

## Memorandum

*To: Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Planning Council*

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

*Date: March 29, 2016*

*Subject: Suwannee–Satilla Council Meeting 1 – Meeting Summary 2016–2017  
Regional Water Plan Review and Revision Process*

This memorandum provides the meeting summary of the Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Planning Council Meeting 1, held on March 9, 2016 at the Nashville Community Center, Nashville, Georgia. The meeting began at 9:35 AM and followed the agenda.

### **1) Welcome and Introductions/Approve Agenda**

Chairman Scott Downing called the meeting to order, welcomed the Council Members (CMs) and guests, and thanked the CMs for their service to the region and state. Chairman Downing then asked CMs and guests to introduce themselves (see list of attendees at the end of this meeting summary). Chairman Downing reviewed the agenda and asked if there were any changes. After hearing no changes he motioned to approve the agenda, seconded by Eugene Dyal, and unanimously approved by the Council.

Chairman Downing asked CDM Smith, the Planning Contractor (PC), to proceed with the agenda.

### **2) Regional Water Planning Overview/Schedule**

The PC presented the following information:

- Overview of the planning areas, key contacts, and contractors supporting those areas.
- Key water planning individuals from Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) and the Consulting team.
- Key elements of the planning process and the timeline for completing these elements and the Regional Water Plan revision.
- A summary of the regional vision and goals with a reminder that these should be kept in mind as new information is developed to ensure that the findings of the water plan are consistent with the vision and goals for the region.

Question/Comment: A CM emphasized the importance of having all appointed CMs attend the meetings because the update process will require review of a lot of new information and a number of important decisions will need to be made. Another CM noted that he would support getting new members to replace the members that are not attending.

Chairman Downing noted that the Council would take up this topic in more detail later in the agenda.

Question/Comment: A CM suggested that in addition to the main meeting notice it would be a good idea to send a meeting reminder a few days prior to the meeting.

It was agreed to incorporate this idea into our meeting routine and the Council asked the PC to help with this procedure.

Question/Comment: A CM noted that the participation in the Water Council is a significant investment in time and noted he was not fully aware of the level of commitment needed to serve on the Council. He went on to suggest that the EPD should ensure new members thoroughly understand the time commitment.

Question/Comment: A CM suggested that the PC send out a doodle poll to help identify dates that would work for most CMs and/or dates to avoid.

It was agreed that the PC would assist the Chair in implementing the suggested procedure.

Chairman Downing noted that the Council had spent a good deal of time developing the Vision and Goals but asked if CMs had any suggested changes.

Question/Comment: A CM indicated that protecting the groundwater resources in the region is very important, especially since it is a primary source of water supply for all water use sectors. The CM expressed concern over possible injection of water or other fluids into the aquifer and suggested that the Council may want to strengthen language or reach out to political leaders in this regard.

Several additional CMs mentioned they also support protection of groundwater resources but thought the existing Vision and Goals addressed protection of the resource. Another CM noted that it is important we make these points to the EPD, but we should be careful not to exclude options if they are based on sound science. It was effectively agreed upon that the Council should avoid lobbying these types of activities and continue to work with EPD and monitor this topic going forward. EPD noted that there is currently a House Resolution (HR 1098) to look at rules and science related to Aquifer Storage and Recovery.

Question/Comment: A CM mentioned that it is important to carefully manage the quantity and quality of both surface and groundwater for the long-term benefit of the region.

It was generally agreed that the Vision and Goals did not need to be modified at this time. Chairman Downing stated that when the Council looks at key management practices again, the Council can also see if any changes are warranted at that time.

The PC continued this agenda item highlighting elements of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) executed during the development of the 2011 plans (signed by Council, EPD, and Georgia Department of Community Affairs); the Operating Procedures and Rules for Meetings; and the Councils Public Involvement Plan. EPD noted that they have prepared two documents for Council consideration and provided the Council with a summary of the documents.

