

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Environmental Protection Division, Watershed Protection Branch
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September 14, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Kevin Farrell, GA EPD
Doug Baughman, CH2MHILL

SUBJECT: Council Meeting 11 Summary
Upper Oconee Water Planning Council Meeting

Georgia Comprehensive Statewide Water Management Plan Regional Water Planning

Council Meeting 11 Summary

Meeting Date: September 14, 2011

Location: Legislative Chambers at Georgia Military College, Milledgeville, GA

1) Welcome and Meeting Overview

Chairman Richard Bentley welcomed the group back to Milledgeville and thanked them for being part of the planning process.

Council Coordinator Doug Baughman reviewed the agenda and asked if there were any modifications. He noted that the objectives for the meeting were to:

- Review substantive comments received on Final Draft of Upper Oconee RWP
- Vote on final changes that will be included in the Final Upper Oconee Regional Water Plan

Council members agreed that the process for accepting or modifying changes would be to review each comment and reach consensus and then have one vote at the end.

The agenda included the following items:

- Review Summary of General Comments
- Review Comments Specific to the May 2011 Upper Oconee Regional Water Plan (RWP)
- Review and Vote on Errata Sheet of Suggested Changes for the Final Upper Oconee RWP
- Discuss Next Steps for Implementation

2) Brief Summary of General Comments

Baughman started by touching on the August 23, 2011 letter to the Councils from Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) sent by Linda MacGregor, Watershed Protection Branch Chief, with a review of the overall comments to the planning process. He told that group that the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) received 282 pages of comments related to all of the regional water plans across the state. The comments came from a diverse group of stakeholders, such as: Private Citizens, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, Georgia Power Company, Collective Georgia Riverkeepers (Georgia River Network, Chattahoochee, Satilla, Flint, Coosa, Ogeechee, Altamaha and Savannah), Georgia Water Coalition, Georgia Industry Environmental Coalition, Georgia Water Alliance, Association of County Commissioners (ACCG), Nature Conservancy, Cobb County Water System, Alabama Rivers Alliance, and others.

He noted that the general comments were related to four key areas:

- Reconsideration of regional planning boundaries to better reflect the natural watershed boundaries
- Use of the 2001 DNR Board Instream Flow policy assumption in the Resource Assessments (RAs)
- Accuracy of the population and economic growth projections
- Creation of a dedicated (State) funding source to support implementation and future planning

One council member stated that a lot of the general comments were not directly related to the Upper Oconee and more to the planning process itself. Baughman said that there weren't many comments on the management practices recommended in the Upper Oconee RWP.

Another council member asked who or what entity was responsible for contingency planning during drought conditions. EPD staff said that was not really the one of the charges in the regional water planning process.

3) Review and Discussion of Comments Specific to the Final Draft of the Upper Oconee RWP

Baughman then went through a list of comments specific to the Upper Oconee RWP that resulted in changes from the May 2011 draft of the Plan. Organizations offering specific comments included: Altamaha Riverkeeper, Georgia Power Company, City of Madison, Georgia Forestry Commission, Town of Braselton, and the Georgia Farm Bureau. The comments prompted several discussions on whether or not to accept the recommendations or make additional changes.

Specific Comments Discussed (Suggested Revisions Underlined)

1. Altamaha Riverkeeper comment (1g):

Discussion of the interaction between WS and WC MPs, i.e. implementation of the WC MPs could lessen the need for some of the WS MPs.

- Suggested revisions to page 6-3 of the Upper Oconee RWP:
Conservation also helps ensure responsible use of a public resource and can reduce the need for, or delay, implementation of potentially costly water supply MPs.

Council Response: change "can" to "may"

2. Georgia Power Company (2a):

Add discussion of why Lake Jackson standards have been applied to Lakes Sinclair and Oconee.

- Suggested revisions to page 3-5 of the Upper Oconee RWP:
There are no established chlorophyll a or nutrient (total phosphorus and/or total nitrogen) standards for Lake Oconee or Lake Sinclair. Therefore, results for chlorophyll a, total nitrogen, and the total phosphorus loading for these lakes were compared to the standards for Lake Jackson.

Council Response: accept change

3. Georgia Power Company (2b):

Does not concur that any of the MPs that call for the tightening (via the elimination of exemptions) of existing erosion and sedimentation requirements are needed to meet regional goals.

- Suggested revisions to page 7-30 the Upper Oconee RWP:
Consider modifying (limiting), as appropriate, the extent of exemptions found in O.C.G.A. § 12-7-17 regarding the Erosion and Sedimentation Control Act.

Council Discussion/Response: much discussion on the applicability of “as appropriate” and whether or not it’s needed for clarification. One member commented that it waters the MPs down too much. Another commented that it will be up to the [Georgia] General Assembly to make that sort of change and that if the Council made such a change, it would not make much difference. Others voiced opinions in favor of leaving it in but just as many or more said it should be removed. At the end of the discussion, the Council agreed to **not** add “as appropriate.”

