

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

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May 18, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: Coosa – North Georgia Water Planning Council Members
FROM: Rick Brownlow, CH2M HILL
SUBJECT: Council Meeting #1 Summary

Georgia Comprehensive Statewide Water Management Plan Regional Water Planning

Council Meeting #1 Summary

Meeting Date: May 8, 2009
Location: Appalachian Technical College Education Center, Jasper, Georgia

1) Welcome and Introductions/Approve Agenda

Commissioner Robert Jones from Pickens County welcomed the Council Members and provided introductions noting the importance of water to the County's future.

Rick Brownlow (CH2M HILL) introduced himself and asked each council member to introduce themselves. Mr. Brownlow provided a brief overview of the Meeting One Framework and the agenda was approved by the Council. Rick then introduced Chrissy Thom (CH2M HILL) to recap the Kick-off Meeting.

2) Recap Water Planning Councils Kick-off Meeting

Ms. Thom provided a recap of the Kick-off Meeting and noted the importance of the feedback survey process for making any necessary adjustments to future meetings. She directed the Council's attention to the board summarizing the "35 exercise" results and asked if there was any additional feedback. Council member feedback included the following comments:

- Need to remember that the Coosa basin drains to Alabama and keep in mind that representatives from Alabama were present at Kick-off Meeting and are part of the basin.

- Don't forget about Tennessee and North Carolina. Participants noted that in their opinion Tennessee has more water than they know what to do with.
- Many local stakeholders are already coordinating with Tennessee out of necessity / close proximity. (Dade County – 100 yards)

3) Explanation of the Water Planning Process

An overview of the water planning process was presented by Ms. Thom that included the roles and responsibilities of the Water Planning Council. The timeline for Council meetings was also summarized.

Question: What is the status of the Local Government Advisory Board (LGAB); has it been populated with members?

Response: The Comprehensive State-wide Water Management Plan provides that each city and county in the region is entitled to one representative on the LGAB. The invitation will be extended to the chief elected official of each city/county and they may participate themselves or designate another individual to represent their community. The LGAB's first task will be to review the employment and population forecasts prepared by the Office of Planning and Budget (OPB). GA EPD is in the process of producing a DVD (includes information for the entire state) that will be mailed to local governments and council members with an explanatory letter requesting feedback and comments. Carl Vinson Institute of Government at UGA has already met with ACCG, GMA and DCA to review these forecasts as well.

Question: Will there be any more joint Council Meetings?

Response: All ten (10) councils may not meet together again, but joint meetings with adjacent Councils that share water resources are likely to occur.

Question: The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) says that studies will be provided to Council Members however members noted concern regarding the process for including other studies in the planning process; will need insight into the data sources and basis for the studies.

Response: GA EPD is performing several resources assessment studies and Council Members will have an opportunity to review these studies. These studies will be discussed in Council Meeting 2 and the group will really get into details by Meeting 3.

Question: Are any press releases planned?

Response: None have been developed so far. In advance of this meeting, the PC identified local newspapers and sent them the agenda as an announcement to comply with the 'spirit' of the open meetings act.

Comment: The group requested that if post-meeting press releases are developed that they should be reviewed and approved by the Council prior to their release.

Question: Doesn't GA EPD really have the final say on the Plan? Is the Council just a rubber stamp?

Response: No. The goal is that the management practice options be very Water Planning Region specific. Using their regional knowledge and experiences members of the Coosa –

North GA Council have the responsibility to select and adapt their preferred management practices to build and design a plan that specifically works for the Coosa-North GA topography, soil types, expected growth patterns, projected economic developments, protection of water quality, conservation of water quantity, protection and preservation of living systems, etc.

4) MOA, Operating Procedures, and Rules for Meetings

Becky introduced the Council Members to the MOA noting that it was an important acknowledgment of the group's commitment to the process, rather than a legally binding contract. The operating procedures and meeting rules were also reviewed.

Question: Is there any ability to modify MOA?

