



Vision and Goals Technical Memorandum

Altamaha Regional Water Planning Council

Little Ocmulgee State Park

Supplemental Material
Initial Recommended Altamaha
Regional Water Plan

May 2011

CDM

*Little Ocmulgee State Park
photo courtesy of the Georgia
Department of Industry,
Trade & Tourism*

1.0 Introduction

The central purpose of Georgia's State Water Planning process is to "guide Georgia in managing water resources in a sustainable manner to support the state's economy, to protect public health and natural systems, and to enhance the quality of life for all citizens." The Altamaha Regional Water Planning Council (Altamaha Council) was established to help accomplish this at the regional level. This Technical Memorandum summarizes the process used by the Altamaha Council to fulfill this purpose.

The Altamaha Council first considered how water is used and managed in the region. The Council then considered the vision and goals that should be developed for water resource management in the region. To accomplish this, the Council found it useful to describe the economic, population, environmental and water use conditions that would be desired for the region over the next 40 years. This was accomplished through a series of discussions at several initial Council meetings.

The discussions of vision and goals began at the March 2009 kickoff meeting of the Statewide Water Planning effort. Council Members completed a "Water 35" exercise. The exercise was designed to begin to identify the important issues and needs for both the planning process and the region. This exercise involved Council members identifying critical factors that should be addressed and evaluated during the regional water planning process. Each Council member identified his/her 5 most important factors and then discussed these factors with other Council members. The factors were scored based on their discussions to help organize the discussion points. The results of the exercise were summarized and provided to Council at their first meeting.



Altamaha Council Boundary

2.0 Altamaha RWPC "Water 35" Results

- Ensure adequate resources for all the citizens of Georgia and preserve this commodity for future generations
- Be fair
- Need to come to consensus

- Flexibility of plan to balance everyone's needs
- Better utilize our water resources
- Keep an open mind
- Varied opinions/concerns, make effort to see the other side's opinions/concerns
- Maximize access to water without excessive regulations and maintain quality and quantity of water supply
- Use sound science
- Important to recognize the water resources that we have

The outcome of the “Water 35” exercise was built upon during the next Council Meeting on [05/05/2009]. Council Members were asked to identify Trends, Forces, and Factors that are or will be affecting water use and management in the Altamaha region over the next 40 years. The following Trends, Forces, and Factors were identified by the Council:

3.0 Trends, Forces, and Factors Results

- There is an increased need to promote wise land and water management for economic, recreational, and wildlife sustainability.
- Increased growth in the Atlanta and Coastal areas is increasing the importance to implement conservation measures and wisely manage for long-term sustainability of resources. Need positive incentives.
- Growth is increasing the need to better and more actively plan for future needs, economic development, and to promote wise land use. New development should better retain/manage runoff and improve open space/wetlands.
- Growth in the Atlanta and Coastal areas may/is placing pressure on the basin: concern over reduced river flows, basin transfers, and groundwater use impacts in this basin as a result of issues outside the basin.
- Rural areas are seeing growth in unincorporated areas and there is a need for funds to consider regional water and wastewater facilities.
- Agriculture needs to do its best to efficiently use water.
- Agriculture in the area will continue to rely heavily on groundwater.
- Changes in land use and growth increase the need to manage point and nonpoint source pollution.

- Increased water use is changing the amount and timing of river flow and groundwater. This is driving concerns over groundwater use, needs for the environment, and the need to increase storage /improve management and technology.
- Increased water use is increasing the need for Georgia to be better prepared for drought.
- Increased regulation could have a negative economic impact on the region and increase the costs for compliance. Increased costs are especially hard on more rural areas.
- Future growth of the state should seek to balance multiple uses and economies: municipal, residential, agriculture, industry, recreation and eco-tourism.
- Growth in the Atlanta and Coastal regions could adversely impact the region.
- Climate and variability of supply in the future means that the state needs to better manage for extremes. Storage, desalination, reuse can help address this trend.
- Growth and increased water use places more pressure on water quality and quantity in streams and groundwater.

