

Memorandum

To: Altamaha Regional Water Planning Council

From: Rick Brown and Katherine Zitsch, CDM

Date: 08/24/10

Subject: Council Meeting 7 - Summary

This memorandum provides the meeting summary of the Altamaha Regional Water Planning Council Meeting 7 (CM 7), held on August 24, 2010 at Georgia State Prison, Wardens Guest House, Reidsville.

1) Welcome and Introductions/Recap CM 6/Approve Agenda/Approve CM6 Summary

Chairman Brinson Lanier called the meeting to order. The Council was welcomed by Warden Brad Hooks (Rogers State Prison) and Warden Donald Jarriel (Georgia State Prison) and the Council was provided with an overview of both the correctional facilities in Reidsville. The Council was invited to participate in a tour of the food production and packaging facilities including: farming, swine, and dairy operations and the food canning facility. A tour was arranged for the end of the day following the formal council meeting.

The PC provided an overview of the agenda and discussed the timing of activities over the next several months. October 28th was proposed as the preferred date for the Council Meeting 8 with November 4th as a possible backup date. The PC mentioned that Council Meeting 9 will likely be in early to mid December.

The PC then discussed the results of the last meeting which, based on the meeting evaluation, was reported useful or very useful to the Council. The PC then discussed the meeting summary and asked if there were any comments on the summary. Chairman Lanier indicated that there had been some concerns expressed regarding the resolution regarding fisheries and fishing that came up near the end of Council Meeting 6 and pointed out that there may be a conflict with how to interpret the resolution within the context of the Councils existing Vision and Goals. Chairman Lanier pointed out the existing vision and goals identify protection of natural systems and environmental and recreational needs of the region. It was acknowledged that the words fish or fishing is not specifically mentioned and if necessary they could be added.

A Council Member (CM): Mentioned that he was curious what the objective of the resolution was/is and that the resolution by itself does not take into consideration the other needs of the region that are included in the Vision and Goals. Another Council member mentioned that since the motion was made by Council Member Len Hauss (Len was absent due to illness) and that perhaps the Council should revisit the resolution when Mr. Hauss is able to discuss the topic.

The PC asked the Council for a motion to approve the meeting summary with the understanding that the topic of the resolution would be revisited at CM 8; Cleve Edenfield moved to accept the summary; Ed Jeffords seconded the motion. The Council unanimously approved the meeting summary.

Next John Roller made a motion to approve the agenda and Sue Sammons seconded the motion; Council unanimously approved the agenda.

The meeting continued with a more detailed overview of the objectives for Council Meeting 7. These included:

- Review resource assessment model results to identify and refine water and wastewater needs/gaps;
- Develop and refine management practices to address water availability and wastewater needs and gaps (Subcommittee report out);
- Review and prioritize current water quality impairment information and list of impaired segments and the status of Total Maximum Daily Load Plans;
- Discuss Subcommittee work on Water Plan development, and plan development review process; and
- Develop a deeper understanding of water resource dependent ecosystems in the region - Georgia Wildlife Resources Division Presentation

The PC then proceeded to the next major agenda item.

2) Quantification of Gaps and Needs

The PC described the work that has been undertaken by the Management Practices Subcommittee since the last Council meeting. The PC noted that the Subcommittee members have been invaluable in helping provide general input and direction on the technical work. However, final decisions and recommendations will come from full Council. Today's agenda item will bring the Council up to speed on the work completed

to date and there will be several full Council action items identified to help move the process forward and begin the management practices selection process.

The PC then provided an overview of a detailed handout that summarizes: regional forecast data; preliminary findings for the region for groundwater, surface water, and water quality; preliminary management practices to address gaps between available resource and forecasted need; and detailed water, wastewater, and water quality information at the County and/or river reach level. The PC outlined for the Council the overall summary information and showed a single county to highlight what information is presented and how to interpret the various information and data sources. A copy of the handout can also be obtained from the Council Meeting 7 portion on the EPD website.

CM: In regard to the surface water gap at the Atkinson Node on the Satilla River; I am familiar with this area near Wayne County and there are swamps that flow into the Satilla above Atkinson and just last week I was there and there was no discernable flow in the little Satilla. From the analysis that has been done I am wondering has anything we've done made it go dry more frequently or for longer?

PC: This is the crux of the work we have ahead of us. The surface water resource assessment evaluated how off stream uses have impacted surface water flows during critical dry year conditions. If off stream uses reduces these low flow periods (7 day low flow for each month that occurs 1 in 10 years or the cumulative unimpaired daily flow, whichever is less) or makes them occur more frequently then there is a gap between available resource and off stream water need. Council's next steps are to identify the potential causes of these gaps and develop management practices to address these gaps.

