

# **Georgia Department of Natural Resources**

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September 10, 2010

## **DRAFT MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** SUO Council Members

**FROM:** Jeff Larson, GA EPD  
Bill Martello, Jacobs

**SUBJECT:** Council Meeting #7 Summary  
Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Water Planning Council

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## **Georgia Comprehensive Statewide Water Management Plan Regional Water Planning**

### **Council Meeting 7 Summary**

**Meeting Date:** September 8, 2010  
**Location:** The Thomson Depot, Thomson, Georgia  
**Attendees:** See list

#### **1) Welcome and Council Member Introduction**

Ron Cross, Council Chairman, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending. Council members, EPD staff, planning consultants (PC), partnering agencies, and other attendees introduced themselves.

Chairman Cross stated that he has been receiving a letter from a variety of environmental groups asking for his support for Georgia EPD's Science and Engineering Advisory Panel to do further research for 7Q10 policy and instream flows.

PC Bill Martello reviewed what 7Q10 means, and the three options GAEPD allows for minimum instream flow. Chairman Cross wanted the SUO Council to determine if they would support Georgia EPD's Science and Engineering Advisory Panel's recommendations and the need for further state funding. It was decided that this is beyond the scope of this regional water plan; however, the SUO Council would, as part of their management practices, encourage state funding for this additional research to meet SUO Council's Goal #6.

Chairman Cross discussed the upcoming Joint Meeting to be held in Macon on October 6, 2010. He requested the committee chairs attend – Bruce Azevedo, Scott McGregor, and Pat Goran (for Tom Wiedmeier). Both Larry Walker and Don Dye have requested to attend. The meeting is public and open to all. PC asked SUO Council to decide upon potential topics they would like to put forward to Georgia EPD for consideration at the Joint Meeting's panel discussions – the selected topics are:

- 2050 water supply needs
- Interstate coordination
- Interbasin transfer issues
- Agricultural surface water gap on the Ogeechee

Chairman Cross pointed out that there is an upcoming Savannah River Basin Advisory Council meeting to be held in South Carolina on September 22, 2010 at the Anderson County Library located in Anderson, South Carolina at 1:00 p.m.

Chairman Cross stated his desire for the development of a Savannah River Basin Coalition. He is planning on contacting all bordering governments in South Carolina and Georgia to form a permanent group. His thoughts were that the group would begin as a public sector entity with county commission chairs and mayors. They would then decide if they wanted to add other potential stakeholders.

Lastly, the council discussed if they wanted to maintain their goal that restricts interbasin transfers. Chairman Cross recommended no interbasin transfers out of the Savannah River that supports economic growth for communities outside that river basin especially to the detriment of communities surrounding the Savannah River. The existing water should be used to continue to meet the future basin needs. It was pointed out that existing interbasin transfers already exist with those near Greenville, South Carolina, from Lake Keowee (owned by Duke Power); and the proposed biomass electric generating plant in Warren County (in the Upper Oconee River Basin) plans to use reclaimed water from the City of Thomson for cooling purposes.

Chairman Cross talked about how we could discourage interbasin transfers from the Savannah River. Sam Booker discussed the new South Carolina legislation that would limit Greenville's withdrawal to projected needs and possibly eliminate the current grandfathered permit amount. Toye Hill suggested that we limit each user to a maximum usage.

PC Bill Martello discussed the meeting agenda and objectives.

## **2) Committee Review & Updates**

Bill Martello reviewed the status for each committee.

The Technical Committee has met twice to discuss resource assessments and management practices. The Plan Review Committee has met three times to discuss the plan sections and to review comments. The Interstate Coordination Committee has met once, and there is an upcoming meeting on September 22, 2010 with SCDHEC. Scott MacGregor updated the SUO

Council on the following items: the new South Carolina permitting process and its implementation phase along with the Savannah Harbor TMDL process. The CSRA and the Savannah Harbor Committee has selected a facilitator to mediate a mutually agreeable TMDL implementation plan.

### **3) Forecast and Resource Assessments Update**

Bill Martello reviewed two flow charts – one for water supply and one for wastewater management to help the SUO Council understand terminology used in the document versus what is located within their withdrawal and discharge permits.

Municipal water forecast numbers were presented that identify approximately a fifty percent increase between current usage and projected 2050 needs. Industrial water needs show a 14 percent increase. Agricultural water use was forecast based on crop type and acreage estimates. Bill Martello explained that the University of Georgia has not developed future needs for non-irrigated acres and that these have been held constant for this plan. Energy needs are forecasted to double with the doubling of Plant Vogtle's capacity. This value could change once further details are known about the units, but using this assumption is considered conservative. Surface water summary forecasts were presented and show about a fifty percent increase. SUO Council members were concerned with the South Carolina summaries and Jeff Larson stated that SCDHEC will provide updated forecasts as they become available.

