

Memorandum

To: Altamaha Regional Water Planning Council

From: Rick Brown and Katherine Zitsch

Date: 5/19/09

Subject: Council Meeting 1 Summary

This memorandum summarizes the meeting of the Altamaha Regional Water Planning Council Meeting 1 on May 6, 2009.

1) Welcome and Introductions/ Approve Agenda

The Altamaha EPD Representative and Planning Consultants (CDM) introduced themselves to the members of the Water Planning Council. Council members introduced themselves to EPD, the Planning Consultants, and each other. Public attendees introduced themselves to the group. The meeting Planning Consultant proposed some changes to the order of the Agenda and the Council approved them.

2) Kickoff Meeting Evaluation

The Planning Consultant presented the summary of results of the evaluation forms from the Kickoff Meeting. There were no comments or questions from the Council.

3) Water Planning Process Presentation

The Planning Consultant presented an introduction to the Water Planning process. The following questions/comments from Council were addressed:

- Will the process we come up go to the head of the EPD and will EPD determine whether it's viable or not. *EPD Response: EPD will make recommendations based on your plan.*
- Does the regional plan ultimately need the approval of the Director of EPD? *EPD Response: Yes.*

- What is the role of DCA? *EPD Response: DCA's role is to make sure local comprehensive plans are not inconsistent with what goes into the regional plans. It boils down to local comprehensive plans versus regional comprehensive plans. We will give the council the opportunity to review future documents and provide comments on consistency.*
- From the entire plan, what is the outcome expected by EPD? 1) EPD regulations or recommendations for runoff controls; or 2) Anything general other than assessing what we have, what we need, or what the gap is? *EPD Response: As EPD staff I would like to get away from managing by crisis every day. It would be nice to have a lot of things laid out related to what I should do in a certain situation. I can say "here is what you guys decided to do" rather than concentrate on what's going to be done. Generally, we need to address long term needs and long term availability. The challenge for you is how you're going to fill in the gap – you need to work as a team to determine the best way to do that. Planning is a good thing. There is never really a time when planning is a bad thing. Not that whatever comes out in these plans will be the strict "how things will be done," but it will be a good starting point. This way, people can plan ahead. For instance, if a plan says in 5 years there will be a regional Waste Water Treatment plant in the area, people can start thinking about how to build it and not have overflows.*
- An assessment of actual resources could be done pretty easily as well as projecting future needs. DCA and others already do that fairly consistently. Ultimately, we want to see a plan that involves the wise use of resources – both preserving our resources as well as dividing them out. *EPD Response: However we decide is the best way to meet future needs – we will want to make sure it's the most environmentally friendly way to do it and not necessarily the cheapest way to do it.*

CDM Response: Part of the process is described as visioning -- Where are we going to take the data that we're getting? What are our goals? Where are our important resources? What resources are in good shape, and which need to be improved? Where do we need to utilize those resources? This is based on trends. Look at visioning and where we should concentrate. What are different types of ways we can manage to meet goals? Generally, from my experience on other planning projects, there is a portfolio of different types of approaches. There is usually not a single solution, but we will be crafting different types of approaches. If we change an irrigation practice here, how would that change how groundwater is used? How does that affect runoff and streamflows? Look at that, reassess, then try something different. It is an iterative process. The goal is for the council to shape as much as possible and then craft the plan.

EPD Response: There is a scale issue. The plan is not going to name every creek around the state. Other efforts are going on for local watershed protection plans. That finer scale protection of streams will continue to be done and address more localized issues.

- When we submit our plan to EPD, are they going to look at the different elements of that plan and take the ones they like and reject the ones they have a problem with, or will they try to negotiate a middle ground? If there is a part they don't want to buy-in 100%, will there be a negotiation process? *EPD Response: Not sure about any of that yet. The ideal scenario is that EPD looks at the plan and says all that's proposed could possibly work. We don't want to get into scenarios where EPD would say no. Hopefully the council will have vetted out whether a new wastewater treatment plant meets water quality standards, etc.*
- The plan will deal with use now and in the future. There are two issues – groundwater and aquifers that we all draw from for agricultural and municipal water supply, and also our river system. This is a combination of making sure our aquifer stays healthy as well as our river system for different reasons, not just water use, now and into the future. How far will the council go into that? *EPD Response: There are other contracts looking at watersheds and modeling and groundwater. You will get that information to look at.*

CDM Response: That is the idea of sustainability. Everyone has a different idea of how to identify and use/protect all resources. Need to consider future use – identifying environmental needs (species, recreation, etc.) What does sustainability mean to this council? That's where we can custom tailor some things. Just to touch on the point, as the council identifies things, our goal is to make sure EPD gets that information early on. This is to ensure a better sense of where there are potential conflicts before a crisis point. We need to indentify constraints as well as flexibility.

