

Memorandum

To: Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Planning Council

From: Rick Brown and Brian Keel, CDM

Date: 01/03/11

Subject: Council Meeting 9 - Summary

This memorandum provides the meeting summary of the Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Planning Council Meeting 9 (CM9), held on December 8, 2010 at the Youth Center in Douglas, Georgia.

1) Welcome and Introductions/Recap CM8/Approve Agenda/Approve CM8 Summary, Public Comment

Chair Darwin Eason called the meeting to order and Mayor Jackie Wilson welcomed the Council to Douglas and also introduced Ernest Crussel, Water and Wastewater Director for the City of Douglas.

Chairman Eason provided an overview of the agenda and kicked off the meeting. The PC asked for approval of the CM8 Summary; Andy Stone moved for approval, second by Earl Brice and Council unanimously approved the summary. Next the PC asked for approval of the agenda; Gordon Rogers moved for approval, second by Earl Brice and Council unanimously approved the agenda.

The location and possible dates for Council Meeting 10 were discussed. The PC suggested February 23 in Adel and proposed Council come back to this at the end of the meeting.

The PC then gave a recap of Council Meeting 8 and continued with an overview of the following objectives for Council Meeting 9:

- Selection of Final Management Practices for Regional Water Resources
- Discuss final information considerations for Energy Forecasts
- Review status of Water Plan Drafting

- Discussion of Water Quality including TMDL listed streams and 319 grant program
- Review schedule for completing the Regional Water Plan

The PC mentioned that an Instream Flow Ad Hoc meeting was held on December 7th in Macon and highlighted the following points:

The meeting was well attended with an estimated 50-80 people, about three quarters of which were Council members.

EPD facilitated the meeting and provided background on the State Instream Flow Policy.

A guest presenter, Mary Freeman, Research Ecologist with the United States Geological Survey provided a PowerPoint presentation highlighting river ecology and flow related functions that occur during different flow regimes. Ms. Freeman mentioned that the 7Q10 flow metric is a metric that addresses drought conditions but that other flow related benefits can be considered beyond those that address dry year flow conditions. Ms. Freeman's full presentation and additional information about the meeting can be found at: http://www.gawaterplanning.org/pages/resource_assessments/instream_flow_ad_hoc_meeting.php.

The meeting concluded with a discussion regarding whether the Council members in attendance had any specific flow related research language that might be appropriate to include as recommendations in the current draft plans to help prepare for and/or include in the next round of water planning. No specific recommendations were identified or discussed.

2) Public Comments

Chairman Eason then invited public attendees with opening comments to speak.

Larry Hanson, the City Manager for the City of Valdosta addressed Council regarding recent flooding problems in the City. The City of Valdosta is at the downstream end of a large drainage basin, and the City comprises only 1% of the basin but receives runoff flows from all the upstream areas. Some communities in the basin upstream of Valdosta lack regulations and coordinated runoff control measures. The City would like to see a regional reservoir to serve as flood control and water supply as a potential project.

Mr. Hanson made the following recommendations to Council:

- Form a subcommittee or task force to continue the Council's work after this first round of planning.

- Develop educational materials and encourage municipalities to adopt stormwater management ordinances.
- Recommend prioritized funding for a potential regional water supply and flood control project.
- Apply for Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) funding for such a project.

CM: The forecasted population of Valdosta will double over the next 40 years. I agree we need a task force to look at storage and supply projects.

LH: We developed a stormwater utility and master plan to control local runoff but we can't manage the 15,000 square miles of upstream runoff.

CM: What would you say is your biggest problem faced?

LH: Upstream development contributing to flooding, erosion, and debris in Valdosta.

CM: Are you suggesting other municipalities need to implement new subdivision regulations?

LH: Not just new subdivisions but all development, such that post-development runoff does not exceed pre-development runoff. Creative solutions are possible.

CM: Would this best fit under Erosion and Sedimentation Control regulations?

