

Memorandum

To: Coastal Georgia Regional Water Planning Council

From: Shayne Wood and Jenny Bywater, CDM Smith

Date: May 2, 2018

*Subject: Coastal Georgia Regional Water Planning Council Meeting 6
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 6, held on April 18, 2018 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 6. The meeting began at 10:30 AM and followed the Council Meeting 6 Agenda, except that the order of the guest presentations after lunch were switched.

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 Meeting Agenda and the Council Meeting 5 Meeting Summary.

2) Review of Regional Water Plan Outreach Materials

The PC explained that, in addition to the one-page fact sheet that had previously been distributed to the Council, an outreach presentation had been developed overviewing the Regional Water Planning process and highlighting the recent updates that were made to the plan in 2017, which was finalized in June of 2017 and formally adopted by EPD in July 2017. The purpose of the outreach materials is to support council members who may present information on the regional water plan to interested stakeholders, thereby raising awareness and helping to bridge the work of the council with the implementing actors who will help with implementing the recommendations of the updated regional water plan. The PC walked through the outreach presentation and noted that it could be tailored based on a specific audience or event that a council member may be presenting to. The PC noted they are available to assist council members with making edits to the presentation as necessary to accommodate future speaking engagements. The idea was to develop a longer presentation knowing it would be easier to cut material based on the time available and interest of the audience. Talking points are also included along with each slide to aid the presenter. The factsheet can augment these presentations by providing a summary of the regional water plan and can be used as a leave-behind for interested stakeholders and implementing actors.

Question/Comment: The Council Chairman asked generally what some opportunities for outreach are and the PC answered that council members would hopefully know where the best forums are to present. The PC stated his team could also be available to refine the outreach material for specific events and help with logistics and assist with presenting the materials as opportunities become available.

Question/Comment: A CM noted that part of outreach is getting the word out to the general public, but this is hard material to present to the general public. Not everyone is connected to water issues and there is a need to be able to make a strong case for why people should care.

Question/Comment: A CM asked that if they have two minutes with a county commissioner, what would be the quick pitch? While we call it a 'plan', he sees it more as an 'assessment'. What implementation are we trying to drive?

Question/Comment: A CM noted that there are so many things mandated to local governments. Is there information we feel like all counties should be receiving? Could there be mandated goals where the county commissioners then determine implementation? If we don't get information or goals to commissioners, then implementation may be limited.

Answer: It was noted that as permits get renewed, language is being added that permittees must be in compliance with the regional water plans. Grant funding is also being used as an incentive. An applicant's grant application gets much higher consideration based on how strongly aligned the objectives are with advancing plan implementation.

Question/Comment: Could there be a course developed on the State Water Plan for the Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) conference? This would provide an opportunity for a larger group of elected officials to hear about the material and then take it back to their communities. There's also classes for newly elected officials and this could be an opportunity to present material with a regional focus.

Question/Comment: What is it we want the elected officials to do? We do not want this to become regulatory. A one-size fits all will not work. If a community has water available and the permits they need, and no threat of fines, it's not going to be as important to them.

Question/Comment: The goal is to inform and not necessarily force implementation. There is a need to show how local water decisions can be affected by regional issues.

Answer: The Council Chairman suggested a small group of council members get together and strategize on who needs to see the findings that came out of the plan update. The discussion has been focused on elected officials, but should also consider permit holders, other groups such as Rotary clubs, and the general public. The PC noted that the hardest part of the planning process is outreach and implementation. It is important to be persistent and continually look for opportunities for continued outreach to help increase awareness and facilitate implementation.

3) Council Member Survey Results

The Planning Contractor teams reached out to the councils via a survey and interviews with the 10 council chairs to inform the development of recommended improvements to the planning

process for EPD. A total of 91 surveys were returned, which was a 36% response rate. The PC walked through the results of the individual survey questions. Common themes heard from the CMs are building connections with those in the region that can implement the plan and increasing public awareness. The summary slides will be posted with the meeting summary and shared with the council members.

