

## **Memorandum**

*To: Upper Oconee Regional Water Planning Council*

*From: Dale Jones and Zakiya Seymour, Jacobs*

*Date: March 23, 2017*

*Subject: Upper Oconee Council Meeting 4  
Regional Water Development and Conservation Plan Review and Revision  
Meeting Summary*

This memorandum provides the meeting summary of the Upper Oconee Regional Water Planning Council Meeting held on March 2, 2017 at the Reynolds Landing Clubhouse in Greensboro, Georgia. This memorandum provides a summary of the items discussed at the Council Meeting that was held from approximately 9:40 AM to 2:30 PM.

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

Chairman Melvin Davis called the meeting to order and welcomed members as well as the public to the meeting. He asked Council Members and guests to introduce themselves. The minutes from the November 17, 2016 Council Meeting were approved following a motion by Council Member Hunter that was seconded by Council Member Neal. The meeting agenda was approved following a motion by Council Member Neal that was seconded by Council Member Hunter. Chairman Davis turned the meeting over to the Planning Contractor to proceed with the agenda.

### **2) Regional Water Plan Review Timeline**

The Planning Contractor reviewed the projected schedule for completing the draft plan with Council:

- The draft of the Regional Water Plan should be complete by March 31st.
- The timeframe for the public notice is currently scheduled from March 31st to May 15th.
- Following the receipt of public comments, there will be a 5th Council meeting in late May/early June to review and incorporate any public comments or comments from EPD. The Council would still have the opportunity for input during the public notice period.

The Planning Contractor discussed two approaches for reviewing updates made to the management practices: via subcommittee or by the full Council.

The Council agreed to create a subcommittee to review the best management practices, their respective implementation schedule, and recommendations to the State. Chairman Davis requested that the following Council Members form the subcommittee:

- Chairman Melvin Davis
- Vice-Chair Pat Graham
- Hunter Bicknell
- Linda Gantt
- Rabun Neal
- Stuart Cofer
- Larry Eley

A conference call would be set up by the Planning Contractor. The Council agreed to receive the subcommittee's feedback via email as well as provide their review and concurrence via email on the plan updates.

### **3) Demand Forecast Technical Memorandum and Updates to Regional Water Plan Sections**

The Planning Contractor reviewed the Demand Forecast Technical Memorandum that detailed updates to the population projections, municipal water forecasting, municipal wastewater forecasting, industrial forecasting (no changes), agricultural water forecasting, and energy sector water forecasting for the Upper Oconee Region.

The Planning Contractor also reviewed draft updates to the following Plan sections:

- Section 3 – Water Resources of the Upper Oconee Region
- Section 4 – Forecasting Future Water Resource Needs
- Section 5 – Comparison of Available Water Resource Capacities and Future Needs

The draft Plan Section updates were provided to the Council in redlined format to detail changes made to the original Plan. The Planning Contract mentioned that the municipal water and wastewater needs presented in Tables 5-5 and 5-8 were still being confirmed by the Planning Contractor and EPD.

Addendum: Table 5-5 *Permitted Municipal Water Withdrawal Limits vs. 2050 Forecasted Demands* was updated to more accurately reflect from the Bear Creek and Hard Labor Creek Reservoirs. The following updates were made:

- Athens-Clarke County's current permitted water withdrawals changed to 67.0 MGD
- Barrow County's current permitted water withdrawals changed to 17.0 MGD
- Jackson County's current permitted water withdrawals changed to 25.9 MGD
- Oconee County's current permitted water withdrawals changed to 21.7 MGD
- Walton County's current permitted water withdrawals changed to 62.9 MGD

Based upon the updated municipal water withdrawal limits, Barrow and Oconee Counties do not have additional projected municipal water needs during the planning horizon. Table

5-8 *Summary of Potential Gaps, Needs, or Shortages by County* was updated to reflect that there are no additional municipal water needs above current permitted withdrawals across the Region.

#### **4) Discussion and review of the Management Practices**

The Planning Contractor highlighted that the original (2011) Plan organized the management practices into four sections: water conservation, water supply, wastewater, and water quality. In preparation of the discussion on the management practices, the Planning Contractor reviewed the updated information concerning potential gaps in the Region. The Planning Contractor detailed that each existing management practice would be reviewed individually, providing the Council with the ability to keep, delete, or modify it. At the end of each management practices section, the Council was also given the opportunity to add any additional management practices deemed appropriate.

The Planning Contractor began the discussion on the management practices by reviewing updated information regarding potential groundwater and surface water gaps. No groundwater resource shortfalls are expected over the planning horizon, but potential surface water gaps are expected downstream of the region at the Eden planning node on the Ogeechee River (Greene, Hancock, and Washington Counties). Council Member Cofer mentioned that he thought Hancock County was mostly agricultural. Council Member Bicknell echoed that statement about Washington County as well. Scott Thackston (Georgia Forestry Commission representative) confirmed that the area is mostly pasture land without active irrigation.

