



# Georgia Water Planning

## **Meeting Summary**

### **Middle Chattahoochee Regional Water Council Meeting**

**By Teleconference**

**November 2, 2020**

#### **Welcome, Introductions, and Meeting Overview**

Kristin Rowles (Georgia Water Planning and Policy Center, or GWPPC) started the meeting by checking who was in attendance. Meeting attendees are listed at end of the meeting summary.

Steve Davis (Chair) welcomed members and thanked everyone for their attendance and for their flexibility in participating in a virtual format. He encouraged the Council to keep moving forward in planning under less than ideal circumstances. Christine Voudy (Georgia Environmental Protection Division, or GAEPD) reported that the recommendations for Council member appointments are currently being evaluated by the Governor's office, and then will be passed onto the Lt. Governor's and Speaker's offices. Ex officio member, Senator Heath, noted that he is not running for re-election, and his current term of office as a Senator ends in January. The Council will need a new Senate Ex officio member to be appointed to the Council.

Kristin Rowles (GWPPC) reviewed the meeting agenda. Next, Kristin updated members on the approval of the proposed change to the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District plan for Coweta County, which was discussed in the last two Council meetings. She also noted that a possible proposal for a plan amendment concerning the City of Villa Rica had been dropped, and the City's needs instead will be considered in the next update of the District's plan.

#### **Update on Regional Water Planning Process**

Kristin introduced three brief presentations to update the Council members on the water planning process. The slides from these presenters (and others from this meeting) are available on the Council's website.

Christine Voudy (GAEPD) provided an overview of the timeline and process for updating the Regional Water Plans. She also provided brief updates on water demand forecasting and

resource assessments modeling. She noted that the current target date for completion of the next regional water plan revisions is late 2022.

Steve Simpson (Black & Veatch) gave a detailed presentation on forecasting water demands from the municipal, industrial, and energy sectors. He gave members additional information on the stakeholder driven process led by Black & Veatch to develop the municipal forecasts. In response to a question, Steve said that the withdrawals and discharges are computed in terms of annual averages. In response to another question, he provided additional information on how the forecasts account for peak water demands and wastewater returns. Steve Davis (chair) commented that he thinks that Muscogee County concerns about the population forecasts (and related demand forecasts) should be noted in the Council's plan. These concerns relate to how the transient population is reflected in the long-term forecast. Local officials believe the resulting population projections are too low.

Mark Masters (GWPPC) updated the Council on the methods and timeline for completing the agricultural water demand forecasts. Mark mentioned that the same team from the GWPPC at Albany State and researchers from the University of Georgia that completed the 2015-16 forecasts have been engaged to complete the 2020-21 work. He noted improvements in the wetted acreage database and incorporation of meter data to improve estimates of crop water needs used to develop the current conditions and forecasted needs. In response to questions, Mark commented on possible changes to crop mix in Georgia based on drought and other challenges in the western U.S. as well as how installation of solar panels on irrigated acreage may impact future water use. In response to a question, he said that he does not know of any substantial solar conversions in the Middle Chattahoochee region. Most of those observed have been in the Lower Flint-Ochlockonee region.

#### **Water Quality Data for Georgia and Assessment Changes for Walter F. George Reservoir**

Stephanie Whitacre (Black & Veatch) presented the Council an overview of the 305(b)/303(d) Integrated Water Quality Report (2020). She provided members information on the various assessments contained in the report and showed examples of areas that have changed assessment status (slides available). Stephanie then gave members a brief overview of an interactive tool developed by GAEPD to review water quality assessment conditions throughout the state, available on the GAEPD website:

<https://gaepd.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=dea4c9c319d4461c8d5cef8e68957b1b>

Dr. Liz Booth (GAEPD) then provided the Council an update on changes to the assessment status for Walter F. George Reservoir, based on the analysis of data collected at this lake and whether the data meets the water quality standards associated with the lake's designated use. The reservoir is now listed as impaired for chlorophyll a at the mid-lake location and listed as pending assessment at the dam forebay. The upcoming water quality resource assessment

process will involve an update of the basin-wide water quality models (watershed and lakes models). Dr. Booth also commented on improvements to the land use information, meteorological data distribution, and water quality data collection and availability that will enhance water quality model calibration during this round of regional water planning. Responding to a question, Dr. Booth offered that meteorological data on sunlight and rainfall along with phosphorus and nitrogen levels are important in modeling to support TMDL development. Responding to a question, she noted that Georgia works closely with Alabama through their Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) to incorporate Alabama's data to inform modeling and evaluation. In response to another question, she said that GAEPD modelers could meet with Columbus Water Works when the model is ready to be discussed. In response to another question, she said that the basin-wide assessment will not involve a re-evaluation of the Lake Lanier TMDL.

Dr. Booth made an important clarification about the word "designation" in the context of the meeting discussion. Waters have "designated uses," such as recreation or fishing, which determine their water quality standards. These designations are evaluated in the triennial review process. Waters are assessed and designated as "supporting," "impaired," or "assessment pending" based on water quality data meeting or not meeting the requirements for specific designated uses in the 305b/303d assessment process.

Christine Voudy (GAEPD) then presented information related to the process that GAEPD would follow to evaluate proposed changes in designated uses for waterbodies. There are currently proposals to change designated uses of some waters in the Middle Chattahoochee region. Those proposals would need to be supported by data and information, and undergo a review process, as outlined in guidance issued by GAEPD.

### **Groundwater Recharge Areas**

Christine Voudy (GAEPD) provided members an overview of identification and modeling of groundwater recharge areas in the state. She reported that the Watershed Protection and Land Protection Branches of GAEPD are working together to develop a comprehensive GIS database that will better support both Branches in coordination on potential impacts to drinking water sources. She shared information and maps identifying groundwater recharge areas.

Dr. Booth shared a link to a new USGS site that maps USGS-collected data on groundwater, surface water, water quality, and meteorology that can be found on the following website:

<https://dashboard.waterdata.usgs.gov/app/nwd/?region=lower48>

### **Public Comment**

No one wished to make a public comment.

### **Next Steps/Meeting Adjournment**

Chairman Steve Davis thanked members for attending and the meeting was adjourned.

**Council Members Attending November 2, 2020 Meeting**

Steve Davis (Chair)

James Emery

Harry Lange (Vice Chair)

Matt Windom

Philip Eidson

Bill Heath (Ex Officio)

**Other Attendees**

John Asbell (GA Power)

Liz Booth (GAEPD)

Gregory Cherry (USGS)

Christine Voudy (GAEPD)

Chris Manganiello (Chattahoochee  
Riverkeeper)

Jennifer Welte (GAEPD)

Danny Johnson (Metro North GA Water  
Planning District)

Steve Simpson (B&V)

Stephanie Whitacre (B&V)

Paul McDaniel (GA Forestry Commission)

Kristin Rowles (GWPPC)

Billy Turner

Mark Masters (GWPPC)

Debbie Warner Gordon (USGS)