



Memorandum

To: Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Regional Water Planning Council

From: Ashley Reid, CDM Smith

Date: October 5, 2023

*Subject: Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Regional Water Planning Council Meeting Summary
(subject to Council review and approval)*

Welcome, Introductions and Council Business

Chairmen Bruce Azevedo called the meeting to order at approximately 10:04am. Chairmen Azevedo called for a motion to approve the prior Savannah-Upper Ogeechee (SUO) Council Meeting Minutes (June 6, 2023). No additional changes were noted, and minutes were approved by the motion, second and unanimous vote.

Chairman Azevedo called for a motion to approve the drafted agenda for the meeting. The agenda was approved by the motion, second and unanimous vote.

Chairman Azevedo expressed his appreciation to the Council for helping advance the planning process over the last couple years and for seeing the plan revision through to approval.

Regional Water Plan Revision Recap

Ashley Reid, CDM Smith, gave an overview of the recently adopted 2023 SUO Regional Water Plan which outlines the near- and long-term strategies needed to meet water needs through 2060.

The 2023 Resource Assessment Results were presented to the Council as well. Below are summarized statements for each assessment:

- Groundwater Supply: There will be adequate supplies to meet the regional needs in the future over the planning horizon at the regional level.
- Surface Water Quality: Some stream segments, including the Savannah Harbor, will have a limited capacity to accept wastewater discharges. To address the region's future need will encompass addressing non-point sources of pollution and existing water quality impairments.
- Surface Water Availability: Over the next 40 years, the modeling analysis indicates that the water supply and instream flow needs in the region are not met hydrologically at 7 withdrawal locations and 13 discharge locations. Potential surface water challenges exist at these locations.

Regional Seed Grant Project Status Updates and SFY24 RWP Seed Grant Overview

Jackie Encinas and Haydn Blaize from the Georgia Environmental Protection Department (GA EPD) discussed GA EPD Updates on the Regional Water Plan (RWP) Seed Grant Program. This included an overview of all the SEED Grant projects between SFY15-SFY22.

The SFY2024 SEED Grant applications opened on July 17, 2023. Ms. Encinas and Mr. Blaize provided information on the awards, requirements, and eligibility for the SFY2024 application. The application period closed on October 31, 2023. To learn more about this application, please visit: <https://epd.georgia.gov/outreach/grants/regional-water-plan-seed-grant-funds>. Jackie Encinas provided their contact information at the end of their presentation.

Seed Grant Updates

High Frequency Monitoring and the Effects of Agricultural Water Withdrawal

Dr. Oscar Flite from the City of Augusta Stormwater Services division provided the council with an overview of the FY2020 Seed grant project that focuses on high frequency monitoring programs that report water use data from previously installed agricultural farm water meters as well as newly installed water meters. During the presentation Dr. Flite highlighted the two main project goals: 1) improve technology for reading meters and 2) determine the impact of pumping (agricultural water withdrawal) on groundwater/surface water systems. Several project challenges related to connectivity, artificial intelligence (training and reliability), power, and the willingness of farmers to participate, were discussed at length. A schematic of the overall project setup for each monitoring location was shared and Dr. Flite discussed how the different location characteristics may have impacted results.

Pilot Study to Preserve In-Stream Water Quality and Instream Flows

Dr. Flite briefly discussed the FY2022 Seed grant project that consists of a pilot study to preserve in-stream water quality and instream flows below an urban pond complex using a real-time control system. Dr. Flite explained that nonpoint source pollution is the largest contributor to overall water quality degradation in streams throughout the United States and that urban settings are a unique subset of nonpoint source pollution and contribute to overall degradation of water quality by carrying pollutants directly from impervious surfaces to streams through stormwater runoff. As a part of this study, Dr. Flite's goal is to determine if real-time control of detention pond discharge decreases overall negative impacts to receiving streams relative to stream erosion, water quality, and aquatic insect dynamics, compared to conventional detention pond discharge scenarios. A concept diagram was shared to show how cloud software and a web-based dashboard work together collect and track changes in flow and changes in the water level of detention ponds. A future update on this program will be scheduled for a future council meeting to further discuss project results and conclusions.