- i. A MOA extension document was discussed. The MOA, upon execution, will officially extend the agreement and help address the procedural topic outlined below. EPD noted for expediency that if the Council supports the extension, it could be signed by the Chair.
- ii. A redline version of the Council's Operating Procedures (Attachment A of the MOA) was distributed and discussed. The proposed revisions are intended to allow the Council to achieve a quorum for decision making in light of the status of reappointments and lower meeting attendance. The proposed changes in essence defines "active council members" as the criterion for determining a quorum. It was generally agreed that the proposal is a good approach. It was further agreed that the proposal would go to all Council Members to ensure they are fully informed and have the opportunity to become active members for the review and revision process.
- iii. It was also agreed that Chairman Downing can sign the MOA extension on behalf of the Council. A motion was made by Mike Edgy, seconded by Carroll Coarsey and unanimously approved by the Council to adopt the proposed redline and proceed as noted above.

The Council was provided a handout of the dates and locations of all the scheduled first quarterly Council meetings and Chairman Downing noted that later in the day we would discuss potentially attending some neighboring council meetings.

### **3) Updated Population Projections**

The PC presented the following information:

- Source of information for updated population projections.
- Georgia's historical population growth over time.
- Updated state and regional population projections that also showed comparisons to the Round 1 population projections.
- The methodology employed to perform the population projection update.
- The current population projections are more in line with historic trends. PC noted that the current projected growth for the state (as well as the region), while still showing positive growth over time, is not anticipated to increase at the rate that was projected for Round 1. Round 1 projections were developed prior to the 2010 Census and represented an unusually high rate of population growth when viewed in a historical context. The Round 1 projections were influenced by historical levels of in migration and relatively high birth rates at the time the projections were developed.
- While the State of Georgia's population continues to grow, it is important to recognize where the growth is occurring (i.e., urbanized areas and larger cities). Census data showed that between 2010 and 2013, about half of Georgia's counties have experienced population declines. The majority of counties with declining population are considered rural counties.

- For the Suwannee-Satilla Region, the updated population projections show an increase in population of approximately 92,316 people from 2010 through 2050.

During the presentation of the above information, Chairman Downing asked CMs if they had any questions and noted that he felt the new population numbers look more in line with what he would expect given longer-term trends.

Question/Comment: Several CMs noted that several smaller counties have not experienced much growth over time. Overall, CMs thought the updated population projections looked reasonable. A meeting guest stated that it would be important for the Council to look at where the population is increasing upstream and downstream of the region, as this can place additional demand on the availability of the region's water resources.

#### **4) Municipal Water/Wastewater Forecast Updates**

The PC presented the following information for municipal water forecast updates:

- Review of the Round 1 methodology used to calculate municipal water demands.
- Review of the per capita adjustment factor (average percent rate of change from 2010 to 2014) that was applied to the Round 1 gallons per capita per day (gpcd) to arrive at the updated gpcd value for publicly-supplied municipal water demands.
- Municipal gpcd results for the Suwannee-Satilla Region. Overall, there was a very small change across the region between Round 1 and the updated values (137 gpcd regional average value in Round 1 vs. 135 gpcd regional average updated value). PC stated that population is the more significant parameter in terms of calculating estimates of municipal water demands.

Question/Comment: A CM indicated that he thought the overall water use should be declining due to increased water metering, especially in multi-family buildings.

Question/Comment: A CM asked how these new data are going to be used.

Answer: The PC stated that the new data will be used to update the water plan and will be used in the Resource Assessments to evaluate the effects of water use on water supply sources.

Question/Comment: A CM noted that some counties show a decrease in gpcd, which makes sense as people become more aware of using water wisely. The CM went on to state that he wondered if those counties with higher gpcd values may just be due to inaccurate reporting by the utility.

Chairman Downing concluded this portion of the agenda item by asking if there were any additional questions. After hearing none he concluded by saying he thought the original population projections and water use forecast may have raised some concerns about effects on resources, and these more moderate results appeared more manageable.