CM: What happens to small streams that feed the creeks? I have at least two creeks that are gone. That creek is flowing underground. How much of our water is still there but flows underground as leaves and things fill up our creeks? We have so much woodland and trees along creeks.

PC: Our challenge is to find ways to address critical low flows and understand to the best of our ability the most effective way to address these low flows. It is possible that changes in flow are related to other variables besides water use.

CM: What types of action can we recommend; we don't want to stop people from using water.

PC: This will be a Council driven decision several options are provided in your summary and you will need to review this and provide your input on those management practices that are effective and have a high potential of successful implementation. Possible options include but are not limited to demand reduction, replacement sources such as groundwater, changes in return flow (please see the Council Handout for more detail).

The PC also discussed several of the challenges regarding where surface water use occurs at the sub-county level. For example in Wayne County surface water use is associated with agricultural use and that use occurs in both the Satilla watershed and the Altamaha watershed. This will make a difference in terms of where management practices will be needed and to what level they may need to be implemented.

3) Management Practices Discussion –

The Council then spent about 15 minutes reviewing the handout and discussing the information among themselves. Following this informal work session the Council then convened as a full group. The PC encouraged the Council members to take the information home and share the information with their local governments, water providers and other stakeholders. The information will help you as a Council show where we are in the planning process and provide the opportunity to share ideas on management practices, plans and projects that are needed to meet future needs and address gaps. The PC mentioned that this portion of the planning process will be the main focus of our remaining work and is a vital part of the water plan and we will send a reminder email to make sure all Council members provide input. As we finalize this portion of our planning effort we must work toward a balanced solution with sufficient detail to be meaningful. If we are too generic and broad then we will not be as effective.

CM: What type of outreach have we been doing?

PC: We send meeting information with dates, location, and agenda to the Local Government Advisory Board (LGAB) (Mayors and County Commission Chairs, designees to LGAB that have been developed, and interested parties list, and “other” governmental officials list.

CM: Many of the gaps are on tributaries. Is the Council considering draining ponds?

PC: That could be an option to consider but it probably does not meet our regional vision and goals, would be difficult to implement and would have an adverse impact on local communities.

CM: Regarding industrial waste water many of the systems went from point source to LAS has that had a negative impact?

PC: It would be hard to separate out specific issues. We do know the basic changes of those that have gone to LAS.

CM: Would it be possible for some farm ponds to be done in a manner that do not use surface water when certain flow levels occur. You could require an identification of an alternate source of supply to help sustain river flows when certain river flow levels occur and utilize some groundwater inflows and release stored water if an alternate source was available.

PC: Yes those are the types of ideas that we need to explore and flesh out.

CM: We are being asked to address gaps. If there is a current gap how do we fix these given current use?

PC: We have to address gaps but also need to address adverse impacts. Improved data collection and model improvement may also be needed.

CM: Is there a program to move surface water to ground?

PC: Yes that may be a viable option.

CM: Are there other areas of the state that have similar problems.

PC: Yes the Suwannee-Satilla, Coastal Georgia and other regions such as the Flint have and will need to address these types of issues.

CM: We have an asset that is water. We need to protect the resources and grow our communities economically. It's a balance.

- 4) Guest Presentation – Mr. Don Harrison, Fisheries Biologist, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Division – *Developing a deeper understanding of water resource dependant ecosystems in the Region*

Mr. Harrison presented information regarding aquatic resources in the region highlighting several points:

Hydrologic variability and yearly flow variation on the Altamaha at Doctortown including low flows that some rivers experience in extreme drought where there is flow that is only at or below aquatic subsistence flow level. Mr. Harrison showed some examples of flow

conditions at higher flow highlighting the functions that are achieved (i.e., spawning, recharge flood plain, exchange of nutrients, change channel morphology etc.). He also highlighted some examples of different ecological species that benefit from different flow levels and how population of sunfish varied in the Altamaha during low versus higher flows. Mr. Harrison then noted some data on economic benefits of fisheries both recreational and commercial; including some of the fishing tournaments that attract people to the region. Mr. Harrison then highlighted several species; including mussels, and mentioned that several species are fairly rare species on the Altamaha which is one of the largest and watersheds and longer unimpounded rivers in the east. Mr. Harrison presented some optional ideas about different flow options related to Georgia's Instream Flow Policy and mentioned a few ideas to improve river flows including water conservation; return water near the location of withdrawal; direct withdrawals versus storage; impairment; identify high priority streams for conservation where environmental flows are especially important for the protection of aquatic life.

