

Memorandum

To: Altamaha Regional Water Planning Council

From: Danielle Honour and Rick Brown, CDM Smith

Date: June 21, 2017

*Subject: Altamaha Regional Water Planning Council Meeting 5
Regional Water Plan Review and Revision Process*

This memorandum provides the meeting summary of the Altamaha Regional Water Planning Council (Council) Meeting 5, held on June 8, 2017 at the Southeastern Technical College in Vidalia, GA. This memorandum provides a summary of the major items discussed at the Altamaha Council Meeting 5. The meeting began at 10:30 AM and followed the agenda.

1) Welcome and Introductions

Council Chairman Ed Jeffords opened the meeting, welcomed Council Members and guests, and asked each Council Member (CM) and attendee to introduce themselves. Chairman Jeffords also thanked the Council Members for their service and dedication to the water plan update process. Chairman Jeffords reminded Council Members that our work is not complete. It is important to continue to reach out to our citizens and implementing entities to ensure that they are aware of and utilize the water plan as a resource for their local planning efforts. Chairman Jeffords then turned the floor over to CDM Smith, the Planning Contractor (PC) to provide an outline of the topics that would be covered during the Council Meeting.

The PC welcomed Council and outlined the Meeting Agenda and asked for approval of the Council Meeting 4 Meeting Summary. Chairman Jeffords asked Council if they would approve one amendment to the agenda; an overview of a project that he and others are working to enhance education and tourism on the Altamaha River. Council approved the agenda as amended by consensus. CM Rex Bulloch moved to approve the Council Meeting 4 meeting summary, second by Mark Burns and approved unanimously by Council. The remainder of the meeting followed the agenda, and the key points and major discussion topics are summarized below.

2) Review of Public Comment and Overview of Draft Final Regional Water Plan

The PC began this agenda item by highlighting the major accomplishments completed by Council during the Regional Water Plan review and revision process. The PC noted some of the changes to the Water Demand Forecast and explained how the water demand changes impacted projected potential gaps in water quantity or water quality in the region.

Question/Comment: A CM stated that he recalled that the gaps have not changed significantly.

Response: The PC indicated that in general that is true. Overall, potential gaps changed in relative size but not location. The PC further clarified that some changes in the Water Quality Resource Assessment did change some of the conclusions from Round 1 Regional planning.

Question/Comment: Chairman Jeffords thanked Dr. Booth, Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD), for her support to the Council in refining areas that have been identified as impaired. He noted that in this region, we see several river reaches that under natural conditions may not meet certain criteria but they are not "impaired". This is important for people to understand because we need to understand that some of our rivers are lower flow and naturally lower in dissolved oxygen.

The PC continued the discussion with a reminder to Council that several Supplemental Materials are also being updated during this review and revision process. We have updated the Demand Forecast Technical Memorandum (TM) which Council has approved, and there will be an updated Gap TM that we will provide to Council in the next month or so.

3) Public Comments/Local Official Comments

The PC then focused the discussion on the changes made to the Regional Water Plan and overview of public comment period/process. It was noted that only one comment was provided on the Altamaha Plan and that comment came from the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District. The comment congratulated the Altamaha Council for completing the Altamaha Plan updated, thanked Council for providing the opportunity to provide comments on their water plan, and expressed the desire to continue dialogue and coordination on future planning and implementation strategies.

The PC continued the discussion highlighting that since there was no substantive public comments on the Water Plan, there was no need to make substantive changes to the draft plan. There were only minor editorial changes to the draft Regional Water Plan and those changes were sent to Council prior to this Council Meeting.

4) Council Vote for Adoption of the Regional Water Plan

The PC then asked Council if they had any further questions of comments prior to proceeding with a vote on the updated Regional Water Plan.

Question/Comment: A CM mentioned that in the time since he has grown up and been farming in the region, there have been some changes that has impacted his business. He noted that these changes have required farmers to meet new requirement and regulations. The CM expressed concern that the Regional Water Plan does not include any language regarding the rights of the landowner.

Response: Chairman Jeffords spoke up and agreed that the Regional Water Plan does not have explicit language about the land owner's rights, but he emphasized that Council has discussed the rights of the landowner and the need to manage, develop, and protect water resource for current and future generations. In addition, we have noted in our plan, and Council discussions, the need to support the basin's economy and the businesses and industries that rely on adequate water supplies. He indicated that he thought protecting land owners rights are implicit in our vision and goals for the region.

Question/Comment: The CM who made the previous comment said he understood and appreciated those comments but would like to have his comments on the rights of land owners reflected in the meeting minutes. He also suggested that the Council continue this discussion of landowner rights as we undertake next steps in the water planning process.

Question/Comment: Another CM also mentioned he would like to see this topic discussed in future discussions/meetings of the Council.

Response: The PC acknowledged this and asked the Council if they were comfortable incorporating the discussion in the meeting summary and moving forward with a vote on the water plan.

There was general agreement to move forward with a vote. Chairman Jeffords indicated that the water planning process has been a good one so far and has focused on making sure our voices are heard and that we need to be proactive in working with our neighboring Councils and the entire state.

EPD reinforced that it has been a good process. We recognize that you are most familiar with your regions resources and we value your perspective, input and leadership.

