

## Memorandum

*To: Altamaha Regional Water Planning Council*

*From: Katherine Zitsch, Danny Johnson, and Rick Brown, CDM*

*Date: 5/19/11*

*Subject: Altamaha Initial Recommended Regional Water Plan -- Local Government, Water Utility, and Interested Parties Outreach Meeting Summary*

This memorandum provides the meeting summary of the Altamaha Initial Recommended Water Plan Outreach Meeting held on May 12, 2011 at the Economic Development Center, Southeastern Technical College, in Vidalia, Georgia.

### 1) Welcome and Introductions

Vice-Chairman Ed Jeffords, Altamaha Regional Water Planning Council opened the meeting and welcomed the meeting attendees and introduced himself. Vice-Chairman Jeffords noted that the completion of the Initial Recommended Regional Water Plan (Plan) and today's meeting mark a significant milestone in the Altamaha regional water planning process. Vice-Chairman Jeffords asked the Council members in attendance to introduce themselves, and then had Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) and Planning Contractor (PC) staff introduce themselves.

Vice-Chairman Jeffords mentioned that the PC staff were charged with helping the Council develop the Initial Recommended Regional Water Plan and indicated that the PC would be facilitating the meeting and asked the PC to proceed with meeting agenda.

The PC also welcomed visitors and described the planning documents and handouts that had been placed around the room. Copies of the Executive Summary of the Initial Recommended Regional Water Plan were provided to visitors along with a summary sheet that outlines instructions for providing comments on the Plan. The PC mentioned that copies of the entire Initial Recommended Regional Water Plan and Supplemental Materials for the Plan are available on the table at the back of the room and visitors are welcome to look through these documents which are all available on the State Water Plan website.

The PC then provided an overview of the purpose of the meeting highlighting the following objectives:

- Improve your understanding of the Regional Water Planning process
- Help you understand how to get additional information
- Answer questions about the Planning process and how the Plan may affect you

The PC mentioned that the best way to get information about the planning process and the regional plans is by visiting the State Water Planning website at <http://www.altamahacouncil.org/>. Information for all the planning regions can be found at this website and it was noted that an overview of the website and the water plan comment collection tool would be provided later in the meeting.

The PC then provided a PowerPoint presentation which included the following information.

- A short overview of the Drivers for state water resource planning
- Summarized the major steps in the Regional Water Planning Process
- Presented the Vision statement developed by the Council
- Described the Resource Assessments noting that three assessments were completed by EPD; Surface Water Availability, Ground Water Availability, and Surface Water Quality. The PC noted that the resource assessments are analytical models that were developed to help evaluate the capacity of the resources to meet the current and future water resource needs of the region.
- The PC then described the forecasting process that summarizes the regions forecasted water and wastewater needs over the next 40 years from 2010 to 2050. Forecasts were completed for the Agricultural, Municipal (includes commercial and self supplied), Thermoelectric Energy and Industrial sectors. It was noted that the region's population is projected to grow by 50 percent over the next 40 years growing from about 250,000 to 375,000 people. Water use is forecasted to grow from about from 207 to 248 million gallons per day (not including energy water use). Wastewater forecast information for the region was also highlighted.
- The PC then described the Council management practices selection process which was based upon documenting and building upon existing planning and permitting activities that are currently underway. Council specific management practices to address resource needs were also developed and the PC noted some of

these practices and mentioned that more information can be found in Section 6 of the Plan.

- The PC highlighted the major results of the resource assessments and noted that management practices will be needed to address resource shortfalls and future needs in the region.
  - **Groundwater:** *Overall, results indicate that the sustainable yield for the modeled portions of the regional aquifer(s) is greater than the forecasted demands.*
  - **Surface Water Quantity:** *There are sufficient surface water supplies at several locations throughout the Altamaha Region, but there are also surface water shortfalls during some periods of time at the Claxton, Kings Ferry, Atkinson, and Statenville nodes.*
  - **Surface Water Quality:** *There are four reaches within the Ogeechee River Basin, six reaches within the Altamaha River Basin, and one reach in the Ocmulgee River Basin that may exceed assimilative capacity.*
- The PC noted examples of several of the categories of management practice selected by the Council and mentioned that more detailed information can be found in Section 6 of the Plan.
- The PC also mentioned that the Plan includes Council “Recommendations to the State” along with implementation considerations, timelines, possible funding sources, and benchmarks to assess water plan progress. The PC encouraged people to think about how information from that Plan may be applicable in their region or for their utility and to also think about recommendations that could be made to the state to help their community plan for their water resource future.
- The PC concluded by reminding the attendees how they can comment on the Plan noting that comments can be made through several avenues:
  - Via the web at <http://www.gaepdcommentcenter.org/login.aspx>
  - Via email at [info@georgiawaterplanning.org](mailto:info@georgiawaterplanning.org)
  - Via fax at 404-651-5778
  - Via direct mail to:

Arnettia Murphy  
Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Environmental Protection Division  
2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive  
Suite 1152, East Tower  
Atlanta, GA 30334

Vice-Chairman Jeffords and the PC then opened the floor for comments and discussion.

Question: You mentioned groundwater versus surface water resources. Is there any incentive to use groundwater where surface water has a gap?

Answer: In some areas of surface water use, the shortfalls occur during some low river flow years and generally do not occur during the entire year more in the 20-90 day range. In light of this timing issue the Council talked about using return flows, or having agriculture (a major surface water use category in the region) use groundwater supply rather than surface water during these periods. Council did discuss the need to develop incentives especially if the surface water user needs to drill a well. Council even discussed the need to have incentives to utilize existing storage on a willing participant basis to release to the environment during lower low periods. Overall Council wanted to have several options as and hopefully incentives to help implement some of these options.