Response: Becky responded that changes to the MOA portion are limited by the language of the original law but GA EPD can review any suggestions for changes.

Rick introduced the Council to the first group exercise. He noted that it focused on decision making while the second exercise will explore the other portions of the Operating Procedures and Rules for Meetings.

Exercise #1– Achieving Results through Consensus Decision Making:

Group 1 - No specific issues with the process however there could be unintended consequences.

Group 2 – We're concerned that insisting on obtaining consensus will move the council to mediocre decisions (watered down practices) but we recognize that this is part of the process. If there is a consistent 70 / 30 split, might need to have a minority opinion (contingency). 2/3 majority is usually not applied to decisions that MUST be made (high threshold), might need to have an alternative (50% +1) to get something done. Would like to see a contingency plan developed to guide potential disagreements.

Group 3 – Concerned that the 50/50 split suggested would not reflect consensus. Need to ask what are the assumptions behind decisions and continue to follow the process toward reaching consensus.

Group 4 – The only way to reach consensus is through compromise and the Council must recognize the 2/3 goal of consensus ahead of time in order to reach it. Consensus takes time and consideration to be reached.

Group 5 – This effort is similar to serving on a jury. Participants should take the interest of the locale first, then region, and then the state. At some point a distinction must be made to achieve agreement when meeting a deadline.

Exercise #2: Operating Procedures/Rules for Meetings Broad Issue Areas

Group 1

General Powers – Want to know where the Council Leadership guidance provided by GA EPD came from (source of it)

Selection of Chair and Vice Chair – Why was a 6 month term for the Chair selected?

Group 2

Other Meetings – What are the expectations regarding meetings with other Councils? Will they be information or will there be results/voting/actions from these meetings? Can EPD dictate the need/dates of meetings between Councils?

Group 3

Quorum – Requested clarification of the last sentence of “Quorum” to note that the Council may meet if there is no quorum but may not take any actions.

Subcommittees – Who appoints the subcommittees? Thinks this should be done by the Council not the Chair. Group 3 noted preferring a coordinating role for the Chair (facilitate selection of subcommittee members)

Participation by Non-Members – limited involvement of public during meeting but allow opportunity to voice comments at beginning and end of meeting. Reasonable amount of time for public comments, might want to be more specific regarding when and how long is allowed for these. Rick noted that the Public Involvement Plan would address some of this.

Group 4

Rule 4: Meeting agenda and summaries – Satisfied with the rules however suggest that last sentence in “E” be covered in the first sentence of “C”. Requested that item G be changed to “Meeting summaries and minutes” after Becky agreed that it may not apply in this specific case. The term “consent agenda” might not be appropriate in this case.

Group 5

Rule 5: Discussion of issues – Background information should include more than just what is provided by GAEPD. The Group noted that a mechanism will be needed for integrating outside documentary information. Consensus / decision making clarifications regarding majority definition. Could need outside persons with expertise to speak to Council.

Rule 7: Public notice and comment – Group commented on item 7.B that written comments will be available at each meeting. Need time limits on comments.

Comment: Make sure Public Involvement Plan includes a mechanism for integrating outside / public comment and for disseminating information between meetings.

Comment: “Open” meetings: A Council member brought up the potential need to have closed meetings for example for the discussion of the ACT lawsuit implications. The Council briefly discussed the rare need and legality of doing this.

Rick asked if there was general consensus to the group observations above; no objections were presented and Becky noted that the intent would be to bring a final draft of these for adoption at Council Meeting #2.

Lastly, the Council was asked if there were any potential deal killers to which one member noted an earlier discussion of the presumption of consent (if quiet then agreement) / Consensus.

5) Website Introduction

Ms. Thom provided an overview of the new and existing web site resources being developed by GA EPD.

6) Regional Geography, Facilities and Resources Overview

An overview of the Coosa – North Georgia region was provided by Chrissy Thom characterizing current watershed conditions.