The PC agreed and replied that the pressure on the resource is less compared to the Round 1 forecast across the regions due to the slower growth of population in the updated forecast. The PC also went on to state that the forecast does take into consideration conservation laws and plumbing code efficiencies (i.e., natural retrofits that occur over time). The PC also noted that EPD is currently taking a closer look at an additional source of information regarding County-level per capita values as part of their due diligence, and will come back to the Council with further information as that analysis progresses. The additional source of information was used when considering the 2010-2014 trends and arriving at the per capita adjustment factors, and a current snapshot of the additional source of information, which is still under review, shows a regional average gpcd value of 144. The PC then presented the following information for municipal wastewater forecast updates:

- Review of the Round 1 methodology used to estimate total municipal wastewater generation.
- Review of the methodology used to update the municipal wastewater generation forecast and updated results by region.

Based on the results presented, PC wants to follow up on why the municipal wastewater forecast for this region seems to be increasing faster compared to the population projections and municipal water demand. This may be due to using the new methodology or could be due to the assumption of transitioning away from septic to centralized wastewater.

There were no additional questions.

## **5) Industrial Water/Wastewater Forecast Updates**

The PC presented the following information for industrial water/wastewater forecast updates:

- How industrial water and wastewater demand forecasts were developed in Round 1.
- Review of Round 1 industrial water demands by category and source.
- Review of Round 1 industrial wastewater flow by discharge method.
- Unless there is a significant change to industry in the region, EPD is not proposing to change the industrial forecasts during this Plan update process.

Chairman Downing indicated that he did not know of any significant changes in industrial water use and asked CMs if they were aware of any major changes. No additional CMs commented.

Question: A CM asked about the industry that is using surface water and wanted to make sure it was not a mistake.

Answer: The PC did not know the specific industry but agreed to check on this item and get back to the Council.

## **6) Energy Forecast Updates**

The PC presented the following information for energy forecast updates:

- Review of thermoelectric power facilities with water withdrawal permits in the State of Georgia.
- Review of the energy sector water demand forecasting methodology from Round 1.
- Updates to energy sector water demands are not yet complete and will be shared with the Council once available.
- There are no major power generating facilities in the region that have associated water withdrawals.

Question/Comment: Several CMs discussed hydropower and energy measurement units and the proposed Federal Clean Power Plan. No major concerns or questions were identified.

## **7) Current Agricultural Demand Estimate and Method for Updates**

The PC turned this agenda item over to Cliff Lewis, EPD. Mr. Lewis noted that the information he was presenting was prepared by Mark Masters, Georgia Water Planning and Policy Center (GWPPC). Mr. Masters is leading the team that is updating the agricultural forecast. Mr. Lewis proceeded with his presentation and made the following points:

- The GWPPC is teamed with members of the University of Georgia, Agriculture and Applied Economics. Both entities were involved with the original forecast, but GWPPC is the lead entity for this round of planning.
- Updates will be conducted for irrigated acreage, livestock, nursery and golf course irrigation.
- The original forecast utilized three major steps/inputs for obtaining irrigated acres: 1) wetted acreage from GIS, 2) meter data at select locations to refine the wetted acreage database, and 3) desktop analysis of aerial imagery to identify missing wetted acres.
- Crop water application rates were derived using a crop demand forecast model based on crop type, county, soil type, and climatic conditions.
- The updated method refines the above inputs with: 1) information on animal counts from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agriculture Statistic Services; 2) updated wetted acreage information from detailed mapping at some locations in South Georgia (Flint, Ogeechee, and Suwannee-Satilla basins); and 3) additional meter data.
- Mr. Lewis presented preliminary results that can be viewed from the Council Meeting PowerPoint. Select points made by Mr. Lewis included the following: statewide, the biggest change in animals/livestock was an increase in swine count and Altamaha saw one of the largest increases. Between 2009 and 2014, the Suwannee-Satilla region has experienced a decrease in surface water use, and a moderate increase in acreage and groundwater use, especially from new center pivot irrigation.

Question: A CM noted he is familiar with meat processing and was curious why Georgia is seeing an increase in swine count and where the swine are being processed.

