

Memorandum

To: Altamaha Regional Water Planning Council

From: Rick Brown and Katherine Zitsch, CDM

Date: 3/1/11

Subject: Council Meeting 10 - Summary

This memorandum provides the meeting summary of the Altamaha Regional Water Planning Council Meeting 10 (CM10), held on February 17, 2011 at the Little Ocmulgee State Park, near McRae, Georgia.

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

Chairman Brinson Lanier called the meeting to order and welcomed Council members and visitors. Chairman Lanier asked Council members if they had reviewed the meeting summary and asked for a motion to approve the summary. Ed Jeffords moved for approval of the summary; seconded by Buddy Pittman and the summary was approved unanimously. Chairman Lanier asked Council for a motion to approve the meeting agenda. John Roller moved for approval of the agenda; seconded by Ed Jeffords. The PC noted that there is a suggestion to have one item added to the agenda. Kim Thompson, RC&D Coordinator, Georgia United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service has generously offered to provide some possible ideas for a Clean Water Act 319 grant project(s). The Council has not submitted any grant ideas and Ms. Thompson has some possible candidate projects. Council unanimously approved the agenda with the additional agenda item to be taken up prior to public comment.

The Planning Contractor (PC) provided a recap of CM9 and highlighted the Council's major accomplishments over the last two years. The PC outlined the next steps in the Regional Water Planning process and provided an overview of the schedule through the end of 2011. The following key dates and activities were noted:

- The goal for today's meeting is to obtain Council's approval to forward the Regional Water Plan to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) with the recommendation that the Plan be posted to the State Water Plan website for public comment. The PC emphasized that there are still some minor wording and grammar changes that need to be made and that there are a few factual items

to double check in the Plan. In addition, it is likely that some substantive comments will come out of today's discussion. The PC recommended the following process for completing the draft plan: the PC will make redline changes to the current Plan draft (February 9, 2011) and send these changes to full Council in the next two-three weeks. If Council does not have any changes to the redline changes then they will be accepted and the Plan will be forwarded to EPD. If significant issues remain then it may be necessary to schedule another full Council meeting. The Council generally agreed with this recommended process.

- The PC noted the Plan is due to EPD no later than May 2nd and that formal public comment is scheduled to begin on May 9th.
- The PC noted that there are provisions for one additional Council meeting following public comment. This meeting will likely occur in July and will focus on helping Council address public comment and to finalize the Plan for submittal to EPD for final action. EPD Director Allen Barnes plans to act on the Regional Water Plan. Director Barnes can either: 1) Approve the Plan; 2) Approve the Plan with conditions; or 3) Develop an approvable Plan internally.

Council Member (CM): How long will the Public Comment period last?

EPD: There will be a minimum of a 45 day comment period and the schedule is to have the Plans completed and approved by September 30, 2011. EPD asked the PC to provide Council with an overview of the supplemental materials that will be produced as part of the planning process.

PC: The PC noted that there are 6 appendices that will be included as supplemental materials, and that Council has reviewed much of the content of these appendices over the last two years. The appendices 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. A list of the Plan's appendices is provided below:

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

6. Plans Considered for Selecting Management Practices Technical Memorandum

Chairman Lanier: Before we go over the Plan I want to ask the Council to keep a couple of points in mind. We have covered much of today's material over the last year or two and today can be relatively quick or it could go very long. I think today's agenda can proceed more quickly if Council stays within the topic being discussed and stays specific to the section of the Plan being discussed. Please feel free to comment but try to be to the point and concise in your comments.

2) Overview of Regional Water Plan

The PC opened this portion of the agenda by asking Council to think about the 3 most significant issues and/or findings that you believe need to be included in the Plan. The PC asked the Council to think about this during the review of the Plan and write down their thoughts on a 3X5 card. This information will be used to help refine current plan language and to help guide the emphasis/major points to highlight in the Executive Summary of the Plan.

The PC proceeded with a section by section overview of the contents of the Regional Water Plan. The PC mentioned that a very preliminary draft of the Plan Executive Summary was provided to the Plan Drafting and Management Practices subcommittee but that today's meeting will likely provide valuable information for the Executive Summary and therefore a revised version will be developed and ultimately sent to Council for review and approval via electronic mail.