4. Georgia Power Company (2c):

- *Suggested revisions to power plant water consumption narrative.*

Suggested revisions to page 4-9 the Upper Oconee RWP:

Certain types of power plants ~~consume~~ utilize water and others do not. “Waterless” power plants include wind turbine and most solar photovoltaic systems. These plants made up about 1 percent of the total energy generated in 2001 in the United States (EPA, 2001).

Thermoelectric facilities (powered by fossil fuels, nuclear, or geothermal energy) are the ~~The~~ two primary major types of power plants that consume water for cooling. ~~are hydroelectric and thermoelectric (powered by fossil fuels, nuclear, or geothermal energy).~~

Once-through cooling systems use water to cool the condenser ~~water steam~~. River or lake water is passed through a heat exchanger to condense steam, the condensed steam exiting ~~condenser water~~ is pumped back through the steam cycle, and the cooling water is returned to its source. ~~Water consumption at the power plant is minimal, if not zero, because the cooling water does not directly contact the air.~~ Although the consumptive water use is minimal at the power plant, the amount of water withdrawn from the river or lake is significant. However, the once-through cooling water is only used for a short time before being immediately

returned to the source.

Suggested revisions to page 4-10 of the Upper Oconee RWP:

~~Closed-loop cooling systems were designed to minimize the amount of water withdrawn and / or to minimize the heat rejected to the receiving river or lake. Closed-loop systems The condenser water also use water for cooling to condense the steam but exchanges heat with the cooling water in a heat is rejected through evaporation in a exchanger, but the water is then recycled between a cooling tower and a heat exchanger. The cooling water is pumped in a closed loop between the cooling tower and the condenser heat exchanger; makeup water is required to replace the water that evaporates. During the recycling process, the cooling water evaporates and there has to be a constant water supply to account for the consumed water. This system consumes much more water than once-through systems because the entire energy exchange is through evaporation of the water, but they . These systems withdraw less water because less water is needed the only water used is to make up the evaporated portion; however, they consume more water.~~

Council Response: agreed to change the word “consume” to “utilize” in the first paragraph and accept other changes

5. Georgia Power Company (2d):

Executive Summary – RWP does not address how nutrient concerns in Oconee and Sinclair could affect future water withdrawals from these lakes as contemplated in the RWP.

- Suggested revisions to page ES-6 of the Upper Oconee RWP:
Additional nutrient controls will be required to protect drinking water supplies, the recreational activities on the lakes, and the associated economic benefits for the Region. Nutrient controls will also be required to meet the pending numeric nutrient criteria.

Council Response: accepted

6. Georgia Forestry Commission comment (4):

Concerned that country dirt roads are a major contributor to sediment in the Upper Oconee that are not discussed or addressed in the MPs. Recommend adding reference to the Georgia Better Back Roads publication in the Upper Oconee RWP.

- Suggested revisions to the end of the WQ-2, Description / Definition of Action cell on page 6-15:
Consider implementation of the Better Back Road Manual recommendations for dirt road maintenance, drainage improvements, stabilization and erosion control (GA RC&D, 2009).
Suggested revisions to the end of WQ-2 Short-term Actions cell on page 7-17: Consider implementation of Better Back Roads program.

Council Response: accepted

Following these discussions, Council moved to the review of the errata sheet.

4) Review of Errata Sheet Summarizing Suggested Changes to Be Made to Final Upper Oconee RWP

Baughman explained that the errata sheet featured all the proposed changes to the May 2011 Upper Oconee RWP sorted by original page number, including revisions resulting from specific comments, editorial items identified by the planning contractor as well as suggested edits by EPD staff. Other items of note in the errata sheet pointed out by Baughman include the: Resource Assessment narrative on pages 3-5 and 3-7; the deletion of Table 5-6 and associated narrative on page 5-13; and the use of Plan narrative on page 7-1. There was some additional discussion on the removal of Table 5-6 (agricultural permitting).

The Chair asked if there was a motion to accept all changes to the Plan as discussed [specific comments and errata sheet]. A motion was made and seconded to accept written and verbal changes. Before the vote, the Council opened the floor for public comment.

Bryce Jaeck of the City of Madison suggested the Council include an additional note recognizing that the cities of Bostwick, Buckhead, and Rutledge in Morgan County have public water systems; he voiced concerns they would not be accounted for based on the way EPD recognized smaller permit holders. Planning contractor Brian Skeens clarified that they are included as “self-supplied” in the Morgan County data but that a note could be made in the supplemental document.

Ben Emanuel of the Altamaha Riverkeeper clarified his comments to Item 1g of the errata sheet and stated that he agreed with the change to the Plan.

