

## Memorandum

*To: Savannah – Upper Ogeechee Regional Water Planning Council*  
*From: Laura Hartt, Jacobs*  
*Date: April 19, 2018*  
*Subject: Savannah – Upper Ogeechee Council Meeting*  
*Meeting Summary*

This memorandum provides the meeting summary of the Savannah – Upper Ogeechee (SUO) Regional Water Planning Council Meeting, held on April 19, 2018 at the Columbia County Exhibition Center in Grovetown. The meeting was open to the public. The meeting was called to order by the chair at approximately 9:30 AM.

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Chairman Cross called the meeting to order and welcomed Council Members as well as public attendees. Council members and other attendees identified themselves (see list at end of summary).

The Chairman asked for a motion and a second to approve the minutes from the previous council meeting and the agenda for the current meeting. The minutes and agenda were approved unanimously by all council members.

The Chairman noted that Council members will have to wait until after the fall 2018 elections to know if they have been re-appointed to serve another term with the Council.

Council Member Braye Boardman noted that EPD was offering a workshop on nutrient trading, to be held in Savannah, on May 29, from 1-3 pm. Mr. Boardman asked EPD to forward the information to the Council.

### **Review of Regional Water Plan Outreach Materials**

PC provided the Council with an update on materials prepared to assist the Council in outreach efforts. These materials summarize the regional water planning process, the SUO Regional Water Plan contents, and actions that interested parties can take to support implementation of the Plan.

PC presented a draft of the fact sheet, noting its key features. Mr. Boardman suggested adding the 5-year update requirement to the fact sheet. PC agreed that could be done.

PC presented the PowerPoint presentation, noting that its designed to serve as a “canned” presentation that can be tailored by Council members for their specific audience.

Tanya Bonitatibus (Savannah Riverkeeper) asked if it would be possible to align Georgia’s regional water planning process with South Carolina’s. EPD noted that Georgia does coordinate

with neighboring states including South Carolina and Alabama on forecasting (surface water withdrawals/returns), and that future plan updates will involve further coordination.

PC then asked the Council if members were aware of any upcoming venues or appropriate audiences for presenting the PowerPoint presentation. Council members suggested County Commissioner meetings, City Council meetings, Georgia Municipal Association (GMA), Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG), chambers of commerce, golf superintendents, garden nurseries, Urban Ag Council, schools, and annual conferences (e.g., Georgia Environmental Conference, Georgia Association of Water Professionals (GAWP)). EPD noted that at the upcoming ACCG conference, there will be a presentation on regional water planning and that past GAWP conferences have offered panel presentations on regional water planning.

Chairman Cross added that the Council needs to get more stakeholders involved, particularly water utilities. He suggested allowing representatives to participate on a dues basis, with the regional commission as a fiscal agent. The dues could then be used to hire consultants to assist in plan implementation. The Chairman also suggested adding South Carolina stakeholders to serve on ad hoc committees as appropriate.

Mr. Boardman noted that South Carolina and Georgia were in the process of setting up a meeting of the Governors' Committee, which might serve as a good opportunity to present the PowerPoint.

PC offered to assist the Council in identifying upcoming opportunities for outreach as well as refining the presentation as needed for the audience.

### **Council Member Survey Results**

PC presented an overview of the results of the recent Council member survey, to which 91 Council members responded (36% response rate across all Councils). Council members answered several questions concerning Plan implementation, public understanding of the Plans and the role of the Council, Council member understanding of the forecasts and assessments, and Council member confidence in the technical material on which the Plans are based. Survey participants were also given the opportunity to provide general comments on how to improve the planning process; many respondents expressed the desire to involve more stakeholders and increase public awareness and active Council member participation.

**Shayne/Jennifer: add all survey results to notes?**

Contractors also conducted phone interviews with the Council Chairs, asking them to share their views on successes and challenges experienced throughout the planning process. Chairs noted that the Plans were updated successfully, relationships were built, and public awareness increased. Challenges included the need for more data, greater Council member participation, Plan implementation, more funding, and greater public awareness.

PC informed the Council that based on the survey responses, contractors have developed a strategy document for improving implementation as well as the next update process. EPD is reviewing the contractor's recommendations.

### **Grant Opportunity Review and Timelines**

PC distributed a handout with information concerning potential sources of funding for Plan implementation—Georgia Water and Wastewater Funding Sources (compiled by Environmental Finance Center, May 2016). PC also noted that the Georgia Municipal Association has a web page devoted to funding resources that might be helpful for Plan implementation (<https://www.gmanet.com/News-Grant-Opportunities/Grants-and-Award-Opportunities.aspx>).

