



Georgia Water Planning

Meeting Summary

Upper Flint, Middle Chattahoochee, and Lower Flint-Ochlockonee Regional Water Councils Joint Meeting

By Videoconference

June 7, 2021

Welcome, Introductions, and Meeting Overview

Kristin Rowles (Georgia Water Planning and Policy Center, or GWPPC) started the meeting by reviewing the agenda and offering some logistical guidelines for participating in the virtual format. Kristin then introduced the three Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GAEPD) Council liaisons followed by introductions of newly appointed Council members by the respective Council Chairs (Richard Royal, Lower Flint-Ochlockonee; Donald Chase, Upper Flint; Steve Davis, Middle Chattahoochee). A complete list of meeting attendees is provided at end of the meeting summary and presentation slides from the meeting are available upon request.

Update on Regional Water Planning Process

Jennifer Welte (GAEPD) provided an overview of the regional water planning process including an upcoming orientation session for new members. GAEPD anticipates holding quarterly meetings as Councils begin the review and revision process to their existing regional water plans. Kristin noted that the plans are used to guide and inform permitting and water management policy at GAEPD.

GAEPD Land Branch Rule Change Report

Keith Stevens (GAEPD) provided an update on a recent rule change governing high moisture content waste management plans for landfills in Georgia. Keith discussed “instability events” that can occur at landfills due to high moisture content waste and cited the Eagle Point landfill as an example. In response to a question from a Council member, he said that these events could have water quality impacts. The new plans may affect the costs of disposal for sludge from wastewater treatment facilities and residuals from water treatment plants.

Report on Florida v. Georgia No. 142

John Allen (Kazmarek, Mowery, Cloud and Laseter) thanked the Council members for their work to date and stressed the importance of Council planning to the eventual outcome of the Supreme Court litigation. John gave members a general overview of the case history and ultimate ruling on April 1, 2021. Specifically, he noted that the Court unanimously rejected Florida's exceptions to Special Master Paul Kelly's December 2019 recommendation. John commented that the Court made their ruling on the "first stage" of an equitable apportionment case, namely, that Florida did not prove harm resulting from Georgia's water consumption. The Court did not directly address the remainder of Special Master Kelly's recommendations and noted that Georgia has a responsibility to continue responsible use of scarce resources. John also mentioned that members were no longer under a litigation hold related to regional water planning documents and communication. Finally, John reminded members that other litigation is still ongoing with respect to the ACF Basin and the Corps of Engineers' recently updated Master Water Control Manual. He also noted certain litigation risk may exist related to water consumption and impacts to endangered species and habitat.

Water and Wastewater Demand Forecasts

Kristin introduced the water and wastewater demand forecasts as an important step in building the information base for the review and revision of the regional water plans. She said today's presentations would be a first look at the forecasts, as well as a discussion of how they were developed.

Mark Masters (GWPPC) provided the Councils an update on the agricultural water demand forecasts. He updated members on improvements to the statewide irrigated acreage database and agricultural demand estimates based on metering information. Mark also provided members a snapshot of current conditions compared to demand forecasts generated during the second round of regional planning (2016). The Councils will be provided agricultural water demand forecasts through 2060 as part of their next meeting.

Steve Simpson (Black & Veatch) provided a summary of updated municipal water demand and wastewater forecasts for the three Councils including a comparison to forecasts compiled during the previous round of planning. Responding to a question, Steve noted that the decreasing population trend was the primary driver in the forecast reduction in the Middle Chattahoochee planning region's municipal demand. Middle Chattahoochee Chair Steve Davis noted additional discussion may be needed related to the population forecasts for their region, specifically regarding assumptions for Ft. Benning and the Columbus area. In response to another question, Danny Johnson (Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District) said

that the District is close to finalizing their water demand forecast numbers and can share the forecasts at an upcoming Council meeting. He also noted that water demand in the Metro area is difficult to break down by basin given how counties and water systems can span multiple basins in a small geographic region.