4.0 Establishment of Vision and Goals

The work on the development of the regional vision and goals continued through the next Council Meeting [06/18/2009]. Additional background information was provided to Council on how regional vision and goals can be utilized to guide the selection of water resource management practices. It was emphasized that certain management practices, if implemented, can either help advance the regional vision and goals or, conversely, the management practices might impair attainment of the vision and goals.

It was also pointed out that eventually, the Altamaha Council will need to develop a decision making process for selecting water management practices. The identification and adoption of a regional vision and goals are a vital part of developing that decision making process. Please see the Council's "Management Practices Selection Process Technical Memorandum" for more information on how this was accomplished.

The Altamaha Council formed a vision and goals subcommittee and charged the subcommittee with refining the information into a concise vision statement and a series of goals that reflect the ideas that had been discussed over the last several Council meetings. The subcommittee focused on summarizing the information identified by Council within the context of the following questions.

What do you want your rivers, lakes, and groundwater to do for you and the citizens in your planning region?

- Consideration was given to the following factors:

- Supporting the region's and state's economy
- Protecting public health and natural systems
- Enhancing the quality of life for all citizens

What types of resources/needs do you want to protect?

What do you want to achieve with your water resources?

The subcommittee drafted an initial vision statement and identified action-oriented goals to support the vision. The information was sent to full Council and comments and revisions were made to the vision and goals. The full Council unanimously adopted the vision and goals at their September and November 2009 meetings.

The Altamaha Council revisited their vision statement over the course of the planning process to ensure that all elements of the regional water plan were consistent with and complementary to the regions needs, and to consider the information that became available during the water planning process. The following vision statement for the region was adopted by the Council at the October 28, 2010 meeting (revised from the vision statement originally adopted at the September 17, 2009 meeting).

4.1 Vision Statement – October 28, 2010

The vision of the Altamaha Regional Water Planning Council is to wisely manage, develop, and protect the region's water resources for current and future generations by ensuring that the Altamaha basin's water resources are sustainably managed to enhance quality of life and public health, protect natural systems including fishing, wildlife and wildlife utilization activities, and support the basin's economy.

The Altamaha Council identified the following goals for the region. These goals were adopted by Council at the November 19, 2009 meeting. The Council revisited these goals over the planning process but did not identify any necessary revision to the goals. It is important to note that the goals are not presented in order of priority.

4.2 Goals – November 19, 2009

The Altamaha Council recognized that they are generally not the primary implementation entity associated with water resource development, use, and management. Nevertheless, the Council wished to express meaningful, action oriented goals for the future use and management of water resources in their region. The following goals were identified with this principle in mind.

4.2.1 Water Systems/Supply Sustainability

- Help ensure protection and management of surface and groundwater recharge areas to ensure sufficient long-term water supplies for the region.
- Identify opportunities to maximize and optimize existing and future supplies.

- Promote water conservation and water use efficiency for all water use sectors to allow for sufficient long-term water supplies.
- Identify opportunities to better prepare for, and respond to, climate and water supply variability and extremes.
- Identify and implement cost effective water management strategies.

4.2.2 Economic Sustainability and Development

- Manage and develop water resources to sustainably and reliably meet domestic, commercial, agricultural, and industrial water needs.
- Manage ground and surface water to encourage sustainable economic and population growth in the region.
- Identify opportunities to minimize excessive regulations and the resulting negative economic impacts (especially in rural areas); while maintaining quality and quantity of water supply.

4.2.3 Quality of Life and Public Health Enhancement

- Ensure an adequate water supply of suitable quality to meet current and future human, environmental and recreational needs of the region and citizens of Georgia.
- Optimize existing water and wastewater infrastructure, including identifying opportunities to implement regional water and wastewater facilities.
- Identify opportunities to manage water, wastewater, and stormwater to improve water quantity and quality, while providing for wise land management, wetland protection, and wildlife sustainability.
- Work collaboratively with other regions that share resources to help ensure that activities outside the Altamaha region do not adversely impact the region.