4) EPD Seed Grant Opportunity Review and Timelines

The PC noted that they are planning to incorporate Grant/Funding opportunities as a recurring agenda item, to keep any required planning and logistics for grant/funding opportunities on the council forefront. PC passed out handouts summarizing Georgia Water and Wastewater Funding Sources as well as a list of local projects with GEFA funding. The PC can help coordinate grant development by setting up meetings/conference calls with interested parties and EPD.

Question/Comment: A CM noted that the timeline for each grant source can be different and managing timelines can become difficult when coordinating with multiple partners.

5) Chatham County – Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) Dec. 2017 Red Zone Water Supply Management Plan

A team from Chatham County – Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) Red Zone Water Supply Management Plan Task Force, including representatives from the Ecological Planning Group, presented on the recently finalized Red Zone Water Supply Management Plan. The presentation overviewed the planning process and highlighted some of the key findings. Between 2004 and 2015, Chatham County was able to reduce Floridan groundwater usage by almost 11 MGD and move the per capita usage from 135.5 gallons per capita per day to 97.2 gpcd. The plan is aiming for another 10 MGD in net reductions within the Red Zone by 2025, even factoring in population growth. The PC will share the final plan and the presentation with the council.

Question/Comment: A CM asked how the per capita usage was being calculated and if industrial usage was being included?

Answer: The gpcd is based on the municipal permits but there will be some commercial and industrial usage within those totals. The updated gpcd values are a reflection of successful implementation of conservation over time, including the effects of the new plumbing codes, metering, land use, and outreach on conservation that have all contributed to bringing down the per capita values.

Question/Comment: The Council Chairman noted that for the Coastal Regional Water Plan, Savannah per capita numbers were utilized. If the gpcd estimate is lowered by 40%, then in future updates this could impact overall forecasts and the regional water plan recommendations significantly. The council may need to consider different values per county during the next update, rather than the current values which are regionally based.

Answer: The value of 97 gpcd for Chatham County is the lowest in the region and is a result of efficiency improvements being made through continued active and passive conservation coupled with management practices being implemented as a result of the Red Zone management plan coming online.

Question/Comment: The Council Chairman wanted to make sure the methodology used by the MPC will be compared to the methodology used in developing the regional water plan to be sure the two methodologies are consistent, and if the methodologies are not consistent, efforts are made to understand what may be contributing to the differences.

The PC noted they would follow-up on that request, review the data and methodologies and report back to the council.

6) Seed Grant Project: Integrating UGA Extension with Altamaha, Coastal Georgia and Suwanee-Satilla Regional Water Plans

Dr. Gary Hawkins, participating via teleconference, from the University of Georgia Crop and Soil Science Department gave an overview of the management practices that his team are planning to address with the awarded seed grant. The project is putting monitoring equipment on farms with different agricultural practices to analyze the water and sediment coming off of the sites. Of specific interest is comparing farms utilizing conservation tillage and cover crops to reduce soil erosion versus farms that utilize more conventional methods. The team is also currently looking for an urban site to measure stormwater runoff volume and nutrients in the runoff. The grant will also be utilized to train County Extension agents on well water issues and protection of aquifer recharge areas.

Question/Comment: A CM noted that he had an idea for a potential urban monitoring location and Dr. Hawkins responded that he will coordinate with the CM to see if that site is feasible.

7) EPD Permitting Activity Updates and Legislative Update

A permitting update was provided by EPD liaison Reid Jackson on water withdrawal permitting between January 2016 and now. No new or expanded withdrawals from surface water were issued during that period. The following summary points on updates to groundwater municipal and industrial withdrawal permits were reviewed:

- EPD issued a modified groundwater withdrawal permit that merged the withdrawal permits for Glynn County and the City of Brunswick into a single permit for their Floridan aquifer withdrawals. The modified permit resulted in no increase in withdrawals, and it was issued to the Brunswick-Glynn Joint Water & Sewer Commission.
- The City of Ludowici in Long County was previously permitted to withdrawal 0.6 MGD (monthly average) of groundwater from the Miocene aquifer, but they had some concerns about the production rates they were achieving from that aquifer. EPD worked with the City and issued them a modified permit that cuts the withdrawal from the Miocene back to 0.3 MGD (monthly avg), and we also issued them a new withdrawal permit for a 0.3 MGD (monthly avg) withdrawal from the Floridan aquifer.
- EPD has completed the process of modifying all Floridan aquifer groundwater withdrawal permits in the Red and Yellow zones, and those permit modifications incorporate the applicable permit limit reductions in those zones: in the Yellow Zone, they reflect reductions through 2025, and in the Red Zone, they reflect the required

reductions through 2020 and 2025. All of those modified permits were effective through 2027.