Wastewater forecasts identify a sixteen percent increase in discharges.

Surface Water gaps were presented on a node-by-node basis. For the Savannah River, there are no surface water supply gaps. However, there is a 20-MGD gap at the Eden node as it falls below the desired flow regime (7Q10) about four percent of the time. The Eden node was further discussed as the majority of usage at this node is seasonal and agricultural.

The nodes associated with the USACE lakes (Hartwell and Augusta) were discussed regarding potential impacts from an interbasin transfer. Bill Martello stated that the more critical issue would be the conservation pool levels and the minimum release flows required by USACE for downstream users. Chairman Cross asked whether it would be possible for Georgia EPD to run various scenarios to see how interbasin transfers or changes to minimum flow release would affect lake levels and water quality for downstream users. Chairman Cross stated that lake levels affect the surrounding communities' economy. Clemson University's Strom Thurmond Institute has recently completed a study regarding this issue. Chairman Cross would like to invite them to speak to the SUO Council. He also stated that the SUO Council needs to develop language supportive of their position on lake levels and minimum release flows.

The Little TN node, Rabun County, shows no gaps.

Toye Hill stated that the USACE is already running optimization studies. Charlie Newton and Tim McGill suggested that the SUO Council add into their management practices another recommendation for federal funding to support further optimization studies for the USACE lakes model and minimum release flows.

#### **4) Guest Speaker from Georgia Forestry Commission**

Bill Martello introduced our guest speaker, John Colberg, from Georgia Forestry Commission. A copy of his presentation, *Georgia's Forestry Water Quality Program* will be included with the meeting summary.

**Question** (Robert Jenkins): What is the typical width of the streamside management zone (SMZ)?

**Answer:** John stated that they are typically 40 feet but it depends on whether the stream is perennial or intermittent and the slope of the buffer. The Savannah River is a protected corridor with a minimum 100-foot buffer; however, forestry activities are exempt provided best management practices (BMPs) are met. These would have a typical 40-foot SMZ.

#### **5) Forecast and Resource Assessments Update (continued)**

After the break, there was further discussion regarding the surface water usage for the Savannah River. Chairman Cross discussed that USACE needs to re-write recreation use into their approved uses. It was pointed out that the actual withdrawal flows (140 MGD) are very small when compared to the minimum release rate (3,600 cfs/2.3 BGD). Toye Hill explained that the USACE has been studying changing the trigger points for changing their minimum release flow rates. They currently change from 5,400 cfs to 3,600 cfs. He asked why not considering an interim step down to 4,200 cfs. (Current USACE operating schedule/management plan/minimum release varies from 4,200 cfs at Level 1 down to 3,600 cfs at Level 4.)

**Question** (Chairman Cross): Does the USACE need congressional action to change their trigger points?

**Answer** (Toye Hill): No, they can modify this on their own. They even looked at going as low as 3,100 cfs in the winter months where the water is colder and has a higher dissolved oxygen level. There were no water quality impacts.

**Comment** (Ed Betross): That number may have been skewed due to excessive rainfall.

It was decided that there is a lot of political pressure for the USACE to reconsider their minimum release flow rates. The year 1986 is being held as the worst drought in history for the USACE lakes. Release rates at that time were whatever came into the lake was released.

**Question** (Pat Goran): Do we need to make a recommendation that USACE consider different trigger points to manage the lakes to include recreation?

**Answer** (Toye Hill): Yes, but we should also look at additional reservoir capacity above full pool.

It was decided that the SUO Council should request USACE to review what full pool should be on the lakes as part of the SUO Council's management practices.

Bill Martello presented the groundwater summary for the region. While the Upper Floridan shows sufficient yield for the future, and the Cretaceous aquifer is undergoing further study, the communities utilizing the Crystalline aquifer may want to look at other surface water options for their future needs.

Assimilative capacity was discussed, and is more straightforward. For those communities with red line streams, more stringent treatment limits will be required to meet some current, but mostly, future water quality needs. It was noted that these are screening-level water quality models and more detailed analysis will be required for specific TMDLs.

## **6) Management Practices**

Bill Martello discussed demand management practices emphasizing water conservation as maximizing the efficiency of water use. He described the four tiers of conservation practices and the recently adopted Water Stewardship Act.

There was much discussion on the submetering requirements and whether that would be onerous to existing property owners. Bruce Azevedo said that he recently installed a submetering system. Others thought that the tenants would not change their water use habits.

Bill Martello identified several other demand management practices with some as “no-regrets”. This led to a discussion regarding conservation rates. Many communities believe that to be an issue for them. Chairman Cross assigned preliminary review of these practices to the Technical Committee.

