

Memorandum

To: Middle Ocmulgee Regional Water Planning Council

*From: Veronica Crow, Georgia Environmental Protection Division
Laura Hartt, Jacobs*

Date: December 6, 2017

*Subject: Council Meeting 7 Summary (November 13, 2017)
Middle Ocmulgee Regional Council*

This memorandum provides the meeting summary of the Middle Ocmulgee (MOC) Regional Water Planning Council Meeting 7, held on November 13, 2017 in Central Georgia Technical College, Macon from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

1. Welcome and Introductions/Approve Agenda

Council Chair Elmo Richardson called the meeting to order. Chair Richardson asked for and received a motion and a second to approve the minutes from the previous Council meeting as well as the current meeting agenda. Council approved both. Jennifer Welte (EPD) introduced Veronica Crow as the new EPD liaison to the Council as well as the point person for Council inquiries regarding funding to support plan implementation.

2. Council Outreach Products and Implementation Efforts

Laura Hartt (Jacobs) presented a brief overview of the outreach materials that would be available to the Council, including a MOC fact sheet and draft PowerPoint presentation. Ms. Welte (EPD) discussed the survey to which Councilmembers had responded as well as the one-on-one interviews conducted with Council Chairs. Chair Richardson commented that he had participated in an interview and had emphasized that the biggest shortcoming of plan implementation was the lack of education and awareness among local governments and utilities. Ms. Hartt (Jacobs) replied they were available to assist with Council communication and outreach needs.

3. Alternative Flow Regimes Pilot Study

Dr. Gail Cowie (EPD) provided an introduction to an EPD pilot study designed to characterize Middle Ocmulgee instream flow needs in terms of the services, benefits, and values of importance to the Council and to stakeholders in the region. She explained that the purpose of this portion of the meeting was to provide some information on similar studies and then get input from Council members on the services, benefits and values of importance in the Middle Ocmulgee River Basin.

Councilmember Tom McMichael questioned if ground water inflows were taken into account, to which Dr. Cowie (EPD) replied that they would not be at this time. Chair Richardson asked if more monitoring stations were needed for the study, pointing out that currently there was only one in the north and another one in the south. Dr. Cowie (EPD) replied that it would be good to have more as it would help refine the data further. Dr. Wei Zeng (EPD) noted that new USGS gages were installed in 2009 and would monitor and collect more data over time.

Dr. Zeng then discussed the methodology for assessing instream flows, including calculation of unimpaired flows and current and future water demands. Dr. Zeng added that desirable flow regimes could be determined in one or more of three ways by: (1) appropriate experts, (2) regulatory constraints (e.g., FERC licensing or ESA requirements), or (3) the Council and other stakeholders based on those services, benefits, and values identified as important.

Dr. Bill Tollner's (University of Georgia) presentation "Water Management and Habitat Suitability Study along the Ocmulgee River" outlined efforts to identify recreational flows sufficient to support desirable boat landing sites along the Ocmulgee Water Trail as well as environmental flows to support fish and wildlife in the Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve. Dr. Tollner also briefly described interactions between UGA researchers and stakeholders that lead to the research project.

Following Dr. Tollner's presentation, Chair Richardson noted that many changes have occurred throughout the basin since the early 20th century, including significant morphological changes in the Ocmulgee River south of Macon towards Hawkinsville. Councilmember Tony Rojas noted that flushing and flooding were contributing factors. Councilmember Rojas asked if 400 cfs was a common flow rate for rivers. Dr. Tollner responded that 400 cfs was used because it represented 7Q10 flows consistent with the state's interim instream flow policy.

Dr. Ken Watson (HSW Engineering, Inc.) presentation "Flow Regime Development Examples" outlined efforts to identify environmental flows in the lower Suwanee River sufficient to provide instream and floodplain habitat for select protected, rare, and other fish species of interest.