5) Guest Presentation – Mr. Kevin Kelly, Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA)
- Overview of GEFA Funding Programs

Mr. Kelly thanked the Council for the opportunity to discuss GEFA and gave a short overview of GEFA highlighting their funding programs and the types and purposes of various funding sources and entities. Mr. Kelly included information on the funding options available and key agency and contacts. An overview of the key points made by Mr. Kelly are summarized below:

GEFA is involved with 4 major water infrastructure loan programs; two state (revolving funds) and two federal. These loan programs are summarized briefly below (for more information please see the PowerPoint Presentation for Council Meeting 7 which includes the GEFA Overview Loan Program Handout that was provided at the meeting):

State Funded

Georgia Fund – provides loans for drinking water, wastewater, water supply and solid waste infrastructure projects.

Georgia Reservoir and Water Supply Fund – provides loans for water supply projects.

Federal Funded

Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) – for use on water quality (including wastewater and storm water) and non-point source pollution projects.

Drinking Water SRF – focuses on drinking water with an emphasis on public health and regulatory compliance; Mr. Kelly noted this fund is not available for water supply to meet growth.

Mr. Kelly then provided more information about how each fund works and the assets available for loans. He emphasized that in regard to the Water First program with Department of Community Affairs (DCA), you can get up to a 1% interest reduction for GA Fund or GA Reservoir & Water Supply loans under \$10 million.

In terms of timing for applying and being approved for a loan; for the federal funding sources it is typically 5-6 months for SRF and these tend to be bigger projects; for state funds the turnaround is shorter, typically about 2 months.

Mr. Kelly noted that GEFA is here to help support and work with Council in helping meet their water needs and as Council gets more detail on projects that are needed to meet future needs they should keep GEFA in mind. Finally, Mr. Kelly provided a six page handout that summarizes Georgia's Water and Wastewater funding sources (see PowerPoint presentation).

CM: Are there any reservoirs expected to be pursued in the North Georgia area.

Mr. Kelly: Yes there are several feasible sites on the "drawing board" including ones that were identified in the GEFA reservoir study.

CM: Some people think that reservoirs are the "solution" to future growth but in my opinion these sites are not that prevalent; they need to be technically sound; they take a long time to permit; there are concerns over cost; and concerns of downstream impacts. Therefore what percentage of sites do you think will actually go forward?

Mr. Kelly: I think there are several viable projects that can and will likely go forward but can't say for sure which ones.

CM: Given the concerns I mentioned do you think that there will be a chilling effect which would drive people away from reservoir construction?

Mr. Kelly: GEFA does not get into the regulatory process but does try to help communities implement the projects that they need. Another service that GEFA provides is the "Technical Assistance Program" which is available to help committees understand resources that are available to help address local planning challenges and to help them with planning; GEFAs focus is to help communities get the project done.

Deatre Denion from the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) then provided a short overview of the Water First Designation for Communities that demonstrated excellence in water conservation/efficiency noting the following:

The program is a Voluntary program that began in 2002. The first three communities were designated in 2003. In total approximately 19 communities have been designated for their

efforts in “going beyond” the minimum water conservation activities in up to 7 program areas (including water conservation, water supply, water supply protection, wastewater, stormwater, reuse). The City of Savannah, Cobb and Gwinnett counties were the first three that received the designation. The next deadline for designation as Water First is October 1, 2010.

6) Current Water Quality Impairments

The PC then provided additional information on Current Water Quality Impairments and the process used to organize the list of impaired waters. The discussion focused on the color coded maps that showed both areas of low dissolved oxygen and current and permitted discharges and well as stream list on the 303 (d) listed streams.

The PC and EPD mentioned that EPD will provide up to \$100,000 in non-competitive Section 319(h) funds to a specified funding recipient(s) in each Water Planning Region. EPD is making these funds available to encourage Council discussions about nonpoint source pollution impacts on water quality and to facilitate implementation of nonpoint source pollution management practices. These funds will be provided to a jurisdiction(s) identified by the associated Council to serve as a recommended eligible funding recipient. It was noted that there is an annual cycle of funding for the overall 319 Program from the Environmental Protection Agency and this process for the Councils will fit within that program; there will be up to \$1 million in funding (up to \$100,000 per Council) and the funding recipient (and partners, if applicable) must demonstrate implementation commitment by providing a minimum of 40% in non-Federal matching funds or in-kind services for use in completion of the project. EPD has prepared a guidance memo (provided to the Councils) to guide the Councils (and their planning consultants) in the selection of an implementable nonpoint source pollution management project to be included in their recommended Regional Water Plan.

7) Shared Resources Discussion

The PC highlighted several areas of the region and topics that are candidates for discussion with other Councils. These regions and topics are related to areas where resources are shared across Council boundaries and where there are gaps between available resource and need. Chairman Lanier lead the Council through a discussion of the shared resources and sought volunteers to work with some of the other Councils. The following topics and volunteers were discussed and identified.