Potential Seed Grant Projects

Ashley Reid encouraged the group to look for opportunities to participate in the RWP Seed Grant Program. She discussed how the SUO region had been quite successful with Seed Grant applications in the past and mentioned how important it is to plan projects that align with the regional priority management practices grouped as follows:

- Four Demand Management Practices
- Five Supply Management Practices
- Four Water Quality Management Practices
- Two Educational Initiatives

Chairman Azevedo added that planning meetings prior to the GA EPD preapplication meetings, allow him to review and provide feedback on the grant applications. This has been proven to be very beneficial to applicants.

Soil Amendments Regional Update

Tonya Bonitatibus, Savannah Riverkeeper, provided an update regarding the importance of regular monitoring of soil amendments application sites. Main points discussed included:

- Husley began applying soil amendments on Broad River Valley Farms in late September 2023. The dumping was identified through the required groundwater monitoring wells on site and an GA EPD enforcement action is underway.
- Other known application sites in operation will continue to be monitored, and additional sampling is anticipated. Tracking applications for comparison with the Department of Agriculture records is vital. It is encouraged that those that are aware of new sites, alert the Riverkeepers.

Speaker/Topic and Field Trip Brainstorm Exercise

During this portion of the meeting Ashley Reid led an exercise to gather information from the Council to develop a list of presentation topics and field trip ideas. The idea prompts were outlined as follows:

- Presentation Topics
 - Lead in Drinking Water/LCRR Requirements
 - Municipal WWTP/WTP Improvements
 - Local Water Quality Reports
 - Water Conservation Practices in Agriculture
 - Leveraging Federal Funding to meet local needs

■ Field Trips

- Farm/Agriculture operation tour
- Municipal WTP/WWTP tour
- Industrial/Energy facility tour
- Hydro facility tour
- Stream restoration/stormwater BMP site tour

The Council expressed interest in continuing to hear updates on soil amendments including new application sites in the region and any regulatory changes/advancements. Additionally, Chairman Azevedo voiced the desire to have Georgia Department of Agriculture Commissioner, Tyler Harper, participate in future soil amendments updates and discuss agriculture issues impacting water resources in the region. Several field trip recommendations were made including a tour to a Georgia Power hydroelectric power facility. Tonya Bonitatibus, Savannah Riverkeeper, offered the group a recreational Savannah River boat tour. Jillian Amurao, lab director for the Phinizy Center for Water Sciences, suggested a field trip to Savannah Rapids Park, where her team could assist with a Shoals Lily demonstration.

Next Steps/Public Comments/Open Discussion/Adjourn

Chairman Azevedo thanked the speakers and asked if there were any members of the public or elected officials present who wished to provide any comments. No comments or questions were forthcoming.

Next meeting will be tentatively planned for first quarter of 2024. Ms. Reid will send out a poll to get Council Member's availability. Chairman Azevedo asked the Council members and participants to send recommendations for meeting subjects for future meetings to Ashley Reid.

The presentation portion of the meeting adjourned at approximately 12:05 and followed by lunch and a tour of the Phinizy Center for Water Sciences laboratory facilities.

Meeting Attendance

Council

- Bruce Azevedo (Chair)
- Thomas C. Jordan
- Scott MacGregor
- Sue Parr
- Suzanne Sharkey
- R. Lee Webster
- Pat Goran
- Lee Vaughn

GA EPD

- Haydn Blaize
- Clete Barton
- Jacqueline Encinas
- Barbara Stitt

Planning Contractors

- Ashley Reid (CDM Smith)
- Autumn McNeil (CDM Smith)

Public and Agency Partners

- Tonya Bonitatibus, Savannah Riverkeeper
- Bryce Trotter, Georgia Milk Producers
- Carly Nielsen, Ogeechee Riverkeeper
- Jillian Amurao, Phinizy Center for Water Sciences
- Jason Mallard, UGA
- Christina Wagoner, Broad River Watershed Association
- Carol Flaute, Northeast Georgia Regional Commission
- Patrick Heritier, Southern Company
- Jerald Penzo, Glynn County Airport Commission