EPD: No, Erosion and Sedimentation Control regulations just control a symptom of the overall problem. I will take the State's role in promoting a task force.

CM: This was done in north Georgia in the 1960's.

EPD: Yes, it's a proven strategy.

CM: Federal and State governments have a bad habit of setting mandates and then not funding them. That's a bad idea.

LH: Is future funding available?

EPD: Potential funding is available, and projects recommended in the Plan will get funding priority.

CM: The Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) relied on inaccurate FEMA maps. Development in the floodplain has a big impact on future flooding. We need to enforce no development in the floodplain.

CM: I'll be Chairman of the GEFA Board next year and I can tell you most of GEFA's money goes to Atlanta and the metro area. Not much of it makes its way south.

CM: High and low flow issues in our region are linked. We don't want to point fingers but I have seen changes in Runoff coefficients in urban, suburban, and rural areas. I support forming a regional group to study this impact.

Chairman: I think we have one additional Public Comment from Mr. Al Browning.

Al Browning: I work with the Georgia Adopt-a-Stream program addressed Council. Mr. Browning worked as an educator and in the fields of water quality and biological and chemical monitoring for 30 years. Council's discussions to date have focused primarily on water quantity. Sustainability over the next 40 years is also dependent on water quality. It is an important part of the State Plan. We should be incorporating water quality programs into school curriculums and getting schools to teach water quality in their Ag and Science programs to ensure sustainability. The Department of Education can recommend this to teachers.

CM: In high school do they cover erosion and sedimentation control in farm classes?

AB: Yes, some schools already do this. EPD does not have the resources to monitor every little creek and stream in the State. We need to be training a voluntary force to do this.

3) Selection of Draft Management Practices

The PC began the discussion by outlining the Management Practice selection process that the Council has undertaken over the last 4 months which included starting with a broad universe of practices then developing a short list based on cost, effectiveness and implementability. The short list was then compared to relevant management practices from both local Comprehensive Plans and Watershed Protection Plans and additional practices were added if they were not already included. The PC then provided an overview of the Council recommended management practices using "Road Map" figures for water quantity and water quality developed from the detailed list of practices.

The overall approach to addressing resource gaps and future water supply needs is based on an incremental and adaptive process with those practices that are lower cost and more easily implemented emphasized in the short-term (1-10 years). If resource gaps and needs

are not being fully addressed, then more costly and more complex practices will need to be considered for implementation in the mid (10-20 years) and long-term (20-40 years).

The PC emphasized that we have limited surface water resources in our region to meet our needs, and while we do have groundwater those resources are not unlimited. The PC thanked the Subcommittee for their hard work to date and handed out the detailed table of management practices for Council consideration. The PC explained that the goal was to focus the discussion on the broader view Road Map figures but that Council could entertain any discussion of detailed practices from the handout if any Council member wanted to.

CM: We don't have surface water rivers that feed into our region from outside the region, but we do have underground recharge areas coming in from other regions or states. Some groundwater levels have changed with pumping and corresponding cones of depression and others haven't changed at all in 30 years. It bothers me to dig wells where groundwater feeds surface streams. Ponds are really the only way we can irrigate. Areas in the Gulf Trough can't even use groundwater.

CM: Short-term management practices are easier to do and not as costly. Longer-term stuff is more costly and takes time to implement. We should go after low-hanging fruit first. The further we go in our incremental approach, the more costly and politically difficult the practices become.

CM: We're called on the address flow issues in this Plan. I think the Subcommittee boiled down the most appropriate approaches. We're not called on to work out all the details, but rather to develop an implementable Plan.

PC: The Subcommittee wants to provide a menu approach for people to draw upon, not mandates. One thing we struggle with is connecting every dot: what is implemented, by whom, at what cost, and measured by what benchmarks? In the Plan we propose to be more specific with short-term practices and less specific with long-term practices.

CM: Folks can pick up any part of the Plan; it's flexible and adaptable.