The PC mentioned that one of the most important things that Council can do is to review the summary boxes that appear at the beginning of each of the Plan's sections. These boxes contain an overview of the section and should succinctly highlight the key take away messages for each section. If Council members have any suggested changes please provide them today or send us an email.

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.

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

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.

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 is where the Plan presents the comparison of available resource capacity and future need and we begin describing major challenges. In the summary box for Section 5, are we sending the right message about the challenges? Generally, we have sufficient surface water supplies at a regional level but shortages on the Canoochee and Satilla (shared resource with Suwannee-Satilla) Rivers. The groundwater resources are abundant but we have to manage them wisely. The other major challenges in the region are related to water quality both in terms of assimilative capacity, in several segments and we may need to see higher levels of treatment in some facilities, and non-point sources of pollution.

CM: To me, a lot of emphasis will be placed on the assimilative capacity modeling. But we don't present results in this section. Which data set was used?

EPD: I believe it was the 2007 data set and we maybe developing more standardized information on definitions of what is current or baseline; this information is in the resource assessments.

The PC continued and described a few new figures. Council will recall that the resource assessment presented gap information as average values. The challenge is that gaps don't occur every year or for the whole year.

To help communicate this we developed Figure 5-1 describes the variability of the surface water gap; this figure is similar to the information provided to Council at CM7 and CM8. That gap varies depending on years. To solve every forecasted gap at Claxton for example takes different quantities of water and that information is presented here.

CM: I am glad to see this information and it is important that people realize that some of the rivers in our region have always had low flow or go dry and we cannot fix natural events.

PC: This is a complex topic but remember we are not being asked to fix natural events. If withdrawals for off stream uses cause the frequency, duration, magnitude of low flow conditions to increase, then the Council is being asked to develop management practices to address the human induced low flow conditions, not the naturally occurring amount. There is also a question of how farm ponds affect the surface water gaps, so this is a research recommendation for future evaluation.

Council should also note Figure 5-3 presents regional water quality information without discussing individual plants. We've summarized the number of facilities that need upgrades without singling them out. This is helpful to show where funding assistance might be needed.

EPD: Can we describe in words what is shown in Figure 5-1?

PC: Yes, we describe it on page 5-2 but can add more if that is useful.

CM: There are broad trends going on in land use. Much of timberland is being converted to agricultural lands. In our basin and our part of the country we're responsible for probably one of the richest potentials for growth and expansion in agriculture. We may be under predicting agricultural and industrial growth here in this region.

PC: We're projecting 18% growth in agricultural water use over the planning horizon. Your point is valid if commodity prices remain high growth might be much bigger than that.

CM: I really like the new figures and only request that we add another value next to the cubic feet per second so that the information is also in million gallons per day.

EPD: It would be good to add some information on the sustainable yield of the prioritized aquifers.

CM: Could you please add a list of acronyms.

PC: Yes

Chairman Lanier: In looking at this information I realized that a few people in this room deserve recognition for all the work that has gone into this. I want to personally thank Paul, Lindsay, Jim Strickland, Gerald, Ed, John Roller, Len, Sue, and Dent.

CM: I want to recognize and thank our chairman.

CM: I think we need to include a page at the beginning of the Plan that recognizes all of the Council members for our region (Council strongly agreed with the suggestion).

The PC then summarized the content of Section 6. Section 6 presents the Council list of management practices for water supply and water quality. The information in the Table 6.1 comes from the list of management practices that was approved by Council at CM9. We have changed the format to align with the "plan template that was developed by EPD.

Section 6 presents the tools that we have in our toolbox. Figure 6-1 presents a general overview of the water quantity tools and how we plan to implement them over time. We'd start with the short term practices and then evaluate how they work towards closing the gap. From there, we could move towards the mid-term and long-term practices.

Priority resource challenges are presented first in Table 6-1.

CM: What's the difference between a flooded wetland and a pond? Both are low places holding water, it's all a matter of how it's used. The idea that ponds are bad and wetlands are good is a fallacy. It's all in how it's used.