- One of newest areas we've heard something about is pumping water from the stream into aquifer. Has that been proposed? *EPD Response: This is not under specific consideration.*

If that became more serious, would this council have input into whether it's allowed? *EPD Response: The legislature has continued a moratorium on that. Generally, the idea of injecting stuff into aquifers is probably not something you would debate and offer input into because it's a non-starter.*

- If not an aquifer, then what about a reservoir? *EPD Response: You can do that. You can pull from rivers in the winter if you want.*
- We don't want to pay for that.
- In the late 1990s to early 2000s era, 24 counties in coastal Georgia were required to submit water supply plans. They were submitted to DCA and EPD. Those plans had a 25-year life. When talking about coordinating with local governments, do those

plans still stand? *EPD Response: That is a factor to be considered, but we need newer, better information.*

- Those plans initially had a level of controls. Does this process have to mesh with that process? *EPD Response: There may be some things in those plans that this touches on and remains applicable. Can someone show why/ if there is disparity?*
- Those plans included population projections. Will we need to work around those older plans? *CDM Response: We can examine the population completed locally as part of 24 county plans vs. the new projections from the Carl Vinson Institute.*
- Moving forward 10 years from now, will we review this as things change? *EPD Response: Our impression is that this process is dynamic and will be revised every 5 years.*
- Is there any way to involve federal agencies so that we don't do planning that can not come to fruition? If this group decides we want a 5000 acre reservoir in a region and we plan it, then it becomes part of regional plan. If afterwards, we find out there are environmental and endangered species reasons, we can't do it. *EPD Response: If it involves fish & wildlife early on, EPD will go to those folks. Obviously a lot of those issues take years to decide. All we'd try to do is to find out on a quick overview basis if it's feasible. In the end, it may not be feasible.*
- We don't want to spend lot of time and effort focusing on something that is not going to happen. *EPD Response: There is no way to avoid that completely. All we can do in this time period is to coordinate with federal agencies and see if there is a real fatal flaw. More than likely, they are going to say it could work. Down the road, something might come up that it doesn't work.*
- In many cases there are two distinct districts like this region vs the coastal region as it applies to water supply, particularly the aquifer. Based on sound science studies that EPD did, the aquifer is in pretty good shape until you get down coast. How do you coordinate those two regions if one has a totally different permit availability? Do they have to jive or can they be different? *EPD Response: There is a 24-county coastal plan. Are we going to treat this area a little different than that area? That remains to be seen. A lot of stuff in the existing plan will dictate how it's handled. A lot of that is already laid out. For instance, the red zone is around Chatham County and how much they have to reduce has been determined.*
- So our plan will not consider availability of the aquifer and whether or not as a region we should promote a different type of growth? We are paying someone \$1M to do a groundwater assessment. \$20M was already paid. Is that sound science we're going to be looking at to determine our future? *EPD Response: We will use all the work that's been done and will be done.*