Question: Regarding review of the forecasted data, how much time will the Council members be given? Member noted that the more time the better.

Response: The Council will be given 3 – 4 weeks.

Comment: Most of these counties have existing projection information that must be rectified with the Water Plan numbers and time will be needed to “ground truth” this information given its importance. (Example: Northwest Georgia Partnership information)

Response: Projections are currently being done at the County level and Becky will attempt to gain more review time, if needed.

Comment: One participant does not think the current recession will affect long term economic trends and projections.

Question: Will Councils have access to which models were used?

Response: Yes, particularly during the next couple of meetings. Becky noted that the Council could also create a subcommittee to look closer at topics such as the modeling. Council members should notify her if they are interested and she can coordinate with the modelers.

Comment: Individual counties can start gathering their own population / employment information for use in comparison with the Planning Council numbers when they are distributed through the DVD process.

Question: What is the source for the agricultural water use numbers being presented?

Response: The USGS’s *Water Use in Georgia by County for 2005; and Water-Use Trends, 1980–2005*. Scientific Investigations Report 2009–5002. Becky noted that more recent numbers are pending though this information can be very difficult to compare as there are a variety of reporting methods.

Comment: Observation that the wastewater withdrawal numbers presented do not reflect return flows, i.e. not consumptive use.

Question: Observation that as a local utility, some of the Council Members must fill out Discharge Monitoring Reports (DMRs) and promptly provide this information to the State, why is this recent data not being used?

Response: This is the readily available data; GA EPD will provide more detail as the Council goes along. A list of “Informed Decision Data Needs” was started at this point in the meeting to capture Council Data Requests that included:

- Permitted versus consumed agricultural use in the region.
- Non-permitted (non-metered) agricultural withdrawals.
- Current DMR data results that GA EPD can provide.
- Local Health Department records on septic tanks.
- Ensure have information to quantify the effects of improved conservation / production efficiencies on water use. Who will provide this conservation factor? Water Conservation Implementation Plan (WCIP) will provide some guidance on conservation measures.

Comment: Observation that there are so many unknowns that group needs to be careful to use the most recent known information.

Comment: The presentation is missing information on small facilities such as septic tanks which are prevalent in White County and are only regulated through the local Health Departments.

7) Trends, Forces, and Factors that will Affect the Future of Water in the Region/Implications of Trends for the Region and Regional Plan

Mr. Brownlow provided an introduction to an exercise on trends, forces and factors being observed in the Coosa – North Georgia region.

Comments from Trends, Forces, and Factors Exercise:

- Potential threats: Individual, mostly unregulated, water and septic systems (DHR), stream flows (USGS). Pine beetle and Hemlock disease are potential threats to the region that has not yet been noted in the presentation; Hemlocks are widespread in the headwater riparian areas in the region.
- Information for conservation / efficiency adjustments can be obtained from the recently developed Water Conservation and Implementation Plan.
- Impact from marketing of environmentally friendly products.
- Creation of new / additional reservoirs in the northwest region.
- Shift in character of economy in North Georgia.
- Prohibition of Interbasin Transfers (IBTs) – state or federal driven initiative? Mostly local.

- Potential of underground storage of water though this could face similar issues to IBT.
- Ensure water used for power generation is properly accounted for and that forecasting reflects return flows.
- Advances in technology could reduce cost of producing / storing water. However these efforts will need to be funded and who would fund it? Both short term and long term economies to consider.