Ms. Voudy (EPD) clarified that the surface water resource assessment is only looking at potential gaps at the actual node (Eden) in the Ogeechee River basin, and that a small portion of the Council area drains into that watershed. Mr. Thackston suggested that surface water use in the counties above the Eden node may be part of the cause of the agricultural gap. Council Member Bicknell mentioned that Hancock is not in the Oconee Basin.

#### **WATER CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

##### **WC-1 - Encourage conservation pricing**

Council Member Luke asked who the implementing actor would be for this management practice. The Planning Contractor explained that it would be each local jurisdiction. The Council agreed to edit this management practice towards implementing conservation pricing for residential clients. Additionally, the Council agreed to delete the first bullet point in the 2015 recommendation.

##### **WC-2 - Develop water conservation goals**

Ms. Voudy mentioned that the Regional Water Plans developed by the Councils are used by EPD as a guide during the permitting process to confirm that the conservation plans are consistent with the management practices outlined in the associated Regional Water Plan.. The Council then decided to:

- sharpen the responsibilities for counties with multiple jurisdictions with assistance from the EPD and the Planning Councils;
- develop goals for individual jurisdictions, focusing in on areas where there are potential surface water gaps; and
- have the subcommittee review this water conservation goal in particular to determine how it might be achieved.

Related to this management practice, the Council also discussed water savings achieved through water-efficient fixtures and water utility rate structures. The Council agreed to edit this management practice.

### **WC-3 - Consistently meter and report agricultural water withdrawals (> 100,000 gallons per day [gpd])**

The Planning Contractor noted that the management practice is currently regulated by the agricultural use metering program.

The Council agreed to delete this management practice.

### **WC-4 - Implement education and public awareness program**

Chairman Davis asked how this program would be implemented. Vice Chairman Graham responded that local jurisdictions could refer to Athens-Clarke County as an example on ways to improve public awareness.

Mr. Haynie suggested that the State should award local jurisdictions for implemented public awareness program with relieving some State regulation or providing points during the annual water audit process.

The Council agreed to edit this management practice to change “implement” to “encourage.”

### **WC-5 - Implement golf course water management education program**

Council Member Neal stated that golf courses have their own withdrawal permits from EPD.

The Council agreed to delete this management practice.

### **WC-6 - Encourage variable rate agricultural irrigation systems**

Vice Chairman Graham recommended that the first two sentences under the description for this management practice be deleted.

Mr. Haynie requested a clarification on the term “variable.” Vice Chairman Graham stated that some systems pump the same amount of water regardless of whether or not there is a need. The Council requested that Council Member Larry Eley provide further input on this management practice during the subcommittee discussions.

The Council agreed to edit this management practice.

#### **WC-7 – Encourage non-potable reuse**

Ms. Voudy stated that the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District's original plan encourages reuse but the District is now focusing more toward returns. EPD encourages reuse options when that option reduces withdrawals. Council Member Luke stated counties would rather focus on reuse in place of withdrawals for facilities such as golf courses.

Mr. Haynie mentioned the notion of reuse can create a financial burden given the need to maintain two systems and different regulations. He also mentioned how Emory University withdraws 400,000 gallons per day and reuses its water for land application and flushing toilets; this reuse reduces their overall water need from their water utility.

Council Member Cofer stated that reuse should be encouraged when and where feasible.

The Council agreed to edit this management practice to include "where and when feasible."

#### **WC-8 - Require installation of rain sensor shut-off switches on new irrigation systems**

Council Member Cofer indicated that facilities should be educated on how to incorporate the rain sensor switches. He recommended changing an educative effort. Mr. Ford (Onsite Wastewater Association) mentioned that these facilities would benefit from using stormwater runoff once rain sensors were installed. He also noted that the use of cisterns should be encouraged.

Chairman Davis encouraged Council Members to participate in the upcoming process to update the State Building Code.

The Council agreed to edit this management practice to include education materials for businesses and apartments to encourage retrofit with rain sensors. The Council also recommended rain sensors on new irrigation systems.

#### **WC-9 - Require new car washes to recycle water**

The Planning Contractor detailed that current legislation states that conveyor car washes are currently required to recycle a minimum a 50% of their water; hand car washes are exempt.

Council Member Cofer mentioned that legitimate car wash businesses are able to send their water into storm drains to avoid the legislation. A Council member asked if this was regulated through the MS4 process. Ms. Voudy stated that this practice is not covered by MS4 permits.

Vice Chairman Graham asked EPD if all car washes are required to reuse their water. Ms. Voudy stated that it is a voluntary certification process for implementation of BMPs; additionally, there are no State inspections completed to confirm reuse.

The Council agreed to edit this management practice to encourage local jurisdictions to determine where water from local car washing shops discharge.

**WC-10 - Encourage residential water audits**

The Council agreed to keep this management practice.

**WC-11 - Encourage certification of irrigation specialists**

The Council agreed to keep this management practice.

**WC-12 - Encourage commercial water audits**

The Council agreed to keep this management practice.