- What I've found when the sound science study was done was that it determined this region had an abundant supply of water. Consequently the moratorium in this area was lifted. What I want us to do is make recommendations based on sound science. EPD was reluctant to lift moratoriums on agricultural withdrawals. How much ability does this group have in making recommendations that will be heard such as our recommendation that we continue to keep moratoriums in these counties lifted for agricultural? *EPD Response: You should feel empowered to make any and all recommendations on how water is handled in the region. You mentioned EPD not wanting to lift the agricultural moratorium. I remember saying we're backlogged and it will take us a while, but not that we were reluctant to lift the moratorium. You should feel empowered to come up with creative ideas and look at data and make suggestions to protect the resources in this area.*
- We want this group to be able to make recommendations based on sound science. Once the water supply was determined to be enough (groundwater in some areas), the issue became what to do with all the runoff? EPD was limiting growth based on what to do with the runoff, not because there wasn't enough water for growth in this area. I have a concern over how what we decide affects council decisions and who is going to decide which policy gets priority. *CDM Response: We don't want everyone to be treated to lowest common denominator. We want to get bottom up type of input. Where we plan and potential resource management options are complex. Where we have cross boundary issues – another regional planning council that is using a common resource – we need to identify areas where we might need to talk to adjoining councils about what those issues are. We need to determine what pieces of science should be included, both from a resource assessment perspective as well as management practices. We should be doing what is important to this basin (and be both defensible and sustainable).*
- Who has final say on an instance when a municipality has a need for water and may be mismanaging water versus an agricultural use? Who has the final say on right or wrong? *EPD Response: I hope we don't start pointing fingers. What I encourage is that we determine what our needs are. If a city is preventing this region from attaining goals and objectives, are there options that could help us come up with joint management plans? Are there regulatory options if there is a permit violation?*
- If the user is subject to regulatory or legal constraints, who actually makes the decision? Does this council or EPD make the choice? I understand this board is able to make recommendations and that there is a difference between recommendations and policy. *EPD Response: On tough policy decisions, we will look to council for some recommendations.*

4) MOA, Operating Procedures, and Rules for Meetings Presentation

EPD made a presentation on the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), Operating Procedures, and Rules for Meetings.

5) Operating Procedures/Rules for Meetings Broad Issue Areas Exercise

The Council members engaged in an interactive review of the operating procedures/rules for meetings. The exercise involved breaking into 6 workgroups with each work group reviewing and offering their perspective on specific sections of the documents. An overview of each groups work is provided below.

- Work Group 1 advised that under Operating Procedures Section IV (Council Leadership, Number and Qualifications), the term of the Council Chair and Vice Chair can be maintained at 6 months and re-election could be conducted at the end of the 6-month term there was an acknowledgment that continuity is important.
- Work Group 1 proposed the following revisions to Operating Procedures Section V (Decision Making):
 - The role of Alternate was discussed. The Alternates should attend all meetings but will not vote (unless needed for quorum).
 - Council members should be removed from the Council if they have 2 unexcused absences. This rule should apply to alternates too.
 - When someone is dismissed or resigns, an Alternate should become a full member and the new appointee (Governor, Lt. Governor, Speaker appointed) should become an alternate. The newly appointed member could be the alternate that was appointed by the same person. Or the council could recommend which alternate should become the member based on who attended more meetings.
- Work Group 2 offered the following comments:
 - The work group liked today's meeting locations. Suggestions for future meetings included Little Ocmulgee State Park, Middle Georgia College, Altamaha Technical College in Wayne County, Hazelhurst, and Bruton Park in Mount Vernon. The suggestion was to move around but stay in the middle of the Region.
 - There should be other meetings to coordinate with upstream and downstream councils. The Planning Consultant could present a summary.

- Meeting summaries should be provided to Council members within 2 weeks after meeting. Revisions will be made at the request of Council members if there are inaccuracies in the summaries.
- Meeting summaries must capture dissent; and dissent must be spoken during the meeting.
- Voting issues shall be decided by simple majority; Chair must note the decision.
- Chair can appoint a sub-committee if there is an overriding call to vote of 2/3 majority.
- Clarification is needed: Chairman calls for vote, majority can table issue.
- Work Group 3 offered the following comments:
 - Presumption of assent previously noted.
 - Participation by non-members directed by chair.
- Work Group 4 offered the following comments:
 - Meeting materials should be distributed to Council members a minimum of two weeks before the meeting.
- Work Group 5 offered the following comments:
 - 5c, 5d – There should be coordination related to verbal proposals. These should be held until there is an opportunity to be presented. There should be a 2 minute limit.

