



Meeting Summary

Lower Flint-Ochlockonee Regional Water Council Meeting

Albany State University – Albany, GA

December 11, 2019

Welcome, Introductions, Chairman's Discussion

Lower Flint-Ochlockonee Chair Richard Royal welcomed members, thanked everyone for their attendance, and asked members and guests to introduce themselves. Council member Jimmy Champion provided an invocation. Chairman Royal noted that names were being put forward to appointing authorities by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GAEPD) to fill open seats on the Council. Kristin Rowles then provided the Council a list of possible members and discussed the (re)appointment process. Council member Mike Newberry noted that there is not significant representation from Decatur, Seminole and Miller Counties where a substantial amount of water use occurs. A few members suggested that it would be good to add some young farmers to the Council. They will suggest some possible names to GAEPD.

Updates from EPD

Next, Kristin reviewed the meeting agenda and introduced Jennifer Welte (GAEPD) to discuss the next round of water planning, water demand forecasts, and surface/ground water assessments (slides available). Council review of these materials will start next year. Members briefly discussed characteristics of the OASIS model being used by the surface water assessment contractor on a pilot basis in the Oconee-Ocmulgee-Altamaha Basin. Kristin noted that an important area of focus in that work will be summarizing and presenting the vast amount of data generated by the model into meaningful formats to support Council deliberations.

Groundwater Resource Assessment Updates

Dr. Jim Kennedy (GAEPD) provided the Council an overview of recently completed groundwater assessments on the Claiborne Aquifer in Southwest Georgia (slides available). Dr. Kennedy noted

that this modeling involved a tighter grid spacing (a more refined model) and improved data on agricultural water use beyond modeling done to support the last round of regional water planning. Modeling simulations of increased groundwater pumping were also completed to investigate the opportunity of converting surface water to groundwater in certain portions of the Ichawaynochaway and Spring Creek basins. Dr. Kennedy also noted the differences in the newly completed transient groundwater model compared to the steady-state model used in previous planning periods. The simulations did not include increased groundwater pumping from outcrop areas that might be expected to impact surface water flows. Overall, the transient model results suggest no long-term decline in Claiborne or Cretaceous groundwater levels by increasing withdrawals in the modeled area up to 50 mgd (Claiborne aquifer) and 62 mgd (Cretaceous aquifer). The model simulations also showed aquifer recovery from growing season drawdowns during the non-growing season.

In response to a question, Dr. Kennedy said that there is some recharge throughout the extent of the aquifer by leakage from adjoining aquifer layers. Members commented that the results suggest support for conversion of surface water withdrawals to groundwater. This is the focus of a management practice in the regional water plan. However, they also noted that economic considerations for such conversions must be considered. Additionally, a member commented that the state needs to increase monitoring of the newly installed Claiborne wells in Southwest Georgia.

Status of Agricultural Water Use and Irrigated Acreage Data

Mark Masters (GWPPC) provided the Council an update on work related to irrigated acreage and agricultural metering data to be used in the upcoming agricultural water use forecast. He noted field mapping efforts in support of the state's agricultural metering program as well as other updates to the irrigated acreage resulting from Hurricane Michael damage and solar conversion. Mark offered that the downward trend of acreage irrigated from surface water is likely to continue and that the percentage of acreage irrigated from efficient center pivots or drip irrigation is increasing. Mark also provided a short update on the Floridan Aquifer Collaborative Engagement for Sustainability (FACETS) project underway by the University of Florida, Albany State University, Auburn University, and University of Georgia in partnership with stakeholders throughout the region, including a few Council members.

Updates from EPD

Jennifer Welte updated the Council on the ongoing *Florida v. Georgia* Supreme Court litigation. A hearing in front of Special Master Paul Kelly was held in November 2019. The parties are currently waiting on a recommendation from Special Master Kelly to the Supreme Court. Jennifer then provided a summary of GAEPD's drought response declaration process. She reported that a

significant portion of the state is under Drought Response Level 1 and that three utilities in the Flint (Griffin, Fayette County, and Coweta County) are currently operating under Drought Response Level 2. Finally, Jennifer noted updates on work related to Albany's combined sewer overflow (CSO) permit. GAEPD has extended the CSO permit and is working with the City on facility upgrades. GAEPD is also working with Albany on their wastewater discharge permit. There is not currently a draft permit out on notice for public comment. Jennifer will coordinate with the Council contractor team to ensure members are up-to-date on the permit renewal process. The slides from Jennifer's presentation are available on request.

LUNCH BREAK

Chairman Royal called the meeting back to order. He offered a remembrance and moment of silence for Council members Jerry Lee, Chuck Lingle and Huddy Hudgens who have passed in recent months.

Population Projections

Steve Simpson (Black & Veatch) summarized recently completed population projections that will inform the municipal water demand forecasts for the next round of planning (slides available). The projections were completed by the Carl Vinson School of Government at the University of Georgia. Yearly projections were completed for years 2017 to 2035 and five-year increment projections were completed out to 2062. The overall statewide population is projected to increase while the population of the Lower Flint-Ochlockonee Council region is projected to decrease by roughly 12%. Steve noted that most of the growth in the state is projected in urban areas. Only two counties in the LFO region are projected to increase in population: Lee and Miller. Council members asked for more information specific to projected growth in Miller County.

Review of Council Member Survey Results

Next, Kristin reviewed the results of a recently completed Council-member survey (slides available). The survey was conducted as a part of an effort by GAEPD and the regional water planning contractors to gather input on the regional water planning process. A total of 14 surveys were completed by Council members. One of the questions asked about possible field site visits for the Council, and Council members commented that a trip to visit a dam would be informative. Kristin said that the survey results will be used in planning future Council meetings. Summary slides of the survey results are available.

Next Steps and Opportunities for Outreach

Kristin reported on upcoming Council meetings that will include a joint meeting with neighboring Councils to review the municipal and industrial water demand forecasts. She also noted that there will likely be new Council appointments in the coming months. Kristin then reminded the

Council of resources available to help in outreach and education efforts including Power Point slides, fact sheets, a video about the Council, and the new Regional Water Planning website (<https://waterplanning.georgia.gov>). She played the short new video about the Council and its neighboring Councils. She requested assistance with an upcoming outreach presentation for the City of Thomasville, and she asked Council members to think about other potential audiences for outreach presentations. She noted that members of the technical support team can be available to attend meetings with Council members to assist in outreach efforts.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjournment

Council Chairman Royal thanked members for attending and the meeting was adjourned.

Council Members Attending December 11, 2019 Meeting

Jim Quinn	John Heath
Mike Newberry	Jimmy Champion
Richard Royal	George McIntosh
Vince Falcione	Steve Bailey

Other Attendees

Kristin Rowles (GWPPC)	Bert Early (GA Forestry Commission)
Mark Masters (GWPPC)	Gail Cowie (GWPPC)
Nikki Dictson (GWPPC)	Dr. Jim Kennedy (GAEPD)
Charles Shinn (FL Farm Bureau)	Steve Simpson (B&V)
Phil Odom (Coastal RWPC)	Rod Weller (GA DNR)
Dan Todd (USDA Peanut Research Lab)	Katherine Hammock(B&V)
Jennifer Welte (GAEPD)	