



Georgia Water Planning

Meeting Summary

Upper Flint Regional Water Council Meeting

Flint Energies – Reynolds, Georgia

January 22, 2020

Welcome & Introductions

Donald Chase, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and offered an invocation. Next, Kristin Rowles (Georgia Water Planning and Policy Center) also welcomed the Council members and presided over the election of officers. *Following a motion by Benjamin Wood and second by Jack Holbrook, Donald Chase was re-elected as Chair and Raines Jordan was elected as Vice-Chair by consensus.* Chairman Chase and Vice-Chairman Jordan each thanked the Council members for their votes of support and emphasized the importance of the Council's work moving forward.

Next, Kristin distributed a list of active members of the Upper Flint Council as well as a list of potential candidates to be submitted to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the House for appointment. A member commented that the Webster County position should be considered as a full member rather than as an alternate. Kristin noted that the Council had previously discussed that alternates should be considered for appointment as full members of the Council and said that she will suggest to EPD to make this addition to the document. A moment of silence was observed in honor of Hays Arnold. Kristin noted that this meeting would be Randy Startling's last meeting as a member of the Upper Flint Council. Mr. Startling then introduced Bob Melvin and Nealie Cannington from International Paper in Oglethorpe, GA. Mr. Melvin is included in the names that are being suggested for appointment to the Council.

Updates from EPD

Johanna Smith (EPD) gave a report on several topics including the regional water planning process, the Florida v. Georgia case, and the recently lifted drought declaration (slides available). She discussed the next round of regional water planning and provided an overview of the development of technical work products to support planning. Council review of these materials

starts this year. She explained that for the surface water availability resource assessment, a pilot project in the Oconee-Ocmulgee-Altamaha Basins is developing a new model that will provide much greater resolution than the previous model. It is expected that this pilot project will be expanded to the rest of the state.

Ms. Smith 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, and the Special Master released his recommendation to the Supreme Court in December 2019. It was noted in discussion that the Supreme Court is expected to set a briefing schedule on this case before the end of its current term (June 2020), but oral arguments are not anticipated to occur until the Court's 2020-2021 term that begins in October.

Ms. Smith provided a summary of GAEPD's drought response declaration process. She reported that a significant portion of the state was under Drought Response Level 1 last fall. Several utilities in the Flint (e.g., Griffin and Coweta) were operating under Drought Response Level 2. The drought declaration was lifted on December 27, 2019.

Groundwater Resource Assessment Updates

Dr. Jim Kennedy (GAEPD) provided the Council an overview of recently completed groundwater assessments 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. Dr. Kennedy noted that there are over 4.6 million grids in the new transient model which provide an improved representation of groundwater impacts throughout the planning area as compared to the models used in previous planning cycles. The modeling simulations suggest that increased groundwater pumping may be available from the Claiborne Aquifer in Dooly and Crisp Counties and from the lower Cretaceous Aquifer throughout the region without impacting surface water flows. The simulations did not include increased groundwater pumping from the Floridan Aquifer, as increased pumping from the outcrop areas might be expected to impact surface water flows. Increased pumping from the Clayton aquifer was also not simulated due to the moratorium for that aquifer. Discussion was as follows:

- Several members commented that having the more detailed information on additional groundwater capacity will be important in developing additional water management alternatives.
- Dr. Kennedy suggested additional sampling to determine brackish nature of water from the lower Cretaceous Aquifer in the southern part of Crisp County before new wells are developed.
- Responding to a question, Dr. Kennedy suggested additional monitoring wells be installed prior to additional groundwater being developed.

Review of Groundwater Data from the Region

Katie Hammock (Black & Veatch) presented information on publicly available U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS) groundwater data available in the Upper Flint Council region (slides available). Of the 49 real-time USGS groundwater monitoring wells in the state, only two are in the Upper Flint Council region. Katie reviewed data trends from other available USGS monitoring wells which are not monitored in real time. She reviewed data for the surficial, Upper Floridan, Claiborne and Clayton Aquifers. Katie noted that the trends from individual wells are not necessarily indicative of the overall aquifer. The following is a summary of the discussion of this presentation:

- Responding to a question from a Council member, Dr. Kennedy provided additional information on the characteristics of the Clayton Aquifer and history of the Clayton moratorium.
- Debbie Gordon (USGS) provided additional information on how members can access real-time and other USGS groundwater resources.