CM: Closing gaps won't solve flooding problems.

PC: Practices like buffers and stormwater control ordinances will help address both water supply and flooding.

The PC then suggested a break for Council members to look through the detailed Management Practices table and discuss it amongst themselves. Following the break the Council continued their discussion.

CM: Our Vision Statement references property rights. I believe items ASWS-1, 2, and 3 violate this. [ASWS-1: Future surface water uses – if surface water (ponds and withdrawals) is sought for future water supply (new permits), applicant, Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission (GSWCC) and EPD should work collaboratively to demonstrate that future surface water uses will not contribute to frequency or magnitude of gaps. ASWS-2: Future surface water uses – utilizing incentives and collaborative partnerships, examine opportunities to optimize farm and other pond operations to obtain releases in dry/gap years. ASWS-3: Future surface water uses – encourage additional groundwater development as a preferred source of supply for future demand in surface water gap areas.]

CM: Our intention with the Plan is to encourage options to change farm pond operation if needed, not require it.

EPD: EPD has to make a determination right now if additional withdrawals will contribute to problems. GSWCC funds some but not all applicants. EPD does not participate in cost-share programs. EPD only regulates withdrawals from ponds. EPD does not regulate ponds that are solely for recreation.

GSWCC: Recreation-only ponds are permitted through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE); The NRCS regulates the construction of Ag ponds.

CM: The DCAR management practices acknowledge that we need additional information on Ag ponds. These recommendations don't put a moratorium on anything.

EPD: To summarize permitting: NRCS permits construction of Ag ponds; USACE permits construction of recreational ponds; EPD permits withdrawals from ponds.

CM: What if you have a natural water hole with no stream exiting it on your property?

EPD: In most cases you would still need an EPD permit if you wanted to withdraw water from it for irrigation.

PC: In our Plan we need to identify the practice and implementing entity. In some cases the implementing entity could be a stakeholder group, including EPD and other agencies.

CM: Regarding DCAR-5, are we talking about new crops here or replacing existing crops? [DCAR-5: Collaborate/support research (University, State and Corporate) on improved irrigation efficiency measures and development of lower water use crops and lower water use plant strains.]

PC: Both; we will add language to clarify.

CM: Regarding DCAR-10, referencing “wetlands” doesn’t encompass everything important that we want to cover here. [DCAR-10: Development of plan of study and conduct research to evaluate the opportunities and limitations associated with improving river flow conditions via creation/restoration of wetlands, and if deemed potentially feasible, identify potential location(s) and estimates of potential improvements to stream flow conditions. This effort should include the identification of the incentives that could be used to make this a viable water supply option.]

PC: We can elaborate this language to read “wetlands systems and potential water retention structures including streams”.

CM: I agree with these changes.

CM: When mentioning institutions in our management practices, I think it’s important to specify in-state institutions.

CM: NPSF-2 sounds like enforcement language. [NPSF-2: Improve BMP compliance through Statewide biennial BMP surveys and BMP assurance exams; master timer harvester workshops and continuing logger education; and if necessary seek enforcement actions against registered foresters that operate out of compliance with BMPs.]

CM: The recommendations stated in this practice are already being done.

CM: The Georgia Forestry Commission should be the main enforcement arm here

CM: We should remove the text after the semicolon in NPSF-2.

Joe Hopkins made a motion to accept this change, Mike Edgy seconded, and Council voted unanimously to accept the change.

CM: It would help in the educational process if we could incorporate some graphics into our Plan to illustrate our water resources, gaps, and management practices.

Chairman Eason called for a vote to approve the management practices in the table handout subject to the revisions agreed upon today. Ben Copeland made the motion and Mike Edgy seconded. Council voted unanimously to approve the management practices.

Next the PC handed out and walked Council through the draft of Sections 6 through 8 of the Water Plan. The PC noted these Sections are still pretty rough drafts but this gives the Council as sense of how the information will be summarized in the plan. We will work with the Plan Drafting and Management Practices Subcommittee in January to get this into a more final form.