6) Regional Geography, Facilities, and Resources Overview Presentation

The Planning Consultant presented an overview of Regional Geography, Facilities, and Resources for the Altamaha Region. It was pointed out that there is more than one surface water treatment permit in the region. The following comments/questions from the Council were addressed:

- We need information on the local geology and aquifer information. *CDM Response: The modeling will provide information on water sustainable yields which will be delivered to the council (both groundwater sustainable yield and surface water sustainable yield).*
- We also need more detail on wastewater discharges and water supply permits.
- How is upwelling defined? *EPD Response: consider it similar to a spring.*

- Are there more industrial permits associated with pulp and paper mills? CDM
Response: Do not have that answer at hand.

7) Website Capabilities Presentation

The Planning Consultant presented the capabilities of the State Water Planning website with a live internet demonstration. There were no comments or questions from the Council.

8) Consensus Building Exercise

Council members completed the Consensus Building Exercise without questions or comments.

- A comment was offered that as long as we do no harm to the Altamaha basin then we should be able to reach consensus.

9) Population and Employment Forecasting Presentation

The Planning Consultant presented an introduction to population and employment forecasting. There were no comments or questions from the Council.

10) Trends, Forces, and Factors Exercise

The Planning Consultant broke the Council into two groups and explained the Trends, Forces, and Factors Exercise. Each Council member wrote down what he or she thought were the 5 most important factors affecting water in their region. The two groups posted their ideas on opposite walls and sorted them into groups. With help from the Planning Consultant, a representative from each group sought to develop statement that encompassed each group of ideas. The group identified the following factors (note: not in order of importance):

- 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.
- Increase water use is increasing the need for Georgia to be better prepared for drought.
- Increase regulation could have a negative economic impact on the region and increase the costs for compliance. Increased costs is 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.

Following the exercise the following comments/questions from council were addressed:

- What is the state's progress on installing monitoring on wells? How will we get a good estimate on water use? *Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Service (GASWCS)*
Response: Agricultural water pumping sites were to be monitored by July 1, 2009 depending on funding. We missed receiving our funding for ½ of last year. In the southern portion, most basins complete with exception of areas where no pump is present and portable units where farmers move from one point to another. All meters have been read to date and that info will be available. In the northern portion of the state, we are still working.

- Council member - Can we get numbers on what has been completed vs. what we need to complete? *GASWCS Response: There are 60,000 permitted sites. A lot of those were precautionary permits without ever having a well. The process should be nearing end in 2010. We have read just over 4,400 meters this year.*

11) Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Members of the Council elected L. Brinson Lanier as Chair and Michael Polsky as Vice Chair. Brinson thanked the Council Members for electing him as Chair of the Council.

12) Local Elected Official Comments

There were no local elected official comments.

13) Public Comments

There were no public comments.

14) Wrap-up and Next Meeting

The Council agreed to hold the next meeting on June 24th. (*Note: this date has changed due to conflicts.*)

15) Meeting Evaluations

The Planning Consultant distributed meeting evaluation forms and all members of Council filled one out. The Planning Consultant collected the forms. This marked the end of Council Meeting 1.

16) Meeting Attendance

Altamaha Regional Water Council

Council Member Name	Present (X)
Gary Bell	
Randy Branch	
Guy Rex Bullock	X
James Mark Burns	X
Gerald A DeWitt	X
Will Donalson Jr.	X
Cleve Edenfield	X
Jim Free	X
Randy Giddens	X
Len Hauss	X
Edward S Jeffords	X
Phillip Jennings	
L. Brinson Lanier	X
Dan McCranie	X
Steve Meeks	X
Greg Morris	
Buddy Pittman	X
Michael A. Polsky	X
John E. Roller	X
Sue B. Sammons	X
Doug Sharp	
Paul A. Stravriotis	X
Jim E. Strickland	X
Dent L. Temples	
Lindsay Thomas	X
William G Tomberlin	X
Michael Williams	X
Tommie Williams	
Russ Yeomans	X

Public Attendees	
Leigh Askew (representing Fanning Institute/UGA)	X
Lane Defee (representing Georgia Forestry Com.)	X
Ted Evans (representing Georgia Farm Bureau)	X
Dow Giles (representing Georgia Farm Bureau)	X
Neil Herring (representing GA Water Coalition)	X
Rahn Millisan (representing GSWCC)	X
Bryan Snow (representing Georgia Forestry Comm.)	X
Tim Varnedore (representing Cooperative Extension)	X

cc: Kevin Farrell, EPD