**Question** (Chris McCorkle): Why don't we require landscaper “irrigation design and installation” certification?

**Answer:** Bill stated that these were a preliminary list and that they could be modified to what the SUO Council would like to adopt.

Bill Martello identified several supply management practice options for the Eden node as its shortfall occurs in the summer during low flows and high use. Drilling additional deep irrigation wells was discussed; however, the SUO Council asked if Georgia EPD and University of Georgia confirm what is appropriate for 2050 irrigated acreage? They thought this would be important prior to making a decision on expensive wells. Chairman Cross feels that there are additional needs for evaluation and modeling.

The other question asked was how much of the 20 MGD shortfall is because of the Coastal Council communities?

Other supply management options include reservoirs.

**Question** (Robert Jenkins): How much will Georgia EPD assist in development of new surface water reservoirs?

**Answer:** Bill Martello stated that much of the implementation issues in new reservoirs come during property acquisition and COE permitting, not in the EPD permitting process.

Chairman Cross suggested that the SUO Council request as part of their management practices that Georgia EPD streamline the permitting process and USACE work to optimize the existing reservoirs storage.

Bill Martello identified water quality management practices as two kinds – stormwater management – managing your land appropriately and decreasing your impervious surfaces, and enhanced treatment – providing something greater than secondary.

## **7) Draft Regional Water Plan**

Bill Martello led the group in what has been completed to date and the remaining pieces to complete. The SUO Council requested to see the Draft Plan that was submitted to Georgia EPD in August. A copy will be sent to SUO Council this week. The completion schedule is tight. SUO Council members were concerned that there is much to complete before the next plan submittal in October. Jeff Larson stated that there is no flexibility in the schedule; however, it will be draft and blanks will be allowed for data that is still in development.

Several interim meeting dates were scheduled:

- Week of 9/20 or 9/27 – SUO and Coastal council chairs to meet
- 9/21 – Technical Committee Meeting
- 9/30, 10:00-12:00 – Plan Review Committee Meeting
- 10/7, 10:00-12:00 – Plan Review Committee Meeting
- 10/12, 9:00-12:00 – Interim Council Meeting, Thomson Train Depot

## **8) Elected Official and Public Comments**

Chairman Cross asked if there were any final comments, and there were none.

## **9) Meeting Wrap-up**

Chairman Cross thanked the council members for attending the meeting.

Meeting was adjourned by 3:00 p.m.

## **10) Action Items**

- PC to email Draft Plan Section 1-5 to Council
- PC to provide location for September 22, 2010 SRBAC meeting
- PC to include the following items in draft plan as future evaluation and management practices:
  - Encourage state funding for additional 7Q10 and instream flows research to meet SUO Council's Goal #6
  - Recommend the need for federal funding to support further optimization studies for the USACE lakes model and minimum release flows including full pool elevation modifications (Comprehensive Plan II)
  - Request Georgia EPD assistance in streamlining the reservoir permitting process

## **CM#7 Meeting Attendees**

### **Council Members in attendance**

Ron Cross, Chair  
Bruce Azevedo  
Charles Cawthon  
Don Dye  
Dan Fowler (Alternate)  
Patricia Goodwin (Alternate)  
Pat Goran (Alternate)  
Toye Hill  
Robert Jenkins  
Tom Jordan  
Scott MacGregor  
Chris McCorkle  
Tim McGill  
Charlie Newton  
Stan Sheppard  
Tom Wiedmeier  
Tenia Workman

### **Council Members not in attendance**

Braye Boardman  
Jerry Boling  
Deke Copenhaver  
Barry Cronic  
Mike Eskew  
Larry Guest  
Ralph Hudgens (Ex-Officio)  
Eddie Madden  
James H. Newsome  
Lewis Sanders  
Larry Walker  
Lee Webster  
Tom McCall (Ex-Officio)

### **Staff in attendance**

Jeff Larson, EPD  
Brian Baker, EPD  
Bill Martello, Jacobs  
Diana Jackson, Jacobs

### **Partnering Agencies in attendance**

John Colberg, Georgia Forestry Commission  
Ed Bettross, Georgia DNR, Water Resources Division  
John Huffmaster, Georgia Farm Bureau  
Deatre Denion, Department of Community Affairs  
Nancy Bobbitt, US Senator Isakson  
Frank Redmond, US Senator Isakson

### **General Public in attendance**

Doug Fulle, Oglethorpe Power Corporation  
Frank Carl, Savannah River Keeper  
Sam Booker, Georgia Soil & Water Commission  
Alan Saxon, Augusta-Richmond County Utility  
Michael Rorick, Member of the Public