CM: There is a difference between a pond and a wetland ecologically. A wetland is a transitional area where you have vegetation and water flows through that vegetation. The assimilative capacity of a large body of water pales in comparison to a wetland.

CM: Have we made sure we have emphasized the importance of river flows. I know we have talked allot about this but we only have it show up in two places under surface water. I think we need wording in the beginning of Section 6 about the importance of understanding and studying minimum low flows to keep a river healthy and we should include something in recommendations to the state (section 7.4).

CM: One of the greatest contentious issues with water is to determine safe yield in rivers in state. Safe yield is scientific term - physical, chemical, biological conditions in state. This has been discussed in the legislative setting in the past but money was never appropriated. I agree it's good we put something in our Plan in this regard.

PC: Does Council agree we should call out items for WRD and CRD in section 7.4 and maybe introduce earlier in summary box (section 6) (Council generally agreed).

The PC mentioned the final item in Table 6-1 outlines shared resources. This recognizes that the surface water gaps cross council boundaries and the subsection outlines the main management practices for those shared resources councils on surface water quantity gaps as well as water quality challenges.

CM: On communication between other councils, have you seen other meetings where they have had discussions?

PC: Yes we had the joint meeting in Macon and our Council formed a subcommittee in case we needed one-on-one discussions, but we've been working this out between planning contractors. We may still need a face-to-face if things become more complex. You will recall Director Barnes sent a memo that talked about closing gaps and the council needs to make progress toward closing gaps. The question is how one evaluates how you're closing gaps – qualitative or quantitative. The best way to quantitatively close the gap is to understand each of the management practices and how much they will contribute to closing the gap. Using this information we could model the closing of the gap over time. This sounds straight forward however some folks are uncomfortable with estimates and projections that go into this type of analysis. Part of the reason our subcommittee felt uncomfortable is that it inherently shows a number that the Council will be perceived as "agreeing to" and there are still many questions regarding the planning tools and forecasts and many of these things require funding and research and until that's in place, we can't guarantee any of these things would take place in the future.

CM: So I notice we took some of the percentage values out of the Plan so what is the final outcome?

PC: You are correct it is not in the Plan, but where we're headed is that it may still be required as a yardstick to quantify the strategies for closing the gap. Right now we're still being asked to do the modeling but that might change.

The PC then presented an overview of Section 7 which focuses on implementation of water management practices. The second paragraph talks about uncertainty in planning in general. Also we might need to adjust a couple of dates because they might be a little too aggressive, and we should make sure this tracks well based on the direction Council just provided.

Costs generally show that in many cases it will take substantial resources to implement these solutions. It will involve a substantial capital investment. But costs are general and should not be taken literally; they are very general planning level cost estimates. There are broad assumptions in many of the estimates.

The PC then outlined Section 8 which lays out a process for monitoring how the region is progressing to meeting its long-term water resource needs.

Please make sure you review the language in 7.3 and 7.4 and make sure this language is what you want. Especially in regard to Recommendations to the state – when it comes to role of the council, make sure we have we captured this right – that some form of a local presence is important? Or is it okay to let our recommendations go and reconvene five years from now. We are suggesting the EPD institutionalize planning. There was general consensus that this language was accurate.

CM: I think it is important for everyone to realize that local buy-in and input is important to us. No matter what happens a region Council should be in place to communicate implementation progress with the Council.

PC: Please note two things you have not seen in Section 7; one for Office of State Planning and Budget and one for Department of Community Affairs.

CM: I think we may want to add something regarding funding for academic programs for water management studies and to look at opportunities – universities and academic organizations.

The PC then provided an overview of Section 8 which discusses benchmarks and plan updates and amendments. Let us know if you have comments on the way this information is presented.

CM: I want to make sure I understand how things might change in this version of the Plan. Can someone just change our vision and goals? DO we need to define what a living document means; when we don't have another meeting, who will tell us someone changed it?

PC: The Council will review any proposed changes. We will reconvene after public comment and then we can revise as necessary.

CM: My concern is fish and wildlife and whether it'll live in the vision statement. Can someone other than council change that?

PC: I certainly do not think so. It would have to come back to Council.