- Since last fall, EPD has also issued two new groundwater withdrawal permits to communities in the Yellow Zone for increased withdrawals from the Floridan aquifer outside of the Yellow Zone. In both of those instances, the draft withdrawal permits were subject to EPD's standard public notice procedures and the communities in the Yellow Zone had to reach some type of intergovernmental agreement with their neighboring jurisdiction to enable what might be needed to support the infrastructure or other aspects of those withdrawals.
 - In October 2017, EPD issued the City of Riceboro (in Liberty County) a new groundwater withdrawal permit for an additional Floridan aquifer well located in McIntosh County. That new groundwater withdrawal permit allows an additional 1.10 MGD (monthly avg) to be withdrawn from the Floridan aquifer to support a large industry in Riceboro (SNF Holding Company).
 - In March 2018, EPD issued the City of Pembroke (in Bryan County) a new groundwater withdrawal permit for an additional Floridan aquifer well located in Bulloch County. That new groundwater withdrawal permit allows an additional 0.25 MGD (monthly avg) to be withdrawn from the Floridan aquifer.

Cliff Lewis then provided a legislative update on Senate Bill 451. The bill passed and codified that agricultural metering will remain under the responsibility of EPD. The state has provided \$20 million to fund a five-year plan to install and repair meters within priority surface water basins. EPD will implement the program by subcontracting that work out.

Question/Comment: A CM asked for more background on the logic behind some of the bill's components and how it ultimately came together from the original draft.

Answer: There was a limited amount of time for discussion on the bill during the legislative session, so that may have affected the various components of the bill. The vision is that eventually the metering responsibility will be on the permittees similar to municipal and industrial users.

8) Public Comments/Local Official Comments

There was a public comment that emphasized the importance of looking at the aquifer demands across the full aquifer, not just the coastal region, as there are demands in nearby counties that are not part of the Coastal Region. The PC noted that the groundwater resource assessments are completed over the full domain of the aquifer and the regional plans do recommend coordination between neighboring councils that share resources.

9) Wrap Up and Next Steps

The PC noted that there is funding to coordinate joint council meetings if there are items of shared interest. The Savannah-Upper Ogeechee council is interested in pursuing this, particularly with regard to the Coastal Council and the Savannah River Basin that connects the two councils.

The PC also reminded members to consider opportunities for knowledge sharing, grant applications or if they have ideas for future speakers or topics which may be of interest to the council. The next council meeting will likely be planned for the late summer or early fall.

7) Meeting Attendance

Coastal Georgia Regional Water Planning Council members in attendance:

- Benjy Thompson, Michelle Liotta, Mark Smith, Phil Odom, Pete Peterson, John Sawyer, John Godbee, Michael Browning, Reginald Loper and Jim Vaughn.

Georgia EPD Representatives in attendance:

- Reid Jackson, Jennifer Welte, Cliff Lewis, Cate Williams, Bruce Foisy

Regional Water Planning Council contractors in attendance:

- Shayne Wood and Jenny Bywater (CDM Smith)

Public/Agency attendees:

- Damon Mullis (Phinizy Center for Water Sciences)
- Josh Hildebrandt (Coastal Region Manager for the Georgia Secretary of State)
- Jay Foskey (GA Forestry Commission)
- Ben Cantrell (Effingham County UGA Agricultural Extension Agent)
- Deatre Denion (GA DCA)
- Joel Fleming (DA DNR WRD Fisheries)
- Courtney Reich (Ecological Planning Group)
- Ron Feldner (Garden City)
- Rob Brown (Ecological Planning Group)
- Jen Hilburn (Altamaha Riverkeeper)
- Jackie Jackson (Garden City)
- Susan Inman (Brunswick)