4. Questions and Discussion regarding the MOC Pilot Flow Regime Study

Ms. Hartt (Jacobs) facilitated the Council's discussion of services, benefits and values of importance in the Middle Ocmulgee River Basin, which included:

- Wastewater assimilation/dissolved oxygen
- Maintain good flow regime to have dissolved oxygen for habitat.
- Recognize that the characteristics of the river change as you go from upstream to downstream. From an environmental standpoint, there is a need to look at three different flow regimes for these three different reaches:
 - Newton County to Lake Jackson has one set of characteristics
 - Lake Jackson to Macon is a second type of stream
 - Macon to Pulaski County is a third type of stream
- Water supply

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- Recreational and economic benefits from different kinds of boating
 - Floating/tubing. Monroe County around Hwy 18 is a popular spot and local merchants benefit
 - Include put-in and take-out locations – water trails
 - Kayaking place below Lake Jackson Dam
 - Vendors and outfitters (e.g., outfitter in Juliette)
- Waterfowl and other hunting
- Shoreline recreation: Hiking, biking trails, proposed National Park
- Proposal to expand Ocmulgee Mounds to the greenway. What flows are needed to protect that resources?
- Hydropower generation
 - Jackson is a small hydro-electric facility and operates for peak-shaving if the water is available.
- Thermoelectric. Water from the Ocmulgee cools Plant Scherer
- Wetland habitat and function
 - The swamp in the area of the Ocmulgee Mounds National Monument below Macon, for example.
- Rare and protected species in the Ocmulgee basin
- Downstream needs: communities, effects on the Altamaha and the estuary
- Upstream effects: from the Ocmulgee and Oconee

The discussion also identified the relevant stakeholders and experts necessary to help determine what flows are needed to support the above services, benefits and values, which included:

- Utilities/treatment plants
- Municipal consultants/engineers
- Lake Jackson HOA
- Bass clubs
- Canoers, kayakers
- Federal agencies: National Park Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- State agencies: GA Forestry Commission, GA Department of Natural Resources (Wildlife Resources Division, EPD, etc.)
- GA Farm Bureau
- Land trusts
- Riverkeepers
- Academia

Dr. Zeng (EPD) noted that more specific information regarding which locations within the Basin supported the desired services, benefits, and values would help refine the pilot flow study. Dr. Cowie (EPD) responded that EPD would follow up with the stakeholders and experts identified to assist in the pilot flow regime study. Councilmembers Tony Rojas, Larry Sanders, and Don Shipman volunteered to assist EPD in the effort.

5. Grant Projects: Updates & Upcoming Opportunities

Veronica Craw (EPD) provided the Council with brief updates of currently funded projects as well as upcoming state seed grant (in support of Regional Water Plan implementation) and other funding opportunities. Ms. Craw summarized the Sandy Run Creek project (Clean Water Act Section 319(h) grant) which involves water quality monitoring, BMP implementation, and watershed planning and restoration near Warner Robins in Houston County. Ms. Craw then summarized the Bromide Concentrations in Surface Drinking Water Sources for Butts County project (State seed grant) which involves watershed-based monitoring to identify sources of increased bromide concentrations in the County's public drinking water system.

For Fiscal Year 2018, a total of \$300,000 in seed grants are available. Ms. Craw outlined the application process for applying for these grants, including upcoming deadlines and pre-application requirements. Ms. Craw offered assistance to the Council in identifying and refining potential projects. Councilmember Mike Bilderback indicated that Monroe County might have a project that qualified and would follow up with Chair Richardson and EPD following the meeting.

6. Meeting Adjourned

Chair Richardson adjourned the meeting at 2.00 pm.

7. Meeting Attendance

Middle Ocmulgee Regional Water Planning Council Members in attendance:

- Elmo A. Richardson (Chair)
- Don Cook
- Tom McMichael
- Lawrence E. McSwain
- Rep. Robert L. Dickey
- Mike Bilderback
- Tony Rojas
- Ron Shipman (proxy)

Georgia EPD Representatives in attendance:

- Jennifer Welte
- Dr. Gail Cowie
- Veronica Craw

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- Dr. Wei Zeng
- Gigi Steele

Regional Water Council Planning Contractors in attendance:

- Laura Hartt – Jacobs
- Padmanabhan Narayanan – Jacobs

Other attendees:

- Dr. Bill Tollner - UGA
- Dr. Ken Watson – HSW Engineering
- Thom Litts – GA Department of Natural Resources
- Bryant Bowen- GA Department of Natural Resources
- Brandon Baker – GA Department of Natural Resources
- Scott Thackston- GA Forestry Commission
- Harold West – GA Forestry Commission
- Mark Wyzalek – Macon Water Authority
- Mike Hopkins – Newton County Water & Sewerage Authority
- George McMahon – ARCADIS
- Brian Bandy - ARCADIS