A council member asked to add the 2010 population column with actual census numbers to Table 4-1, ensure it is appropriately referenced, and also change Section 2.2.1 to reflect the 2010 census number. The rest of the Council agreed and included in the changes that were part of the motion on the floor.

Once the discussion was complete, Council voted on the motion to accept all final changes. The vote passed unanimously.

5) Discussion on Next Steps for Implementation

Discussion then turned to what comes next and how the RWP will be implemented. Baughman said the next steps from the perspective of EPD and the planning contractors are to:

- Generate the Final Upper Oconee RWP based on feedback from the September council meeting no later than September 30, 2011 for EPD adoption
- Determine whether the Final RWP is consistent with the State Water Plan and the Rules and Guidance for Regional Planning [EPD]
- Adopt Plan as submitted or with conditions [EPD]
- Distribute hard copies of Final Upper Oconee RWP to Council in October 2011

Baughman also outlined the some of the actions the Council can take in the future until new council appointments are made, such as:

- Hold bi-annual council meetings to track implementation. Additionally, council members may request a full meeting of the council to address potential RWP amendments in the interim period between updates by contacting the acting council chairperson.
- Re-appoint a minimum of 6-9 original council members immediately after current appointments expire in March 2012. The Council voted on this decision at the previous meeting.
- Appoint an interim committee to serve as liaisons to the lead RC for implementation of the Upper Oconee RWP while ensuring the overall Council is kept informed.

- The interim Upper Oconee committee will also, to the extent possible, facilitate State and local participation in funding the RCs specifically for implementation of the RWP.
- Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) staff have agreed to serve as the coordinating RC, working in conjunction with the other applicable RCs.
- The RCs role would essentially be that of the planning contractors during the development of the WRP, i.e. coordinating meetings, maintaining communications, etc.

The chart below shows how the counties in the Upper Oconee planning area are divided among the RCs.

| Commissions | Counties |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Northeast Georgia | Athens-Clarke, Barrow, Greene, Jackson, Morgan, Oconee, Walton |
| Central Savannah River Area | Hancock, Washington |
| Middle Georgia | Baldwin, Putnam, Wilkinson |
| Heart of Georgia - Altamaha | Laurens |

At the end of Baughman’s presentation on the next steps for the RWP, several council members volunteered to serve on the interim committee providing representation for different parts of the planning area.

Upper area:

- Charlie Armentrout
- Pat Graham
- Kevin Little
- Melvin Davis

Middle area:

- Larry Eley
- Rabun Neal
- Alan Foster
- Linda Gantt

Lower area:

- Benjie Tarbutton
- Roger Folsom
- Jennifer Davis
- Richard Bentley (continuing in role as Chair)

There was some discussion on how to distribute the plan and how many hard copies to create. One member suggested providing members with a presentation to give in their local communities explaining the planning process to local officials, utility staff, and regional commissions with a focus on the short term management practices.

EPD staff noted that the agency is still trying to determine the best way to distribute the plans and who should receive a copy.

6) Elected Official and Public Comments

The meeting was closed with a thank you to council members for their efforts and time commitment to the process from EPD and the planning contractors.

There were no additional elected officials from the surrounding community and no additional public comments at the end of the meeting.

7) Written Comments Submitted to Council

No written comments were submitted to Council.

Meeting Attendees

Council Members Present

- Charles S. Armentrout
- Richard Bentley, Chair
- Vincent Ciampa
- Jennifer Davis
- Melvin Davis
- Larry Eley
- Roger Folsom
- Alan Foster
- Linda Gantt
- Pat Graham
- Dana Heil
- Danny Hogan
- Dennis W. Holder, Vice Chair
- Kevin Little
- Jim Luke (alternate)
- Benjamin R. Tarbutton
- Rabun Neal

Council Members Absent

- James Andrews
- Hunter Bicknell
- Stuart A. Cofer (alternate)
- Pat Hardy
- Allen Hodges
- Charles H. Jordan
- Drew Marczak
- Richard McSpadden
- Bill Ross
- Greg Thompson
- Rep. Terry England (ex-officio)
- Sen. Bill Cowsert (ex-officio)

Staff and Planning Contractors

- Kevin Ferrell, EPD
- Ted Hendrickx, EPD
- Doug Baughman, CH2MHill
- Brian Skeens, CH2M Hill
- Heather Dyke, CH2M Hill
- Marci Davis, Jacob

Partnering Agencies

- Scott Thackston, Georgia Forestry Commission

General Public

- George Martin, Georgia Power
- Ben Emanuel, Altamaha Riverkeeper
- Tas Smith, Georgia Farm Bureau
- Bryce Jaeck, City of Madison
- David Hawthorne, City of Auburn