Next, Bill Davis (CDM Smith) summarized updates to the energy and industrial water demand forecasts. Bill noted significant reductions in forecasted water demand for the energy sector based on transition from coal to natural gas-based energy production. Responding to a Council member's question, Bill noted that their estimates reflect a US Department of Energy forecast showing essentially no new growth in nuclear energy generation. In response to another question, Bill also noted that water use from locations in Alabama are not included in the forecast since they are not permitted in the state of Georgia. Jennifer Welte noted that Alabama water use within the Chattahoochee basin, while not in the forecasts, is included in the surface water resource assessments and modeling. Finally, Bill addressed a question concerning impacts of the retirement/ conversion of Georgia Power's Plants Yates and Wansley and reminded the group that changes to water use from energy generation can be incorporated during the regular 5-year plan review and revision schedule.

Public Comment

Ben Emanuel (American Rivers, Atlanta office) was unable to provide a planned brief public comment due to technical difficulties but followed up via email with his greetings to Upper Flint Council members. Ben is looking forward to the upcoming plan update cycle and intends to remain engaged with Council efforts. He noted that the Upper Flint River Working Group (a voluntary, collaborative group of water utilities, conservationists, and other stakeholders in the Piedmont portion of the Flint basin) has been working to develop better information about changing hydrology in the basin and about water availability for people and nature in the basin during drought and hopes to bring useful information to the Council for the upcoming round of planning.

Next Steps/Meeting Adjournment

Kristin reminded members of the next steps for each Council, including orientation sessions and agricultural water demand forecasts to be presented at the next set of meetings. The meeting was adjourned at 12:04 pm.

Council Members Attending June 7, 2021 Joint Meeting

Lower Flint-Ochlockonee

Richard Royal, Chair
Jimmy Webb, Vice Chair
Senator Dean Burke, *Ex Officio*
Chris Addleton
Steve Bailey
LaDon Calhoun
Casey Cox
Marc DeMott
Fred Dent
Hugh Dollar
John Heath
Connie Hobbs
Greg Hobbs
Hank Jester
Mike Newberry
Calvin Perry
Walt Pierce
Jim Quinn
Jay Smith
Cory Thomas

Upper Flint

Donald Chase, Chair
Senator Ed Harbison, *Ex Officio*
Barry Blount
Michael Bowens
Gene Brunson
Beth English
Brad Ellis
Adam Graft
Rodney Hilley
Jack Holbrook
Terrell Hudson
Brant Keller
Lamar Perlis
Gordon Rogers
Randy Summerlin
Walt Turner
Brian Upson
George Teel Warbington
Joel Wood

Middle Chattahoochee

Steve Davis, Chair
Harry Lange, Vice Chair
Senator Jason Anavitarte,
Ex Officio
John Asbell
Victoria Barrett
Laura Lee Bernstein
Patrick Bowie
Barbie Crockett
James Emery
Jim Hayes
Kevin Hayes
Bill Heath
Mac Moye
Adolph McLendon
Ed Moon
Ken Van Horn

Other Attendees

John Allen (Kazmarek, Mowery, Cloud & Laseter)
Brandon Baker (GADNR, Wildlife Resources Division)
John Caldwell (Fayette County Water)
Dan Calhoun (USGS)

Nealie Cannington (International Paper)
Gail Cowie (GWPPC)
Bill Davis (CDM Smith)
Bert Earley (GA Forestry Commission)
Ben Emanuel (American Rivers)

Kevin Jeselnik (Chattahoochee Riverkeeper)
Danny Johnson (Metro Water District)
John Joiner (USGS)
Linda MacGregor (City of Gainesville)
Mark Masters (GWPPC)
Paul McDaniel (GA Forestry Commission)
Hayes Robinson
Mike Roper (GA Power)
Kristin Rowles (GWPPC)

Laura Schneider (River Valley Regional
Commission)
Steve Simpson (Black & Veatch)
Johanna Smith (GAEPD)
Keith Stevens (GAEPD)
Christine Voudy (GAEPD)
Jennifer Welte (GAEPD)
Stephanie Whitacre (Black & Veatch)
Wei Zeng (GAEPD)