Groupings from Exercise:
Group A
Reliance on septic tanks and individual sewer systems.
Interbasin Transfers
Group B
State Regulation
Federal Regulation
Ever tightening regulatory requirements on point sources without evaluation of nonpoint source control.
Increased “recreational” water use resulting in more stringent water quality rules.
Recreation
Water / Sewer Rates are increasing due to permitting and regulatory requirements.
Cost of treating wastewater and potable water results in increased cost to consumers.
Group C
Metro Water Use
Group D
Textile Industry (not carpet) departure from the Coosa – N Georgia Region.
Group E
Economy – Pressure to reduce cost, lack of tax revenues to fund improvements and expansions. New businesses that use water (vineyards).
Efficiency of Water Utilization
Technology advances in water and wastewater treatment. Reduce costs but initial investment in \$ for recycling / reuse.
Population
Population Growth and Economic Development / Growth
Power Generation Growth
Redevelopment – New Business Growth
Personal Conservation
Conservation Level
Industry Conservation Efforts
New industry is more water efficient. (automotive)
Manufacturing Trends – Reduction in traditional industries such as carpet / textile and broiler (chicken) industries.
Group F
If food processing plants come in they will use more water than low use predecessors.
Water Quality – Nonpoint sources of pollution will become more numerous as population increases.
Population Growth
The poultry industry continues to grow.
Increase in residential growth will increase treated water (decrease well use) and wastewater treatment.
Residential use is increasing with houses in pastures instead of cows.
Growth along I-75 and other 4 lane roads continues and provides more access for Atlanta growth.
Group G
Potential Northwest Georgia reservoir in Coosa Basin

Groupings from Exercise:
Drought (weather) causes shift in water use and need for new storage capacity.
Climate / weather
Reservoirs and other storage capacity for drought conditions.
More reservoirs needed across region.
Group H
Green / environmentally friendly products and the means of producing these products – water use / reuse, waste management.

8) Introduction to Population and Employment Forecasts

Brian Skeens (CH2M HILL) provided a preview of the methodologies being used for the population and employment forecasts.

9) Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

David Ashburn, John Bennett and Jerry Jennings were nominated for consideration as Chair of the Council. After giving brief remarks, the candidates left the room and Council voted John Bennett as Chair and David Ashburn as Vice Chair.

10) Public Comments

- Brooke Anderson from the Etowah Water and Sewer Authority in Dawson County emphasized the importance of this Planning effort to the entire region. He encouraged the Council to avoid self serving agendas, to “stay above the weeds” and advocated for a technical coordinating committee
- Joe Cook from the Georgia Water Coalition / Coosa River Initiative gave a brief overview of his experience in the Coosa – North Georgia region and offered the Council his support as a resource as the Plan is developed.

11) Action Items

Council discussed potential dates and location for Meeting # 2; there was also a recommendation for shorter yet more frequent meetings.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Coosa – North Georgia Water Planning Council, May 8, 2009 CM#1

Members Present

1. Doug Anderton
2. David Ashburn
3. Irwin Bagwell
4. Kenneth Beasley
5. John Bennett
6. Mike Berg
7. Charlie Bethel
8. Tim Bowden
9. Keith Coffey (alternate)
10. Don Cope
11. Kelly Cornwell
12. Stephen Gray
13. Jerry Jennings
14. Haynes Johnson (alternate)
15. George Martin (alternate, on behalf of Tim Banks)

16. Dick Martin
17. Tim Mercier
18. Tom O'Bryant
19. Lamar Paris
20. Sam Payne
21. Todd Pealock
22. David Pennington
23. Jimmy Petty
24. David Westmoreland

Members Not Present:

1. Katie Dempsey (ex officio)
2. Gerald Dunham
3. Pat Gober
4. Sherry Loudermilk
5. Chip Pearson (ex officio)
6. Frank Riley

Partnering & Other State Agencies

1. Leamon Scott, Department of Community Affairs (<http://www.dca.state.ga.us/>)
2. Keith Gilmer, Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission (www.gaswcc.org/)
3. Greg Sheppard, Lumpkin County Extension Coordinator (<http://www.caes.uga.edu/extension/>)

GA Environmental Protection Division:

1. Becky Champion, Assistant Chief for Coosa-Tallapoosa-Tennessee Basins
2. Michelle Vincent, NonPoint Source Program

CH2M HILL

1. Rick Brownlow
2. Heather Dyke
3. Chrissy Thom
4. Brian Skeens