

## Memorandum

*To: Coastal Georgia Regional Water Planning Council*

*From: Shayne Wood and Rick Brown, CDM Smith*

*Date: June 12, 2017*

*Subject: Coastal Georgia Regional Water Planning Council Meeting 5  
Regional Water Plan Review and Revision Process  
Meeting Summary*

This memorandum provides the meeting summary of the Coastal Georgia Regional Water Planning Council (Council) Meeting 5, held on June 6, 2017 at the Richmond Hill City Center in Richmond Hill, GA. This memorandum provides a summary of the major items discussed at the Coastal Georgia Council Meeting 5. The meeting began at 1:30 PM and followed the Council Meeting 5 Agenda.

### **1) Welcome and Introductions**

Council Chairman Benjy Thompson opened the meeting, welcomed Council Members and Guests, and asked each Council Member (CM) and attendee to introduce themselves. CDM Smith, the Planning Contractor (PC) provided an outline of the topics that would be covered during the Council Meeting. The Council approved the Council Meeting 4 Meeting Summary (motion by Jim Vaughn, second by John Godbee) and the Meeting Agenda by consensus.

### **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, including the impact of the Red and Yellow Zone Groundwater Permit Limit Reductions. The PC reminded Council that two important Supplemental Materials to the Regional Plan are also being updated. The Demand Technical Memorandum that was previously approved by Council has been updated, and the Gap Technical Memorandum will be updated and sent to Council within the next month or so.

The PC explained that there were very few public comments on Regional Water Plans statewide and no comments were received on the Coastal Georgia Regional Water Plan update.

Question/Comment: A CM mentioned that he was not surprised that there were not many public comments because the planning process had provided opportunity for input from the public and stakeholders at each meeting and during key milestones including subcommittee meetings.

Question/Comment: Jeff Larson, Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) shared with the Council that he sees the minimal comments as an endorsement of the planning process and the manner in which the Council has conducted its business. Mr. Larson thanked the Council for creating a professional and interactive environment.

### **3) Public Comments/Local Official Comments**

There were no public or local official comments.

### **4) Council Vote for Adoption of the Regional Water Plan**

The PC asked if there were any additional comments or question prior to entertaining a motion for approval of the updated Water Plan. There were no additional questions or comments and Chairman Thompson asked for a motion. John Godbee moved approval of the Regional Water Plan update; second by Jim Vaughn and approved unanimously by all Council Members present.

Question/Comment: A CM asked what the timeline is going to be for distribution of the water plan.

Answer: First, Georgia EPD will do a final review of the plans and will very likely approve the Plan as submitted. The Plan will then be published to the EPD website. Also, as we will discuss in more detail during next steps, EPD will provide support to Council in completing some outreach to inform the public and implementation entities of the availability of the updated Plan.

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

Chairman Thompson provided the update on the Clean Water Act 319(h) grant process. Chairman Thompson explained that the applicant was not able to meet the submission deadline, but that at the end of the day this is not necessarily a problem because it will provide more time to select the right project and put together the best approach.

### **6) Next Steps/Wrap Up**

Jeff Larson, Georgia EPD led the discussion of next steps in the planning process. Mr. Larson began by thanking Council on behalf of Director Richard Dunn. He expressed his deep appreciation to Council for all their hard work in Round 1 of the planning process, and for their dedication to the review and revision process for the Plan update.

Mr. Larson noted that the Coastal Council has had to grapple with some major challenges and that the Council has done a very good job creating a detailed water plan. He went on to emphasize that more work is needed to help support implementation of some key management practices, and indicated that EPD will be providing continued support to the Council during the interim period between now and the next 5-year update. He 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 in the September timeframe, and place more emphasis on implementing the Regional Water Plan. In the near term, we will work with the Chair to schedule the next meeting and work both internally and

with Council to better define what our expectation should be around “plan implementation.”

- One aspect of implementation will be ongoing planning contractor support for Council meetings and development of educational materials such as PPT presentations, fact sheets, and other information summaries such as brochures. These tools can then be used by Council to conduct outreach and education to the public and key implementing entities.