Vice Chair Stavriotis stated that he was pleased that there was not a significant number of comments during this round of planning, and that he believes it is testimony of how well the plans have been done. We have utilized an inclusive, open, transparent process that allows for input of the public and stakeholders at every meeting. Vice Chair Stavriotis stated that we have included the best data available and this fact lends credibility to the plan; he also noted that at the same time we know our plan is not perfect, and we need to continue our work to improve the plan as new data and information becomes available.

Question/Comment: A CM asked whether any regions received extensive comments.

Answer: EPD noted that the region with the most comments was the lower Flint.

Chairman Jeffords wrapped up the discussion noting that Council should also feel good about the value the regional planning process had added to discussion/litigation with neighboring states; I think our work in Georgia to understand our water needs and put in place sustainable water plans helps us in our interstate discussions. Chairman Jeffords stated if there were no further discussion he would entertain a motion.

CM Thomas moved adoption of the updated Regional Water Plan. The motion was seconded by CM Bulloch and Vice Chair Stavriotis. All Council Members present voted to approve the updated Regional Water Plan.

CM Thomas indicated that he had a conflict and needed to leave the meeting early and asked if he could address the Council. Mr. Thomas mentioned a book he had been reading entitled "Where the Water Goes-Life and Death Along the Colorado River" and suggested that Council Members might enjoy and learn from the book. He noted it is about the use and management of Colorado River water and that under the Prior Appropriation Doctrine, the water of the Colorado River has been highly developed and diverted for off stream uses. Mr. Thomas

encouraged Council to think about how valuable the Altamaha River is to the region, state, and it is a unique resource of the world. We can take some lessons from the book because it is important to make sure we are good stewards of the Altamaha, especially going forward as we face future growth in and around the state, and demands for water. The book reinforced how important our management practices are and that we need to be proactive to manage our resource in a way that meets human and ecological needs and pays tribute to our history. Mr. Thomas noted that the Altamaha drains about ¼ of the state and in some areas has an 8 mile wide flood and riparian zone. We have about 130 miles of an amazing resource that is unique to the United States and the world. If we are smart to recognize some of the ecological values, such as bird watching and instream uses, this could be a draw and bring visitors and associated economic activity to the region. This could help provide economic benefit for the region via off stream and instream uses and make sure the resource is protected for future generations.

Chairman Jeffords noted that Council Member Thomas' comments were in-line with the discussion that he wanted to share regarding the "Heritage Program" that he and others have been working with on with support from the Carl Vinson Institute. Chairman Jeffords shared his support of the comments made by Mr. Thomas and indicated that the Altamaha River is key to the way of life of many people that rely on it for water supply and for its ecological benefits and that the "Heritage Project" has many potential benefits including education, public access, and economic activity. For more information, he encouraged Council to go to the web to learn more at: <http://connectinwayne.com/pdf/Jaycee-Landing-Strategic-Vision.pdf>

5) Clean Water Act, Section 319(h) Grant Update

The PC asked Rahn Milligan, Pine Country Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) for an update on the Council's 319(h) project. Mr. Milligan provided a short geographic overview of the project location noting that he has also been coordinating with the Upper Oconee Council for areas north of the Altamaha Council. Mr. Milligan indicated that he has formed the advisory committee and selected multiple sampling locations to better delineated potential sources of sediment and fecal coliform. He anticipates having a draft plan completed by March 2018 and a final plan by June 2018.

6) Next Steps/Wrap Up

The PC noted that Ms. Christine Voudy, with Georgia EPD will provide Council with an overview of the next steps in the water planning process. Ms. Voudy began her remarks by thanking Council for all their hard work and indicated that EPD will be providing continued support to the Council during the interim period between now and the next 5 year update. Ms. Voudy noted that EPD is still working on some of the more specific details but the current thinking is to support Council in the following ways:

- Work with Council to schedule the next meeting, probably the July/August timeframe and provide contractor support of Council meetings.
- Provide ongoing contractor support to develop education materials such as PowerPoint presentations, fact sheets, and other information summaries such as brochures.

- Provide the above material and support Council in helping engage and communicate with implementation entities and the public.
- Provide opportunities for Joint Council coordination.
- Provide the opportunity for additional subcommittee meetings to look more closely at specific topics of interest similar to the surface and groundwater subcommittees that were held earlier this year.
- Work with the Chair to facilitate reappointment of new Council Members while maintaining some of the existing members and expertise.

Question/Comment: A CM noted he supports ongoing funding to continue to improve Resource Assessments and voiced support for the existing planning contractor to stay involved.

Question/Comment: Mr. Brett Manning, Heart of Georgia Regional Commission mentioned that Council may benefit from visiting their website and scanning several Region River Corridor/Resource plans which can be viewed at <http://www.hogarc.org/publications.html>

The meeting ended with a short expression of thanks to the Council from Danielle Honour and Rick Brown, CDM Smith, Planning Contractors.

7) Meeting Attendance

Altamaha Regional Water Planning Council members in attendance:

- Ed Jefford, Paul Stavriotis, Rex Bullock, Mark Burns, Gerald DeWitt, Cleve Edenfield, John Roller, Lindsey Thomas,

Georgia EPD Representative in attendance:

- Christine Vouidy

Regional Water Planning Council contractors in attendance:

- Danielle Honour, Rick Brown, and Brennan Schneider (CDM Smith)

Public/Agency attendees:

- Brett Manning, Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission
- Rahn Milligan, Pine Country RC&D
- Byron Feimster, Georgia Power
- Ebony Simpson, Department of Community Affairs (DCA)
- Tim Smith, UGA Extension
- Furman Peebles, Public