CM: I agree our rivers and streams contribute to the whole basis for our coastal environment and the inputs from our region contribute to the health of our marsh systems. That's why Georgia has the coastal zone management act protecting many of those islands. We have a healthy, living estuarine system that is rare in this country today.

I think about it as we've done this work and what we're doing provides a tremendous contribution.

CM: I think our Council needs to recognize Rick and Katherine for helping us get through this process. We all appreciate the work and efforts that were put into this thing.

Chairman Lanier – We've gone through this draft and it addresses the needs that have been identified in the Altamaha Region. It is a living document and I believe our EPD Director will treat it as such. We have the Plan before us and I will entertain a motion to approve the Plan for submission to EPD for public comment contingent on incorporation of the comments made today.

Lindsay Thomas moved that the Plan be submitted to EPD based on the corrections we agree upon today. Dan McCranie seconded the motion. The Altamaha Council voted unanimously to approve the Regional Water Plan.

Council Proceeded to the next agenda item. Kim Thompson, USDA, NRCS, Pine Country RC&D area addressed the Council. Ms. Thompson mentioned a few ideas related to agricultural best management practices and for unpaved roads and regarding proper septic tank maintenance workshops. She emphasized that her group is here to help and could work with Council to develop a few ideas into a grant.

CM: Are all of the NRCS offices aware that this \$100,000 is out there? What I would feel good about is if those NRCS offices that could bid on this would get together and plan on a project they could agree upon for our basin at large.

CM: I agree with that.

PC: Remember that we've been discussing this for a while and we haven't gotten anything off the ground. We talked to Kim because her organization could be a champion and could also come up with a match.

CM: I know and just want to make sure we are conscientious.

CM: If this has already been worked out is there a specific proposal?

PC: No, it has not yet been worked out and what we are really looking for is a couple of volunteers to work with Kim.

EPD: Yes I agree and time is of the essence. Applications were due January 31st and we have an informal extension for Council.

CM: What stipulations are on the use of this money?

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PC: Not to many it is mainly for a non-point source project and preferably for something that will measurably improve water quality.

The Council identified the following volunteers to work on this effort: Mark Burns, Gerald DeWitt, Lindsay Thomas, and Ed Jeffords

3) Local Elected Official Comments

There were no local elected official comments

4) Public Comments

There were no public comments.

5) Wrap-up and What to Expect Next Meeting

The Council tentatively agreed to hold the next meeting in July 2011.

Altamaha Regional Water Council
 Council Members Attendance List

Altamaha Council Members		2/17/2011
1	Gary Bell	X
2	Randy Branch	
3	Guy Rex Bullock	X
4	James Mark Burns	X
5	Gerald A DeWitt	X
6	Will Donaldson Jr.	X
7	Cleve Edenfield	X
8	Jim Free	X
9	Randy Giddens	
10	Len Hauss	X
11	Edward S Jeffords	X
12	Phillip Jennings	
13	L. Brinson Lanier	X
14	Dan McCranie	X
15	Steve Meeks	
16	Greg Morris	
17	Buddy Pittman	X
18	Michael A. Polsky	
19	John E. Roller	X
20	Sue B. Sammons	
21	Doug Sharp	X
22	Paul A. Stravriotis	X
23	Jim E. Strickland	X
24	Dent L. Temples	
25	Lindsay Thomas	X
26	William G Tomberlin	
27	Michael Williams	
28	Tommie Williams	
29	Russ Yeomans	X

Total 18

Altamaha Regional Water Council
Public Attendance List

Public Attendee		2/17/2011	Representing
1	Deatre Denion	X	GA DCA
2	Ted Evans	X	GA Farm Bureau
3	Wilson Gautreaux	X	Rayonier
4	Don Harrison	X	GA DNR-Fisheries
5	Cliff Lewis	X	Georgia EPD
6	Bill Lindsey	X	Heart of Georgia Altamaha RDC
7	Alison McGee	X	The Nature Conservancy
8	Rahn Milligan	X	GSWCC
9	Janet Price	X	Rayonier
10	Bleuland Rabmun	X	City of Scotland
11	Frank Resmuns	X	Senator Isakson
12	Bryan Snow	X	Georgia Forestry Commission
13	Kim Thompson	X	USDA-NRCS Pine County RC&D

Total **13**