



## **Meeting Summary**

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

#### **Columbus Water Works Columbus, GA**

**August 23, 2022**

### **Welcome & Introductions**

Mark Masters (GWPPC) welcomed the Council members, reviewed the agenda, and introduced the Council Support team. He also discussed updates to the ARPA source conversion project, noting that the team has assessed sites for monitoring wells and updated their website. Meeting materials are posted on the Council Website.

### **Chair's Report**

Chairman Davis welcomed and thanked the Council members for attending today's meeting. He noted we have plenty of items to discuss at today's meeting.

### **New Planning Timeline**

Meagan Szydzik (GWPPC) updated members with the new Regional Water Plan (RWP) review and revision schedule. The new EPD targeted date of adoption of revised RWP is set for June 2023. This is a six-month extension that was approved by EPD to provide additional time for surface water availability modeling, for incorporating the Metro District's forecasting projections into the water quality and surface water models, and for the ongoing Council member appointment process. There are currently three more Council meetings scheduled after today's meeting and the Council plans to continue work in their sub-committees between the meetings as well.

**Summary from last meeting** Courtney Cooper (GWPPC) discussed a summary from the past meeting. She reminded members that they reviewed resource assessment results, discussed management practices and recommendations to the state, considered recommendations from the committees, and learned about recent studies on water system interconnectivity and biosolids management.

### **EPD Update, Seed Grants**

Kelli-Ann Schrage (GAEPD) led the discussion on EPD updates and Seed Grants. She informed the members that the Seed Grant Program was announced on July 7<sup>th</sup> and will close for applications October 15. Seed Grants are available for funding projects that support Regional Water Plan management and practices/recommendations related to water quality with up to \$75,000 in state funding available (per project). She also noted that in the Middle Chattahoochee region, \$107,000 of state funds have been awarded towards 2 seed grant projects. Funding opportunities are available on the Georgia Water Planning website. The group discussed that the water quality effects of raising West Point Lake full pool could be a good seed grant opportunity.

### **Orientation to goals for afternoon group discussions**

Courtney Cooper (GWPPC) introduced goals and questions to the Council members to keep in mind as the meeting progressed. She asked members to consider any new issues not yet reflected in the recommendations, what else they want to know about water availability, what water-related projects they would like to prioritize over the next 5 years, and to think of any unsettled committee items.

### **Surface Water Availability Assessment Results**

Mark Masters (GWPPC) and Wei Zeng (GAEPD) presented the Surface Water Availability Assessment results. Mark covered the water supply and wastewater assimilation challenges that were identified for the Middle Chattahoochee region, as well as West Point elevation and Columbus Flow results. The model simulation included a wide range of hydrologic conditions utilizing data from the period between 1939-2018. The withdrawal and discharges for the model had four different scenarios: baseline (average water and wastewater demands for 2010-2018), baseline drought (2011 demands), forecast – ag constant (2060 demands, but agriculture held constant at Baseline), and forecast – ag growth (2060 demands, but with agriculture 2060 forecast without moratorium). The instream flow and protection thresholds were modeled per permit conditions and reservoir physical and operational data were from reservoir owners or GAEPD.

Water and wastewater facilities analyzed in the MC region indicated 3 water supply challenges and 8 wastewater assimilation challenges. These challenges were identified as moderate under baseline and future water use conditions. Additional information on specific challenges are available in Wei's slides in the meeting materials.

Discussion Summary:

- A Council member asked the importance of the 1350 cfs streamflow. It was answered that this streamflow has historically been met and is similar to the 7Q10 for wastewater

assimilation.

- A Council member asked if there are legal requirements for flows going into Florida. Mark answered yes, there are flow minimums listed in the Army Corps of Engineers Water Control Manual.
- A Council member asked if Tallapoosa had any challenges. It was answered that BEAM modeling is still an on-going process for that watershed and the results are not ready yet.
- A Council member asked about the difference is between Forecast – ag constant and Forecast – ag growth. Mark answered that the ag constant scenario is based on existing moratorium policy (no increased impact on surface water flow), and ag growth scenario includes additional forecast growth in agriculture.
- A Council member asked what the definition of a drought is. Mark noted that the drought baseline scenario reflects pumping withdrawals during extreme drought. Wei added that the lack of rainfall starts a drought and as it lasts longer, the effects of it would be reflected in other hydrologic indicators (soil moisture, surface storage, and groundwater storage).
- A Council member asked if the Centralhatchee Creek withdrawal location for Heard County Water Authority is impacted by West Point Lake backwater effects. Wei answered that he does not believe that is the case.
- A Council member asked what the severity of extreme droughts are for West Point Lake. A council member answered that 14 feet below full pool results in near zero recreation and this creates horrible economic impacts.
- A Council member asked if there are examples from other Plans that fit into our region. It was answered that only challenges within the region were flagged for this model, but other locations can be modeled to see their percentage of time with challenges as well.

### **Small Group Discussion: Surface Water Availability Assessment**

The Council was split into two small groups to discuss the following topics after the presentation of the surface water availability assessment results. The discussions of the groups are presented in the “Full group discussion and report back” section of this summary.

- What are your primary takeaways from the water availability assessment?
  - What implications do they have for you?
- Are there any new issues not yet reflected in the recommendations?
  - Do the results mesh with the revised plan recommendations?

- What else do you want to know about water availability?
  - Are there other metrics that you would like to see?
- If you had sufficient funds, what water-related projects would you prioritize over the next 5 years?
- Discuss any unsettled committee items.