4) Selection of Proposed Final Management Practices Continued - Water Conservation

The PC then presented additional information regarding Water Conservation which is considered a preferred management practice. The PC reminded the Council that as part of the pre-meeting materials the Council was sent detail Water Conservation guidance and a worksheet that showed the various tiers of conservation practices. The Council was requested to consider action on the following topics:

- i. Does Council agree with the 25 Water Conservation Goals and/or are there some that should be added or deleted?
- ii. Are there any specific additional (other than those outlined in the detailed list of practices) Tier 1-4 Practices that Council would like to include in the regional plan?
- iii. Are there any specific recommendations for water use data reporting that Council would like to include in the regional plan?

The PC asked for comments on goals in the Water Conservation Implementation Plan, and whether there are any reporting requirements Council thinks all municipalities should be subject to. The subcommittee felt like we shouldn't mandate reporting requirements to anybody.

CM: I'd like to mention regarding retrofit of low-flow fixtures into existing buildings, we should also consider recommending replacement of service lines to these buildings, as old lines can be deteriorated or clogged with sediment.

Public Attendee: Yes. Also a lot of older buildings that are being revitalized have older cast iron pipe that will have sediment problems and need to be flushed regularly. This flushing will counteract your conservation savings.

Next the PC presented the Coastal GA Permitting Plan, which applies to 24 counties in and around the Georgia coast, including some Suwannee-Satilla counties that are in sub-region 3 of the Plan. There are additional conservation requirements for cities and counties in this 24-county area.

Following the discussion Council did not have any recommended changes to the water conservation goals, tiered water conservation practices, or data collection.

5) Water Quality

The PC then handed out a list of impaired stream segments in the Suwannee-Satilla region and gave a presentation on available 319(h) grants. Up to \$100,000 in grant money is available for one or more qualifying projects in the region. In order to qualify a project

must provide a water quality benefit, and the local jurisdiction sponsoring the project has to provide 40% in matching funds.

Rich Batten with the South Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) mentioned that they have recently applied for 1 grant extension (Little Satilla River) and 2 new grants (Franks Creek/Morrison Creek and Two Mile Branch/Withlacoochee River). Rich mentioned that EPD wants to focus on smaller watersheds with these grants. The PC then asked Council for recommendations for 2 or 3 funded reaches.

CM: Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge, in Lanier County near Lakeland could be a good project to consider.

CM: We want to build an education center around a wetland. Would that qualify?

PC: An educational facility alone probably would not qualify for a 319(h) grant, but if it incorporated some additional enhancements to the wetland to provide expanded water quality treatment it might.

6) Energy Forecast

The PC addressed the Council regarding the last component of Council input that is needed to complete the forecast portion of the Coastal Water Plan. The energy forecast has been completed at the regional level through 2020 and at a state wide level between 2020 and 2050. The Council has the option to plan for some of the 2020-2050 energy need being produced within the region.

Based on feedback from the Council management practices subcommittee the PC has developed 3 scenarios:

- i. Use the percent of estimated 2020 statewide power generation by water using power generation combinations in the region and assume the region will produce that same relative percent in 2050;
- ii. Percent of forecasted statewide population growth in region from 2020 to 2050;
- iii. Do not plan for any additional energy being produced in the region.

CM: This is hinged on Federal renewable energy policy (biomass). Just because we're not generating much now, it doesn't necessarily mean we won't be in the future. South Georgia may end up being the biggest energy producer in the southeast.

PC: Council may want to acknowledge that in the Plan.

CM: What is the statewide ratio of MGD per gigawatt of energy production? We need to try to bring in the most efficient types of energy production to our region.

PC: We have that information but will have to look it up. (Note: following the meeting the PC confirmed that 2005 statewide water withdrawal for energy production was 2,737 MGD and consumption was 187 MGD. Forecast statewide energy production by 2020 is 22.9 gigawatts.)