Question: Has there been any consideration of how wastewater is handled in the region? I know there has been some debate over whether or not Land Application Systems are more beneficial than direct discharge.

Answer: Yes, the Council did discuss this especially in regard to the Canoochee River. In this watershed there are some challenges associated with managing discharges to smaller streams that are relatively flat, tend to have higher temperatures, and are more prone to lower dissolved oxygen conditions. Low flow streams typically have stringent discharge requirements and are difficult to meet, so this creates some incentive to consider Land Application Systems. Of course it must be cost effective, have the right soil conditions and have available space. However, the downside is that these flows are not returning to the river. Council talked about incentives for several of the discharges to consider returning water to the river during low flow but that would require significant changes and there is already infrastructure and investment that the discharges have put into place.

Question/Comment: Keep in mind fishing and recreation is very important to us and the minimum low flow conditions may not provide the best conditions for our fisheries and rivers. If we managed the Altamaha to only low flow conditions it would not be the resource it is today. We want to make sure we don't send the wrong message to people upstream that we just need minimum flow down here. We need flows that meet our regions vision and goals.

Question: What about industries like Plant Hatch? It is my understanding that these types of power production lose a lot of water through cooling towers. Could that water be recaptured?

Answer: Plant Hatch uses about 58 million gallons per day and about 62% of that is consumed primarily as a result of evaporation. Single pass cooling doesn't evaporate as much, but withdraws a lot more. Overall the statewide trend is toward cooling that has less withdrawal but higher consumption, more consumptive. There are still significant surface water resources in this region, so it might make sense to locate here. Council did mention that it would be important for power production to consider reuse and be as efficient as possible.

Question: After public comment period closes, what are next steps?

Answer: The public comment period runs from May 9 to June 23<sup>rd</sup> and it is possible that an extension could be requested and we have some time to extend if necessary. EPD has committed to councils and planning contractors that EPD will be done tabulating comments (including both public comments and internal EPD review on adoptability of plans) by August 2<sup>nd</sup>. Council will need to finalize their Plans for EPD consideration by September 30<sup>th</sup>. EPD has three options: 1) adopt the Plan as submitted, 2) recommend changes to allow adoption, or 3) adopt the Plan with conditions.

Question: Will the Altamaha region know what entities upstream of the region are doing and how the actions identified in their Plans might affect us?

Answer: All regional plans are available on the website. Future growth on Oconee and Ocmulgee Rivers will in part rely on surface water supply and that may change river flows, but so far no indication that it would result in major flow shortfalls. Some additional upstream water storage has been discussed but I have not heard of any major interbasin transfers that would significantly change the surface water flows. This is a topic that Council should continue to monitor and follow.

Council Member: I don't have any doubt that some entities in the state are going to build a lot of reservoirs. Are these reservoirs just going to take water and stop water or will it be designed that as these reservoirs are filled at high flows and then release water to increase low stream flows so we're not impacting streams down here.

I know of some cases where off-stream reservoirs were built with clauses that they would release in times of low flow. In one instance when it got real dry, the people in the reservoir area did not release water so that there would be water for people rather than

water for instream flow needs. We need to get our policy makers down here to understand that water is important for South Georgia and that as demands grow we are not forgotten. Issues can really change when as water gets scarce in other regions.

Council Member: This is a good reason to support ongoing planning so that we can revisit some of the information and assumption that have been made.

Council Member: It is important that people realize that the water plan is not over when we walk out of here. We need to monitor and revise information and needs as things progress. The democratic process in this country is that the squeaky wheel gets the grease. If we have normal patterns of rainfall for a few years then we'll take our eye off the ball. We need the funding to continue the process and to keep water planning at the top of the priority list.

Question: You mention assimilative capacity focused on dissolved oxygen and briefly mention nutrients could you say a little more about the nutrient work?

Answer: In a couple of select locations, EPD developed lake and harbor models to models and evaluated nitrogen, phosphorus and Chlorophyll A. EPD is anticipating future nutrient standards, so they wanted to get a handle on this as early as possible. A "nutrient standard" was not applied because it doesn't exist, but we did use some information developed on nutrient hot spots which estimate nutrient loading from non-point sources. Council used this information in a more qualitatively manner and identified Best Management Practices that could be used in those settings. Practices that could apply to agricultural, forestry, urban and suburban areas were identified from several state agencies. Council also requested more data to be derived for future planning.

PC: The PC asked if there were any additional questions and hearing none suggested a quick review of the Water Plan website and comment collection tool. The PC showed the audience how to review the planning documents and how to enter web comments. The PC thanked the audience for attending and mentioned that we would be available for additional discussion for about 30 minutes.

**Altamaha Regional Water Council  
 Council Members Attendance List**

Altamaha Council Members		5/12/2011
1	Gary Bell	X
2	Edward S Jeffords	X
3	Len Hauss	X
4	John E. Roller	X
5	Jim E. Strickland	X
6	Lindsay Thomas	X

*Total*      **6**

**Altamaha Regional Water Council  
 Public Attendance List**

Public Attendee		5/12/2012	Representing
1	Deatre Denion	X	GA DCA
2	Ted Hendrix	X	GA EPD
3	Robbie Atkins	X	City of Vidalia
4	Shaun Oliver	X	City of Vidalia
5	Becky Hooks	X	City of Soperton
6	Isabella Daigle	X	City of Soperton
7	Reggie Evans	X	City of Soperton
8	Royce Fowler	X	City of Soperton
9	Janet Price	X	Rayonier
10	Wilson Gautreax	X	Rayonier

*Total*      **10**