

## Memorandum

*To: Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Regional Water Planning Council*

*From: Laura Hartt, Jacobs & Ashley Reid, CDM Smith*

*Date: June 4, 2020*

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

### Roll Call, Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Bruce Azevedo called the virtual meeting to order. The Council support contractor team verified participant names and affiliations.

### Council Business

Chairman Azevedo called for a motion to approve the prior Savannah-Upper Ogeechee (SUO) Council Meeting Minutes (February 6, 2020). Minutes were approved by motion, second, and unanimous vote.

Chairman Azevedo then called for a motion to approve the draft agenda. Agenda was approved by motion, second, and unanimous vote.

### GA EPD Update on Forecasting Efforts

Jennifer Welte (GA EPD) summarized the status for ongoing forecasting efforts as follows:

- Municipal – Two stakeholder meetings were convened (April 16, June 3). The next meeting will be scheduled for September, following a public comment period (mid-July through mid-August) on the draft forecast and methodology reports. Final forecasts are anticipated by the end of September.
- Industrial – Initial stakeholder meeting was convened (June 3), including representatives from the manufacturing, poultry processing, pulp and paper, and mining sectors.
- Energy – Initial stakeholder meeting was convened (April 29), including representatives from power production entities.
- Agriculture – Albany State University and the University of Georgia are developing these forecasts.

## **Municipal Forecasting Stakeholder Effort**

Vice-Chair Tom Wiedmeier, the Council's representative to the municipal forecasting stakeholder group, provided the Council with an update on the municipal stakeholder group's efforts. Mr. Wiedmeier went over a handout, noting where Council member input would still be valuable. In particular, he noted that per capita values for Lincoln, Screven and Wilkes counties seemed high. He also noted that information for Elberton, Augusta and Columbia County may also be inaccurate and is still under review.

Council member Pat Goran noted that Hart County does not have any water permits, but the County does purchase water from the cities of Hartwell, Lavonia, and Royston. Mr. Goran asked for clarification regarding how the projections are accounting for that situation. Ms. Welte (EPD) said that Hart County population projections could be used to forecast future demands for Hart County, even though the water is being supplied from other entities. Vice Chair Wiedmeier and Ms. Welte encouraged Mr. Goran to submit additional information to the stakeholder group.

Chair Azevedo noted that the biomass plant in Madison County has increased water use from 0.5 to 0.7 MGD. He also noted that the County's water supply sources include Commerce, Franklin County and Elbert County. Chair Azevedo said he would provide EPD with more information on the issue.

## **Savannah & Ogeechee Rivers Real-time Online Water Monitoring Update**

Tonya Bonitatibus (Savannah Riverkeeper) provided the Council with an update on the City of Augusta's 2019-20 Seed Grant project. The grant is funding the development of a website and app to serve as repositories for current and historical water monitoring data in the Ogeechee and Savannah river basins. An electronic survey was circulated to Council members subsequent to the meeting to solicit further feedback on layout and content.

## **SC DNR State Water Planning Update**

Scott Harder (South Carolina Department of Natural Resources) provided the Council with an update on South Carolina's regional water planning efforts. Mr. Harder noted that the Savannah basin would be one of the last river basins evaluated by the state as they work through a basin planning process.

Ms. Welte asked Mr. Harder if South Carolina would consider adding the Council as an advisor group once the Savannah River basin planning process began. Mr. Harder affirmed they would.

## **Break**

The Council took a 5-minute break.

## **Metro North Georgia Water Planning District (MNGWPD) Updates**

Danny Johnson (MNGWPD) provided the Council with an update on the District's planning process, including the timeline. Mr. Johnson noted that the District is targeting the update for December 2022 completion. Mr. Johnson asked Ms. Welte if extending the timeline from June to December would be an issue for the regional councils. Ms. Welte responded that while a specific month has not been set for completion of the next round of regional water plan updates, EPD would coordinate with the District to ensure that the planning processes are integrated with regard to schedule.

