

Memorandum

To: Coastal Georgia Regional Water Planning Council

From: Rick Brown, CDM Smith

Date: December 22, 2016

*Subject: Coastal Georgia Regional Water Planning Council Meeting 3
Regional Water Plan Review and Revision Process*

This memorandum provides the meeting summary of the Coastal Georgia Regional Water Planning (RWP) Council Meeting 3, held on November 17, 2016 at the Oconee Fall Line Technical College (Dubose Porter Center) in Dublin, GA. A Joint Council Meeting was held for the six eastern RWP Councils (Altamaha, Coastal Georgia, Middle Ocmulgee, Suwannee-Satilla, Savannah- Upper Ogeechee and Upper Oconee) from 10 AM to 4 PM. The Coastal Georgia RWP Council held an individual council meeting during the afternoon portion of the joint meeting. This memorandum provides a summary of the items discussed at the individual Coastal Georgia RWP Council meeting that was held from approximately 1:15 PM to 2:40 PM.

1) Debrief with Council Members regarding information discussed during the Joint Meeting

CDM Smith, the Planning Contractor (PC) opened up the meeting and provided an outline of the topics that would be covered during the individual Council Meeting. The remainder of the meeting followed the agenda, and the key points and major discussion topics are summarized below.

The PC asked if the Council Members had any additional questions or comments from the morning portion of the joint session. There were no questions. The PC continued the meeting outlining the following topics: a high level summary of select forecast information; a summary of surface and groundwater resource assessment information; a preliminary approach to shared resource analysis and potential gaps; and an initial review of management practices based on updated forecasts, resource assessments and regional vision and goals.

A brief overview of the demand forecast results was provided highlighting select population growth, municipal and industrial water and wastewater demand, and the Counties with the highest forecasted changes.

Question/Comment: A Council member (CM) asked about where the demographic information came from and whether the population projections have been compared to population projections that are being used by local planning entities.

Response: The population projections come from the Georgia Office of Planning and Budget. This data is used so that we have comparable data from all regions and counties within the state.

Question/Comment: A CM stated that he generally agreed with the conclusion that we will see slower growth than projected in the 2011 Regional Water Plan, but was surprised that we have not seen more of a rebound in growth coming out of the recession.

The PC asked if there was overall agreement that the PC proceed with finalizing the Technical Memorandum for the Water and Wastewater forecasts and then make that document available to Council members for their review. The Council members present supported the outlined approach.

The PC then presented a list of the planning nodes with potential surface water quantity gaps, the Counties within the region affected by the gap and other Planning Councils who share the resource. The PC also pointed out that the planning nodes with potential surface water gaps are associated with agricultural surface water use in the region. The PC indicated that it may be beneficial to form a “shared resources” subcommittee to review more detailed information about the potential gaps and to include members from other Councils as well as some non-Council members (i.e., implementation actors). This subcommittee could also provide some additional insights regarding potential management practices.

Question/Comment: A CM expressed concerned that the Council has a lot on are plate and really needed to look at salt water intrusion and focus on revising the plan. He wondered what type of participation there would be for a surface water subcommittee, and wanted to avoid the Council spreading itself too thin.

Question/Comment: Chairman Thompson responded and shared his concern that Council needs to be sure we have good participation and that we keep the Councils’ work focused. He went on to mention that Council does not have a lot of agricultural participation and it would potentially be beneficial to get some help looking at this topic from some of the neighboring Councils. Overall a focused subcommittee could be beneficial.

Question/Comment: There PC mentioned that if it is acceptable to Council, he would develop the idea in a little more detail and identify some participants. Council members present indicated general support to proceed with developing more information.

The PC proceeded with an overview and history of saltwater intrusion and the major changes to groundwater management in the region that have occurred following completion of the 2011 Regional Water Plan. The PC indicated that the Floridan Aquifer Moratorium on future withdrawals and the Floridan Aquifer groundwater withdrawal permit reduction process have changed our original assumptions on the availability of this resource to meet some of the region’s future water needs. The PC showed some preliminary graphics showing the updated forecasts in relation to the permit limits for the red and yellow zones. It was emphasized that a major challenge for Council is to develop regional information while respecting local planning and individual permits. It was also noted that for any new water demands (that are not

associated with existing permit limits), there is essentially a gap today, if the water demand would rely on the Floridan Aquifer.

Council members agreed that this is one of the biggest challenges facing the region and generally supported forming a subcommittee to help Council incorporate the new information and begin relooking at management practices.

The PC explained that the presentation contains an overview of the surface water quality/assimilative capacity resource assessment, but unless Council wanted to discuss anything specific, the following are the key take home messages contained in the slides.

The PC explained that the assimilative capacity for individual reaches appears to be improving under the future condition but this is also based on the assumptions made by EPD which include more stringent permit limits for wastewater discharges. The results of nutrient loading (nitrogen and phosphorus) for wet and dry years provide some insights on potential sources with areas of higher loadings in wet years being potentially indicative of nonpoint source pollution associated with stormwater runoff. Lastly, the PC summarized the results for estuaries and discussed the limited assimilative capacity in the lower reaches of the St. Marys River and Sound. It was noted that the results from the St. Marys Sound are a little hard to understand given the predominately undeveloped areas upstream of the Sound and the PC noted he would follow up with EPD on this topic.

The PC then briefly discussed management practices and pointed out that the Council will revisit and refine (where necessary) the management practices presented in the 2011 Regional Water Plan (a handout of the table containing management practices and overall summary from the 2011 Regional Water Plan was also distributed to Council Members). The PC reminded the Council that there were over 80 management practices identified in the original plan.

2) Council Meeting Business

The Council then conducted Council Meeting business, which included:

- 319 (h) grant update, noting that the grant scope of work for the 9 Element Watershed Management Plan for Black Creek has been approved and the contract is being routed for signature.
- It was noted that both Georgia Southern and the City of Savannah are interested in pursuing different Regional Water Planning seed grants for non-point source projects. Georgia Southern is interested in an Ogeechee River Sediment Study to determine how the sediments may be affecting water quality. The City of Savannah is interested in a Wilshire Canal Sediment study. Chairman Thompson felt that both ideas appeared to have merit and indicated, if there were no objections, he would offer Council support and leave it to EPD to select the best project(s); Council members present agreed.
- Approve meeting summary from June 23, 2016 Council Meeting. This topic was not directly discussed as it appeared that it would be best to seek approval for this summary via email correspondence with Council.

- New business – none identified

3) Meeting Attendance

Coastal Georgia Regional Water Planning Council members in attendance:

- Benjy Thompson, Michelle Liotta, Mark Smith, and Phil Odom

Georgia EPD Representative in attendance:

- Jeff Larson

Regional Water Planning Council contractors in attendance:

- Rick Brown (CDM Smith)

Public/Agency attendees:

- Megan Smith, SNF Floquip