PC then distributed a handout summarizing recent grants and loans awarded by the Georgia Environmental Financing Authority (GEFA) in the SUO Region. Sources of funding for these loans include Clean Water Loans/Grants; Drinking Water Loans/Grants; and Georgia Fund Loans/Grants.

PC provided the Council with a presentation on how to apply for grants successfully, emphasizing the importance of stakeholder support, meeting deadlines, and finding the right fit for funding.

PC then noted that the next funding cycle for EPD's Seed Grant program begins in October and offered to assist the Council in any submissions. Chairman Cross noted that the Council has secured such grants in the past but that the funding often requires a matching source. The Chair also noted the need to not only secure grants to support good studies but also the need to ensure funding is available to support implementation of the study results.

PC asked the Council if they were aware of any eligible/potential Plan-related projects in need of funding for implementation. EPD noted that last year the Council endorsed Mr. Boardman's nutrient trading proposal.

PC noted that GEFA could come to the next Council meeting and give a presentation on funding opportunities.

### **Legislative Update and EPD Permitting Activity Updates**

EPD provided an update on the 2018 legislative session as it applies to regional water planning, including Senate Bill 451, which authorizes formation of an Agricultural Task Force to look at agricultural water use. The Task Force has subsequently recommended moving the responsibility of metering agricultural use to EPD. The state has appropriated funding (\$20 million) to support this effort.

EPD then provided an update on withdrawal and return permit changes.

Frank Carl asked how EPD keeps track of South Carolina withdrawals and returns, including those for agriculture. EPD responded that from a planning perspective, the state coordinates with neighbors during forecast updates.

Tonya Bonitatibus asked if the Council was aware of an inter-basin transfer (IBT) EPD was reviewing that would entail Rabun County selling 2.5 MGD of water to Rabun County. Ms. Bonitatibus noted that it would be the first to occur into the Metro District since the legislation formed the District. The Chair responded that he was aware of the issue but not of the status of the IBT permit. The Chair suggested the Council follow up with Representative Tom McCall. EPD stated they would review the issue.

#### **Public Comments/Local Elected Official Comments**

The Chair then asked if any public officials were present. Other than Council members, none were present.

The Chair announced that after 16 years of serving as the Council Chair, he would be stepping down. He suggested addressing the need for a new chair at the next Council meeting in order to ensure a smooth transition.

Ms. Bonitatibus asked EPD if the old website could be updated to redirect browsers to the new state water planning website. EPD said they would review the issue.

#### **Next Steps / Wrap Up**

PC summarized the next steps for the Council, emphasizing that contractors were available to serve the Council, look for funding and outreach opportunities, make connections between Council members and implementing actors, and identify outside speakers and topics for future Council meetings (e.g., U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to speak on the Comp 2 study; GEFA to speak about funding).

Ms. Bonitatibus offered to take Council members out on the Riverkeeper boat.

Council members tentatively agreed to convening again next July or August. The Chair suggested a joint meeting with the Coastal Council. Mr. Boardman concurred with that recommendation. Locations and venues were discussed, including Statesboro and Sylvania.

Mr. Boardman thanked the Chair for his leadership. The Chair said that he had enjoyed serving on behalf of the Basin, recognizing it as great resource and better off than much of the state in terms of water quantity and quality in spite of the work still needed.

Council adjourned at approximately 12 noon, for lunch.

## **Meeting Attendance**

### Council Members

- Ron C. Cross, Chairman
- Braye Boardman
- Jerry Boling
- Patrick D. Goran
- Thomas C. Jordan
- Scott P. MacGregor
- Chris McCorkle
- Suzanne Sharley (for Tim McGill)
- R. Lee Webster
- Tom Wiedmeier
- Tenia S. Workman

### Georgia EPD

- Jennifer Welte
- Haydn Blaize
- Steven Gray

### Planning Contractors (PC)

- Shayne Wood (CDM Smith)
- Leland Smith (CDM Smith)
- Laura Hartt (Jacobs Engineering)

### Other Agency Attendees

- Ed Bettross (GA DNR)

### General Public

- Simona Perra (Ogeechee Riverkeeper)
- Tonya Bonitatibus (Savannah Riverkeeper)
- Sam Booher (Sierra Club)
- Frank Carl