## **Stephens Creek FERC Relicensing Update**

Alison Jakupca (Kleinschmidt Group) provided the Council with a brief history of the Stephens Creek Hydroelectric Project as well as an overview of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) relicensing process for the project. Stephens Creek functions primarily to reregulate flows below J. Strom Thurmond Dam. Licensed in 1995, the current Stephens Creek license will expire in 2025. More information is available on the project website:

[www.stevenscreekrelicense.com](http://www.stevenscreekrelicense.com)

## **Comp 2 Corps Topic Coordination Update**

Stan Simpson (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) gave the Council an update on the second interim Savannah River Basin Comprehensive (Comp 2) Study. During his presentation, Mr. Simpson noted that although the modeling was completed, the Corps and other agencies still had outstanding questions. Mr. Simpson noted that hydropower impacts are easier to quantify than environmental ones.

Mr. Harder asked if the Corps would be meeting with the sponsors (Georgia, South Carolina, The Nature Conservancy) on the study. Mr. Simpson responded that if the Corps were to proceed with the study, then they would meet with sponsors and partners to try to resolve any

issues. However, he also indicated that the Corps was leaning toward not proceeding.

Ms. Welte noted the Council's interest in receiving updates on the Comp 2 study.

Mr. Simpson indicated that he could meet with the Council again, once more data is available or the Corps' future direction is made public.

Post meeting update: On July 6, 2020, the Corps ended the Comp 2 study. The press release states that the study ended due to "inadequate analysis, a lack of full partnership concurrence on the recommendation and insufficient funding." More information is available here:

<https://balancingthebasin.armylive.dodlive.mil/2020/07/06/comp-study-ends-water-quality-other-concerns-leave-drought-plan-unchanged/>

## **Council Discussion**

Chairman Azevedo asked the Council if they had any questions for the presenters. There were none. The Chairman then asked if any members had trouble with the next tentative meeting date of September 10<sup>th</sup>. No members voiced concerns.

## **Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

## **Wrap Up**

Chairman Azevedo confirmed September 10 as the next tentative meeting date, and asked members to send ideas for agenda items to both the Chair and Vice-Chair. He also suggested looking into larger venue space (e.g., the Boathouse Community Center in Augusta) with Zoom or other virtual support, assuming Covid-19 does not preclude an in-person meeting.

## **Meeting Participants**

### Council

- Bruce Azevedo (Chair)
- Tom Wiedmeier (Vice-Chair)
- Charles Cawthon
- Dan Fowler
- Pat Goran
- Stephen King
- Chris McCorkle

- Tenia Workman

#### Council participants

- Brendan Thompson (Rabun County Water and Sewer Authority)
- Oscar Flite (City of Augusta)
- Tonya Bonitatibus (Savannah Riverkeeper)

#### EPD

- Haydn Blaze
- Jennifer Welte

#### Contractors

- Ashley Reid
- Michelle Vincent
- Laura Hartt

#### Public

- Nancy Bobbitt (Senator Kelly Loeffler's office)
- Amy Bresnahan (Dominion Energy)
- Wes Byne (The Constantine Group)
- Frank Carl (Sierra Club)
- Greg Cherry (U.S. Geological Survey)
- Carolyn Evans (Blue Cypress Consulting)
- Dale Fulton (Southern Nuclear Operating Company)
- Scott Glassmeyer (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service)
- Katie Gregory (McGuire Woods Consulting)
- Scott Harder (South Carolina Department of Natural Resources)
- Alison Jakupca (Kleinschmidt Group)
- Danny Johnson (Metro District)
- John Joiner (U.S. Geological Survey)
- Damon Mullis (Ogeechee Riverkeeper)
- Michele Oxlade (Covia Holdings Corporation – Hephzibah Industrial Facility)
- Alex Pellett (South Carolina Department of Natural Resources)
- Stan Simpson (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)
- Martha Zapata (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service)