#### **Water Quantity Committee report on revised recommendations**

Harry Lange led the Water Quantity Committee report from their June 15<sup>th</sup> and July 26<sup>th</sup> meetings. He discussed the need for input from the Council on Management Practices IU-1 and IU-2 and whether these should be combined into one practice. The Council decided it was best to keep both management practices separate. He also discussed the newly added IU-3, to promote improvements in timing of flow releases in the Chattahoochee River. The language changes were noted for Recommendations to the State 2, 4, and 6. The group noted that the plan needed to emphasize that population projections used for future forecasting should be consistent with the previous 2017 plan which the Council believes more accurately reflects future conditions. The group also discussed that there needs to be a recommendation to study sediment storage and loss of conservation storage in IU-2 and mention the potential need for dredging.

#### **Water Quality Committee report on revised recommendations**

Ed Moon presented the Water Quality report. He shared with the council the recommendations on draft edits/updates made to the Management Practices and Recommendations to the State in Section 6 from the subcommittee meeting held on June 22, 2022.

A council member asked about the term Complaint versus Compliant used in the Forestry Commission. The term complaint is in the regional water plan, and it was confirmed that this was the correct term; however, edits will be made within the report for further clarification to the reference of the complaint response system used by the forestry commission. The council and team discussed the regulation authority of the forestry commission. Forestry is a large component of nonpoint source water quality. Discussion to recommend giving the local government the authority to regulate or have input of the erosion control in the forestry industry, and recommendation to help regulate and enforce erosion control policy. Discussed support for the forestry commission to regulate the erosion control. It was agreed that another Water Quality meeting will be scheduled and Bert Early from the Forestry Commission will be invited to the next water quality discussion.

### **Inter-Council Coordination Committee report on revised joint recommendations**

Patrick Bowie presented the ICC report. He shared with the council the recommendations on draft edits/updates made to the Inter-Council Coordination Recommendations to the State in Section 6 from the subcommittee meeting held on June 23, 2022. Members from Middle Chattahoochee, Lower Flint-Ochlockonee, and Upper Flint attended the meeting in June. JT-1 and JT-3 were unedited, and there was a slight modification to the JT-2 to include “continue to” improve upon existing resource assessment modeling. JT-4 was added which included language on water quality and supporting the improved utilization of BMPs from nonpoint sources.

The Team shared that the LFO committee has requested that JT-3 (interstate planning organization for the ACF system) be re-evaluated due to the term “management” within the recommendation. The MCH committee discussed the use of the term management within this recommendation. A follow-up ICC subcommittee meeting will be scheduled to discuss JT3.

### **Full group discussion and report back**

Courtney Cooper (GWPPC) led the full group discussion after the small groups met and covered topics that needed the full Council’s discussion and input.

First, Courtney’s group discussed how it would be beneficial to have more narratives or case studies that match the data in the Plan. Also, how they might consider adding places in the Plan to discuss economic impacts about droughts and water challenges. Specifically for water quality, they discussed non-point source pollutants as well as the Better Back Roads Program. She mentioned how they might consider supporting studies on Walter F. George flow and flows to support Shoal Bass in the vicinity of Harris County. A Seed Grant for additional storage at Lake Lanier and West Point was also discussed.

Second, Steve Simpson’s (B&V) group discussed concern about Heard County and challenges that a smaller water utility has in correcting challenges. Council members noted a need to reach out to these small communities to discuss interconnection. Steve mentioned they discussed stream buffers and incentivizing good behavior versus punitive measures to get results and education to farmers. They also discussed the Master Farmer Program from the SWCC and NRCS; there is a proposed program for farmers and producers to get certified in BMP knowledge. This would address education and outreach, and incentivize BMP implementation.

Lastly, Corinne Valentine’s (B&V) group discussed the difference between resilience and reliability for nodes in the BEAM model and reflected on the new modeling process.

After break-out groups reported back, Courtney asked the Council for their input on the population projections produced by Columbus State University for Muscogee County, in place of the projections used in the Plan. The Council decided that additional text should be written in the Plan to provide a supplemental population projection table in reference to the original

forecasts stated in the Plan. The group also questioned how 100-year versus 500-year conditions could be considered in modeling scenarios.

**Public Comment**

Chris Manganiello advised that Chattahoochee Riverkeeper organization is pleased to participate in the planning process and appreciates the Council's efforts.

**Next Steps in Plan Review and Revision**

Meagan Szydzik (GWPPC) informed the Council the next meeting will take place on December 1<sup>st</sup> where they will go over Sections 3 & 5 of the Plan. Section 3 covers the Current Resource Assessment results, while Section 5 covers the Future Resource Assessment results. Before the next Council meeting, the Water Quantity committee plans to meet two more times, while the Water Quality and Inter-Council Coordination committee will meet once more. Meagan reminded the members to watch for emails to come discussing the dates for these committee meetings.

**Adjourn**

Chairman Davis asked if there were any further questions regarding the material covered today and thanked everyone for attending today before adjourning.

**Council Members Attending August 23, 2022 Meeting**

Hannah Anderson*	Bill Heath*
John Asbell	Harry Lange
Victoria Barrett	Ed Moon
Patrick Bowie	Mac Moye
Steve Davis	Kenneth Van Horn
James Emery	
Jimmie Hayes	

**Other Attendees**

Mark Masters (GWPPC)  
Meagan Szydzik (GWPPC)  
Courtney Cooper (GWPPC)  
Steve Simpson (B&V)  
Corinne Valentine (B&V)  
Jake Dean (B&V)  
Wei Zeng (GAEPD)\*  
Jennifer Welte (GAEPD)  
Kelli-Ann Schrage (GAEPD)  
Chris Manganiello (Chattahoochee Riverkeeper)

*\*By videoconference*