

CM: We need to get the Ex-Officio members involved to forward this process.

CM: How is this going to work going forward?

PC: If you want to participate in a discussion about the continuation of the Planning effort after the Plan is submitted, let us know and we will get a list of Council members that we can coordinated with.

CM: Will this be incorporated into our Plan?

Chair: No.

4) Local Elected Official Comments

There were no local elected official comments.

5) Public Comments

There were no additional public comments.

6) Wrap-up and What to Expect Next Meeting

The Council agreed to hold the next meeting in Valdosta in July (it was noted to avoid July 16-19 due to the Georgia Forestry Associations Annual meeting) following receipt of public comments. The PC explained that the purpose of the next Council meeting is to review and address EPD and public comments and finalize the Plan. The meeting was adjourned.

cc: Cliff Lewis, EPD

Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Council
 Council Members Attendance List

Suwannee-Satilla Council Members		2/23/2011
1	Joseph L. Boyett	
2	Earl Brice	X
3	William L. Brim	
4	Hanson R. Carter	X
5	Carroll H. Coarsey	X
6	Ben Copeland	X
7	Scott Downing	
8	Eugene Dyal	X
9	Darvin Eason	X
10	Michael E. Edgy	X
11	Greg C. Evans	
12	Greg Goggans	
13	Jim Hedges	
14	Alva Joseph Hopkins	X
15	Donald A. Johnson	
16	John Wesley Langdale	X
17	Joe Lewis	X
18	R.R. Rusty McCall	X
19	Donald H. McCallum	X
20	Dan Raines	X
21	Scotty Raines	X
22	S. Gordon Rogers	X
23	Jay Shaw	
24	Frank G. Sisk	
25	Miles A. Stone	X
26	Grady M. Thompson	
27	Doyle Weltzbarker	X
28	James R. Willis	X
29	Jackie Wilson	X

Totals 19

Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Council
 Public Attendance List

	Public Attendee	2/23/2011	Representing
1	Richard Batten	X	South Georgia Regional Commission
2	Ernest Crussel	X	City of Douglas
3	John Dinges	X	SRWMD
4	Ted Evans	X	GA Farm Bureau
5	Brittney Foster Hull	X	Packaging Corporation of America
6	Carlos Herd	X	Suwannee River Water Management District
7	Ted V. Jackson	X	GA Dept. of Natural Resources
8	Dale Jenkins	X	Suwannee River Water Management District
9	Mark Masters	X	GA Water Planning and Policy Center
10	Tom Putnam	X	Langdale Industries
11	Bryan Snow	X	Georgia Forestry Commission
12	Angela Wall	X	South Georgia Regional Commission
13	Jeremy Wixson	X	GADNR Fisheries Management

Totals **13**