PC: Does Council feel the need to include water for energy production beyond 2020?

CM: We have to mention biomass in the Plan; identify the potential for it but don't put in hard numbers.

CM: North Georgia is out of water. Future water for energy production has to be in South Georgia.

SGRC: There is a proposal for a 40-megawatt biomass plant in Valdosta to use the effluent from the Mud Creek Water Pollution Control Plant. This would evaporate off all of the plant's effluent so that there would be no return flow.

PC: Maybe we want to add language in Section 4 of the Plan to monitor energy policy and that the region has the fuel and water resources for future energy productions; especially biomass.

Council directed the PC to add some general language to the forecast section of the Water Plan that the region does foresee playing a future role in energy production.

7) Water Plan Schedule

The PC presented a timeline for the remaining tasks to complete the Water Plan. Although EPD has granted an extension for the Plan, we feel like Council is in a good place to finish close to our original schedule. This would mean meetings with the Management Practices and Plan Drafting Subcommittees in January and having our Plan draft complete and ready to submit by the end of February. The PC asked Council to let us know if they felt they needed additional time to finish the Plan.

CM: Will EPD offer additional comments before the Plan goes to public comment?

EPD: There will not be another formal EPD review, but if Council can get the Plan to me before the public notice date we will give it another run through.

CM: When and how will EPD respond to the question of whether or not Council will remain active after 2011?

EPD: Probably Director Barnes will discuss this with legislature toward the end of the process.

CM: Have legislators given any indication as to whether or not they want the process to continue?

EPD: None that I have heard.

CM: I agree we need to recommend to EPD that Council's work continue. We should submit an idea of how to continue to the subcommittee, review it, and discuss it as a Council at CM10.

EPD: Do the Altamaha and Coastal Georgia Councils support this idea?

PC: Yes.

CM: Council has to figure out at what level do we continue and how to fund it.

8) Local Elected Official Comments

There were no local elected official comments.

9) Public Comments

There were no additional public comments.

10) Wrap-up and What to Expect Next Meeting

The Council tentatively agreed to hold the next meeting in Adel on February 23rd, 2011. The PC explained that the purpose of the next Council meeting is to review and approve the draft Plan for submittal to EPD. The meeting was adjourned.

cc: Cliff Lewis, EPD

Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Council
 Council Members Attendance List

Suwannee-Satilla Council Members		12/8/2010
1	Joseph L. Boyett	X
2	Earl Brice	X
3	William L. Brim	
4	Hanson R. Carter	
5	Carroll H. Coarsey	
6	Ben Copeland	X
7	Scott Downing	
8	Eugene Dyal	X
9	Darvin Eason	X
10	Michael E. Edgy	X
11	Greg C. Evans	X
12	Greg Goggans	
13	Jim Hedges	
14	Alva Joseph Hopkins	X
15	Donald A. Johnson	X
16	John Wesley Langdale	X
17	Joe Lewis	
18	R.R. Rusty McCall	X
19	Donald H. McCallum	X
20	Dan Raines	X
21	Scotty Raines	X
22	S. Gordon Rogers	X
23	Jay Shaw	
24	Frank G. Sisk	X
25	Miles A. Stone	X
26	Grady M. Thompson	X
27	Doyle Weltzbarker	X
28	James R. Willis	X
29	Jackie Wilson	X

Totals **21**

Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Council
Public Attendance List

	Public Attendee	10/27/2010	Representing
1	Mike Allen	X	Lowndes County
2	Al Browning	X	Browning Environmental
3	Mike Copeland	X	GA Farm Bureau
4	Ernest Crussel	X	City of Douglas
5	Larry Hanson	X	Valdosta
6	Dave Hetzel	X	City of Tifton
7	Brittney Foster Hull	X	Packaging Corporation of America
8	Rahn Milligan	X	GSWCC
9	Jeremy Wixson	X	GADNR

Totals **9**