

Memorandum

To: Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Regional Water Planning Council

From: Ashley Reid, CDM Smith and Lina Yazbak, Jacobs

Date: March 23, 2023

Subject: Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Regional Water Planning Council Meeting Summary

Welcome, Introductions, and Council Business

Chairman Bruce Azevedo called the meeting to order and then called for a motion to approve the prior Savannah-Upper Ogeechee (SUO) Council Meeting Minutes (November 2022). Minor corrections to minutes noted and will be addressed prior to the finalizing. Minutes (as corrected) were approved by motion, second, and unanimous vote.

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

GA EPD Updates

Planning Schedule Updates

Haydn Blaize, EPD reviewed the draft and final regional water plans schedule with the Council, noting the following:

- Councils are to submit drafts of the revised plans to EPD by Wednesday, March 29, 2023
- Draft plans will be put on Public Notice by EPD on March 31, 2023, and the 45-day public comment period will end on May 15, 2023.
- Councils are to review/incorporate public comments received during their June 2023 meetings.
- Councils are to submit final revised regional water plans to EPD by Friday, June 23, 2023, and EPD Director is planned to adopt plans by June 30, 2023.

Recent and Upcoming EPD Activities

Haydn Blaize, EPD provided the Council with additional EPD updates and dates to remember. He noted that the EPD finalized a Water Quality Trading Guidance document on February 7, 2023. It is available on EPD's website. Mr. Blaize also reminded listeners that lead service line inventories for public water systems were due October 2024. He noted that EPD and GEFA would be implementing online systems to accept and track submissions. Mr. Blaize concluded this discussion by noting that construction stormwater permits would be reissued this summer (2023).

FY2023 Section 319(h) Grant Funding

Mr. Blaize informed meeting attendees that the Georgia Environmental Protection Division Watershed Protection Branch Nonpoint Source Program were now accepting applications for FY2023 Section 319(h) grant funding. Application period is set to close April 30, 2023. He noted that eligible projects should:

1. Implement watershed management plans,
2. Address impaired waters,
3. Address NPS pollution,
4. Install Best Management Practices (BMPs)
5. Engage in partnerships,
6. Collect water quality data, and
7. Result in measurable water quality improvement.

Seed Grant Project Updates

Mr. Blaize gave the Council a brief update on seed grant status, noting that there were currently four in-progress seed grant projects for the Savannah-Upper Ogeechee region. Lead partners included City of Augusta, City of Savannah, and University of Georgia. Mr. Blaize also noted that the Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Council has continued to be one of the leaders in seed grant funding since 2014 with grant funds totaling \$417,570, cash match of \$248,798, and in-kind match of \$211,244.

Review Revisions of Draft Plan Sections 1 -5

In preparation for the draft plan public comment period, Ashley Reid reviewed draft plan sections 1-5 with the Council. These sections had been provided to the Council prior to the meeting for review, and this portion of the meeting was intended to collect outstanding comments and address any questions and/or concerns. The following summarizes comments/discussions for each draft plan section.

- Section 1
 - The Goals for the Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Region figures (Figures 1-4) were discussed and agreed upon.
- Section 2
 - Waterbodies located within the region and necessary descriptions were outlined.
 - It was clarified that the population values were updated by county.
- Section 3
 - A council member questioned the values and percentages in Figures 3-6 in relation to the values provided in Tables 5-2 and Table 5-3. Clarifications were made and required revisions were noted.
 - Questions were brought to the floor about Figure 3-2 and addressed.
 - Section 3.2 was discussed to address any questions and clarification needed for the section.
- Section 4
 - Mislabeling of Figures 4-4 and 4-5 were identified and the required revisions were noted.
 - A misspelling was identified in Section 4.4. and the required revision was noted.
- Section 5
 - Discussions regarding Section 5.2 were brought forth and clarifications made. No revisions noted.

Break for Lunch

Management Practices Overview/Management Practices Breakout Exercise

During this portion of the meeting Ashley Reid provided an overview of the intent of the plan's management practices, and together the Council reviewed the existing management practices. In general, the Council believed the existing management practices still adequately helped to address regional water resource challenges and supported the goals of the region. However, the council did bring forth concerns regarding lack of coordination with the utilities and cities within the region. Interest in incorporating regular updates either through EPD or utility/city representatives was expressed.

During a breakout exercise, Council members worked within their table groups to review management practices and the corresponding actions and brainstormed proposed modifications. Upon return from the breakout exercise, the following suggestions were identified:

- Related to *WD2 – Evaluate/ Encourage Tier 2 (Non-Farm) Water Conservation Practices*, the Council requested that “Exploring use of low impact development (LID) stormwater” be added to the defined list of actions.
- Related to *ED2 - Promote Coordinated Environmental Planning*, the Council requested the following be incorporated into the defined list of actions.
 - “Explore and expand relationship with regional commissions and cities in order to aid in planning and assist with identifying funding alternatives.”
 - “Support efforts to increase publicly available water supply and water quality data.”

Soil Amendment Updates

Tonya Bonitatibus, Savannah Riverkeeper provided an updated regarding the recent legislation that was sent by Madison County.

Legislation was put forth by Representative Robert Leverett, and a hearing was held on March 22, 2023, with nine speakers. The legislation received positive feedback. A request for a ninety-day review period was given. A suggestion to consider a management plan for soil amendments on aquifer recharge zones was made.

The Broad River Valley Farms is the only regularly monitored site with known contamination.

An attendee asked if the new federal PFAS requirements given by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) would impact regulations regarding soil amendments. Currently, there are no PFAS sampling requirements on the discharges to date.

Public Comments, Wrap Up & Adjourn

Ashley Reid thanked everyone for attending.

Chairman Azevedo asked if there were any members of the public or elected officials present who wished to provide any comments. No comments were forthcoming. Next meeting will be scheduled for June 2023 and will focus on reviewing/incorporating and comments received during the public comment period of draft revised regional water plans.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 2 pm.

Meeting Attendance

Council

- Bruce Azevedo
- Jerry L. Boling
- Charles Cawthon
- Patrick D. Goran
- Thomas C. Jordan
- R. Lee Webster
- Dink NeSmith
- Brendan Thompson
- Lee Vaughn
- Braye C. Boardman (virtual)
- Stan Sheppard (virtual)
- Chris McCorkle (virtual)
- Suzanne Sharkey (virtual)

EPD

- Clete Barton
- Haydn Blaize

Planning Contractors

- Ashley Reid (CDM Smith)
- Autumn McNeill (CDM Smith)
- Lina Yazbak (Jacobs)

Public and Agency Partners

- Tonya Bonitatibus, Savannah Riverkeeper
- Amanda Willis, GRWA
- Chris Wagoner, Broad River Watershed Association
- Carly Nielson, Ogeechee Riverkeeper (virtual)
- Ben Kirsch, Ogeechee Riverkeeper (virtual)
- Wes Byne, City of Augusta (virtual)
- Oscar Flite, City of Augusta (virtual)
- Phillip Jones, Northeast Regional Commission (virtual)
- Kris Howard (virtual)
- Frank Carl (virtual)