Metro Water District Planning Update

Danny Johnson (Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District) provided the Council an update on the District's planning process and timeline. The District will be releasing an RFP for consultant services to support plan development by the end of January. Danny reported that priorities for the upcoming round will include biosolids management, municipal drought response, and the impact of septic systems on surface water quality/quantity. In discussion, Council members suggested support for state funding to complete the septic study that Danny referenced and requested that results from the study, when completed, be shared with the Council. The District looks forward to coordinating with the Upper Flint Council in development of their respective plans and will remain engaged throughout the review and revision process.

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 12 surveys were completed by Upper Flint Council members. Kristin said that the survey results will be used in planning future Council meetings.

LUNCH BREAK

Following lunch, Donald Chase discussed his request for council members to request additional council appointments. He discussed the June 20-27 Flint River float event from Thomaston to Oglethorpe. The group discussed the Three River's RC&D study on fecal contamination and noted that additional presentations on TMDLs for various stream reaches and different impairments would be useful in the future.

Soil Moisture Sensor Presentation

Liz Buchen (Trellis, Inc) presented and discussed emerging technology related to soil moisture monitoring, irrigation scheduling, and other precision agriculture tools (slides available). Liz discussed implementation of soil moisture monitoring across different soil types, crops, irrigation systems or other farm characteristics. She explained the Trellis soil moisture sensors and explained how they can support farmers in making irrigation decisions based on real-time information available to them electronically. She discussed incentive programs to support the use of such equipment. She also shared a demonstration of a soil moisture sensor with the Council. In discussion, Council members noted the importance of understanding efforts by farmers to conserve water and the development and implementation of technologies to advance conservation.

Population Projections

Steve Simpson (Black & Veatch) summarized recently completed population projections that will inform the development of the municipal and industrial 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. Projections were completed for years 2017 to 2062. The overall statewide population is projected to increase while the population of the Upper Flint Council region is projected hold approximately steady (less than 1% decline). Steve noted that most of the growth in the state is projected in urban areas. Only two counties in the Upper Flint Council region are projected to increase in population: Pike and Spalding. Council members noted that the population growth across the region is being driven by two counties; most other counties will experience population declines. Many members expressed concern over the predicted county population declines that will affect most of the region.

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 in the region is likely to continue and the percentage of acreage irrigated from efficient center pivots or drip irrigation is expected to increase. Some conversion of forest land to pecan farming is also projected. One attendee noted additional solar conversion in Sumter County. 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.

Next Steps and Opportunities for Outreach

Kristin reported on upcoming Council meetings that may 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 requested assistance with an upcoming outreach presentation in Reynolds, and she asked Council members to think about other potential audiences for outreach presentations. She noted that members of the technical support team are available to attend meetings with Council members to assist in outreach efforts.

Public Comment

Ben Emanuel (American Rivers) provided an update on work of the Upper Flint Working Group and their work related to drought resiliency and river health. Ben also encouraged members to participate in the Paddle Georgia event scheduled for June along most of the Upper Flint River.

Adjournment

Kristin said that she will send Council members follow-up materials from the meeting, and she will be in touch about scheduling the next Council meeting when the schedule for the availability of planning support materials is more clear. Council Chair Donald Chase thanked members for attending and the meeting was adjourned.

Council Members Attending January 22, 2020 Meeting

Donald Chase, Chair	Joel Wood
Raines Jordan, Vice Chair	Gene Brunson
William Sawyer	Randall Starling
Lamar Perlis	Beth English
Buddy Leger	Jack Holbrook
Gary Powell	Brant Keller

Others Attending

Bert Early, Georgia Forestry Commission

Ben Emmanuel, American Rivers

Jennifer Welte, EPD

Johanna Smith, EPD

Christine Voudy, EPD

Jim Kennedy, EPD

Liz Buchen, Trellis, Inc.

Danny Johnson, MNGWPD

Debbie Gordon, USGS

Steve Simpson, B&V

Katie Hammock, B&V

Mark Masters, GWPPC

Samuel Bette

Nealie Cannington, International Paper

Bob Melvin, International Paper

Jim Littlefield

Paul Jarrell, Three Rivers Reg'l Commission

Michael Delisle, Upper Flint Working Group

Laura Schneider, River Valley Reg'l Commission

Kristin Rowles, GWPPC