Question/Comment: A CM noted that she would like to see the planning effort by the Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission of Chatham County (MPC) better coordinated with the Regional Water Planning process. It was noted that much of the MPC’s work appears to be redundant of the Regional Water Plan and it does not appear to be an efficient or cost-effective process.

- Mr. Larson agreed and continued the discussion of next steps, highlighting that EPD liked the groundwater and surface water subcommittee process and explained that they would support future efforts if the Council wanted to participate in these or similar subcommittee processes. He also provided insight into several important ongoing activities that will likely need to be addressed in future planning, including: completion of key elements of the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project; completion of the South Carolina statewide water planning process; implementation of the first phase of groundwater permit limit reductions; and completion of many elements of the Savannah River Basin Compressive Study (Phase 2).
- Mr. Larson completed his comments by noting that EPD will be work with the Chairs across the state to facilitate reappointment of new Council Members while maintaining some of the existing members and expertise.

Question/Comment: A CM asked how discussions are going with South Carolina and Florida.

Answer: Overall discussions are not as intensive as in the past, but Georgia is continuing to work with both states. Clearly, with the litigation still not fully resolved, things are most involved in the Flint Basin.

Question/Comment: A CM asked if there were any updates on the Tybee Island deep well. Will it need to be abandoned?

Answer: The options are still being evaluated. There may be some options to rehabilitate the well, but we do not know for sure what the best options are at this time.

Question/Comment: A CM expressed that he supports a focus on plan implementation, but cautioned that it is important that implementing entities do not perceive this as a threat, and suggested that we need to be supportive of local efforts.

Question/Comment: Another CM agreed and indicated that in his opinion, continuing to build relationships with local leaders to garner support for sustainable and politically sound initiatives will be vital to the region. The CM mentioned the potential value that wastewater

reclamation could play in meeting future needs. Several CMs spoke up, citing success of reuse efforts via grants, but it was also noted that more work is needed to address public education and perceptions.

Question/Comment: A CM reminded the Council of the important role that military bases play in the region's economy. He explained that we need to work at the state level to positively impact discussions related to Defense Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) to avoid negative impacts to the region.

Question/Comment: Several CMs voiced their support and appreciation of the planning process, noting the importance of having a scientifically sound and high quality presentation of data and information. It was recommended that the PC and EPD work with Council to develop easy to understand and compelling brochures, and provide Council with a consistent message platform (i.e., elevator speech material); as well as more detailed information but tailored for the public, local governments, and business/industry.

Question/Comment: The PC and EPD agreed and asked Council to also help us know where to focus and to help us identify some key people to specifically outreach to.

Question/Comment: A CM asked that EPD please make Council reappointments a priority and to make sure that folks who are appointed attend the meetings. I also think that the lack of reappointments sent a mixed message about the importance of planning.

Answer: EPD agreed and will be working with the Chair to make this a priority.

Question/Comment: CM Phil Odom shared an award that Council received from the One Hundred Mile organization. The Council received a lithograph thanking us for our work to make the Coastal area a great place by providing a plan that helps address human and ecological needs.

Chairman Thompson concluded the meeting by thanking Jeff Larson with EPD and the Planning Contractors for the support to Council.

Shayne Wood and Rick Brown thanked the Council for their professionalism, dedication, leadership and commitment to the region.

## **7) Meeting Attendance**

Coastal Georgia Regional Water Planning Council members in attendance:

- Benjy Thompson, Michelle Liotta, Mark Smith, Phil Odom, Tom Edenfield, Randal Morris, Pete Peterson, John Sawyer, John Godbee, and James Thomas

Georgia EPD Representative in attendance:

- Jeff Larson

Regional Water Planning Council contractors in attendance:

- Shayne Wood and Rick Brown(CDM Smith)

Public/Agency attendees:

- Beth Stevenson (GA DNR – EPD Coastal District)
- Nancy M. Bobbit (Regional Director for Senator Johnny Isakson)
- Ebony Simpson (Georgia Department of Community Affairs)
- Matt Gignilliat (Georgia Power Company)