Answer: The PC indicated we would reach out to Mr. Masters to get a more complete answer.

Mr. Lewis concluded his remarks by summarizing that the updated agricultural forecast will incorporate: 1) a more accurate snapshot of acres, and 2) an increase in the amount of crop water use data.

### **8) Appointment of Subcommittee**

The PC then introduced the concept of appointing subcommittees for the review and revision process. Chairman Downing and the CMs indicated that they felt the use of subcommittees was very helpful in the last round of water planning and was a good idea overall. However, at this time the Council did not think a separate subcommittee is needed as the Council's active membership is already rather small. It was agreed that we would revisit this topic as we proceed with the water plan development.

The PC and EPD offered to schedule a follow-up webinar/teleconference to report back on some of the follow-up items asked during the meeting, including sending additional municipal water forecast information at the county level.

### **9) Section 319 (h) Georgia's Nonpoint Source Implementation Grant**

Cliff Lewis, EPD presented this agenda item. Mr. Lewis made the following points during the presentation:

- EPD is making money available via special award to develop or revise nine element Watershed Management Plans. The funding is targeted towards sub-grantees that will work on behalf of the Regional Water Planning Councils. Funding can be made via sole source for eligible sub-grantees, which must be public entities or local governments.
- Several existing 319(h) projects were briefly highlighted.
- Information was presented on the priority watersheds identified in the Suwannee-Satilla region that would be good candidates to consider for this program. Additionally, a list of potential grant recipients was provided.

Question: Could our Council partner with areas that extend outside our region?

Answer: Yes

Question: Does size factor into how areas are prioritized?

Answer: Yes, in part because plans are conducted at the hydrologic unit code level to determine scale.

Several CMs noted that they would like to consider taking this opportunity, as it makes sense to bring available financial resources to the region, to address priority watersheds. However, they felt they needed more details on the program and how priority watersheds are delineated. Mr. Lewis noted that he has been in contact with a CM that has several good ideas and he will work with the PC and the CM to thoroughly examine this topic.

### **10) Public Comment/Local Official Comment**

Two individuals signed up to provide public comment.

A representative from the office of Senator Johnny Isakson noted that there was a Federal Ombudsman Bill introduced that contained some water restrictions, but it did not go forward.

A member of the public noted that water is very important to the region to support agriculture.

A representative from the WWALS Watershed Coalition addressed the council and made the following points: He mentioned a Florida salinity study and possible groundwater quality changes; he noted recent out of state investments in south Georgia agriculture; he voiced support for the Council coordination with the Flint River; he mentioned potential contamination of some soil in the region and ongoing attempts associated with pipeline permitting.

### **11) Wrap Up/Council Meeting 2 Preview/Council Meeting 1 Evaluation**

Chairman Downing and the PC wrapped up the meeting and reminded the Council that the next meeting will be a joint meeting and will focus on Resource Assessments.

The meeting adjourned at 3:20 PM.



## **12) Meeting Attendance**

### Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Council members in attendance:

- Carroll H. Coarsey, Scott Dowling, Eugene Dyal, Michael E. Edgy, R.R. Rusty McCall, and Dan Raines

### Georgia EPD Representatives in attendance:

- Cliff Lewis

### Reginal Water Council contractors in attendance:

- Shayne Wood and Rick Brown (representing CDM Smith)

### Public attendees:

- Henry Hicks (representing Valdosta Utilities)
- Kevin Wright (representing Lakeland Management, LLC)
- Adriane Wood (representing Georgia DCA)
- Fuller Callaway (representing GEFA)
- Michael Roberts (representing GEFA)
- Jim Page (representing Georgia DNR - WRD)
- Greg Cherry (representing USGS)
- Tom Putnam (representing Langdale Industries)
- Amy Wiegenstein (representing WWALS Watershed Coalition Inc.)
- John Quarterman (representing WWALS Watershed Coalition Inc.)
- Jody Redding (representing Office of Senator Johnny Isakson)