Surface Water Gap - Eden, Kings Ferry, and Claxton; Volunteers - Jim Strickland, Paul, Cleve, Gary)

Surface Water Gap at Atkinson; Volunteers - Ed, Lindsay, Len

Water Quality upstream of region (Mount Vernon, Doctortown, Lumber City); Volunteers – Dent, John Roller, Mark
Surface Water Gap at Statenville; Volunteers, if needed, Rex and Mike Polsky

8) Water Plan Development

The PC presented the overall process and results of the Plan Section drafting and thanked the drafting subcommittee (Ed, Sue, John and Jim S.). The PC noted that copies of the draft Plan has been sent to everyone and asked Council to please let us know if they have any questions or concerns. The PC mentioned that a draft version of Sections 1-8 is due to EPD on October 15 and that we will receive a preliminary review from EPD and will likely have formal comments from EPD that Council will need to address. The PC mentioned the tricky dynamics associated with concurrently doing our analysis and drafting the plan and emphasized that all of our work is dynamic and may change as we get new information.

9) Water Plan Implementation

The PC noted that a key element of our planning process is to identify key implementation entities and coordinate with these entities. Council will also be asked to identify implementation milestones and the actions by state agencies to help move the water plan forward once it is developed.

The PC mentioned some breaking information on the Statewide Joint Meeting that will be held in Macon on October 6 at Macon State College (8:30-4:00); we will develop our top 4 discussion topics and submit that to EPD and we will be in touch with the Chair and seek Council volunteers to discuss topics at the meeting example topic that may be discussed include:

- Water Quality Nutrients and Lake
- Groundwater wells versus surface water
- Current Gap
- Future Gaps
- Septic versus central waste disposal
- Agricultural water use
- Water use and land use

CM: Are we late in the process to have joint meetings?

PC: The timelines are tight here at the end but we needed to have our regional data interpretation before we had Joint Meetings.

CM: I want the Council to know that we need to have time to do the Plan right. If we have too many coordination points to do and then concurrently draft the Plan we are not going to have a quality product.

EPD: We are actively reviewing the Council work as quickly as possible now and we also need to adhere to the schedule to allow for a solicitation of formal public comment after the January 2011 submission (and before the June 30, 2011 deadline for Plan completion).

10) Local Elected Official Comments

There were no local elected official comments.

11) Public Comments

There were no public comments.

12) Wrap-up and What to Expect Next Meeting

The Council agreed to hold the next meeting in Swainsboro on October 28th

13) Council Meeting 7 Evaluations

The PC distributed the evaluation forms and members of Council filled out the forms. The PC collected the forms. The meeting was adjourned.

14) Optional Tour of Rogers Farm, Dairy and Swine Facilities

Several Council members, EPD and the PC join official from the State and Rogers Prison for an informative tour of the food production and water use facilities.

cc: Kevin Farrell, EPD

Altamaha Regional Water Council -Council Members Attendance List

Altamaha Council Members		8/24/2010
1	Gary Bell	X
2	Randy Branch	
3	Guy Rex Bullock	
4	James Mark Burns	X
5	Gerald A DeWitt	
6	Will Donaldson Jr.	
7	Cleve Edenfield	X
8	Jim Free	
9	Randy Giddens	
10	Len Hauss	
11	Edward S Jeffords	X
12	Phillip Jennings	
13	L. Brinson Lanier	X
14	Dan McCranie	
15	Steve Meeks	X
16	Greg Morris	
17	Buddy Pittman	
18	Michael A. Polsky	X
19	John E. Roller	X
20	Sue B. Sammons	X
21	Doug Sharp	X
22	Paul A. Stravriotis	X
23	Jim E. Strickland	X
24	Dent L. Temples	X
25	Lindsay Thomas	X
26	William G Tomberlin	
27	Michael Williams	
28	Tommie Williams	
29	Russ Yeomans	

Total 14

Altamaha Regional Water Council
Public Attendance List

Public Attendee		8/24/2010	Representing
1	Stan Dansby	X	City of Glennville
2	Deatre Denion	X	GA DCA
3	Ted Evans	X	GA Farm Bureau
4	Don Giles	X	GA Farm Bureau
5	Don Harrison	X	GA DNR - Fisheries Mgmt.
6	Neil Herring	X	GA Water Coalition
7	Kevin Kelly	X	GEFA
8	Alison McGee	X	The Nature Conservancy
9	Rahn Milligan	X	GSWCC
10	Ken Rosanski	X	Oglethorpe Power
11	Bryan Snow	X	Georgia Forestry Comm.

Total 11