**WATER SUPPLY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

**WS-1 - Expand existing reservoirs**

The Council agreed to keep this management practice.

**WS-2 - Construct new water supply reservoirs**

Mr. Haynie stated that the decision to construct new reservoirs should include an assessment of the financial/business case. Council Member Cofer mentioned that it can take 15-20 years to obtain a permit for a reservoir. Council Member Luke mentioned there is a risk involved with securing a reservoir as with any business case.

The Council agreed to edit this management practice.

**WS-3 - Develop new groundwater wells**

The Council agreed to keep this management practice.

**WS-4 - Encourage development of water master plans with periodic update**

The Council agreed to keep this management practice.

**WS-5 - Encourage indirect potable reuse**

The Council agreed to keep this management practice.

**WS-6 - Expand existing withdrawals from available reservoirs**

Council Member Gantt: We can keep it but there is no more water to be withdrawn. All the water we have is already regulated.

The Council agreed to keep this management practice.

**WS-7 - Encourage water system asset management**

Council Member Cofer mentioned the need for the State to implement statutes to prevent occurrences like the Flint, Michigan crisis occurring in Georgia. Mr. Haynie mentioned that water systems in Georgia are regulated differently from those in Michigan. He stated there is a clear demarcation of ownership in Georgia compared to Michigan. Ms. Voudy added that lead is regulated through the drinking water program with frequent drinking water samples and analysis.

The Council agreed to keep this management practice.

**WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

**WW-1 – Encourage implementation of centralized sewer in developing areas where density warrants**

The Council agreed to keep this management practice.

**WW-2 - Encourage development of local wastewater master plans/Evaluate wastewater treatment and disposal options to meet future demands**

The Council agreed to keep this management practice.

**WW-3 - Develop recommendations for decentralized sewer systems**

Mr. Haynie mentioned the national epidemic of items that are flushable but not biodegradable. He added that there are catastrophic overflows being witnessed at treatment plants as a result. The Planning Contractor suggested that the Council create a new management practice addressing this sort of debris.

The Council agreed to keep this management practice.

**WW-4 - Develop septic system planning and management policies and guidance**

Mr. Ford noted there are many counties, such as Athens-Clarke County, as well as districts across the State that provide pamphlets to homeowners which document details of their septic tanks. Mr. Jaeck suggested that the Council come up with a mapping component because in some areas, it is not clear where a septic tank is located.

The Council agreed to edit this management practice to include “financially feasible” to the management practice.

**WW-5 - Develop and implement sewer system capacity, management, operation, and maintenance (CMOM) program**

The Council agreed to keep this management practice.

**WW-6 - Provide local government with acceptable parameters for septage disposal at facilities**

Mr. Ford mentioned that illegal ground applications have been detected across many counties. Mr. Haynie said the Oconee County Utility Department has a \$400,000 septage plant upgrade underway to curb illegal dumping; disposal fees will provide the department with an additional revenue stream.

The Council agreed to keep this management practice.

**WW-7 - Implement grease management program**

The Council expressed an interest in encouraging the development of monitoring and enforcement capacity for grease management.

The Council agreed to keep this management practice.

**WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

**WQ-1 - Encourage comprehensive land use planning**

The Council agreed to keep this management practice.

**WQ-2 - Encourage local government participation in construction erosion and sediment control**

The Council agreed to edit this management practice to include public education efforts.

**WQ-3 - Encourage implementation of agricultural nutrient management programs**

The Council agreed to edit this management practice to include education materials for from Georgia Department of Agriculture and Georgia Farm Bureau.

**WQ-4 - Encourage forestry management practices**

The Council agreed to keep this management practice.

**WQ-5 - Encourage stream buffer protection**



The Council agreed to edit this management practice to remove the existing language and request that measures and practices implemented follow current State and local regulations.

**WQ-6 - Evaluate water quality credit trading**

Ms. Voudy mentioned that, to her knowledge, there are no water quality credit trading studies currently underway in the State.

Due to the complexity of implementing this type of program, the Council agreed to delete this management practice.

**WQ-7 - Encourage floodplain management / flood damage prevention**

The Council agreed to edit this management practice by removing the word “prohibit”.

**WQ-8 - Encourage general stormwater practices**

The Council agreed to keep this management practice.

**WQ-9 - Support total maximum daily load (TMDL) implementation**

The Council agreed to keep this management practice.

**WQ-10 - Encourage agricultural cropland management practices**

The Council agreed to edit this management practice to include Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission Best Management Practices Manual.

**WQ-11 - Promote post-development stormwater management**

The Council agreed to delete this management practice and merge it with WQ-8.

**WQ-12 - Monitor long-term ambient trends**

The Council agreed to keep this management practice.

**5) Discussion and review of Recommendations to the State (Plan Section 7.4)**

**A. Funding**

- **Identify long-term funding mechanism, beyond grants, to assist responsible parties with implementation.**

The Council agreed to keep this recommendation.

- **Work with existing organizations such as the [Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission] to identify incentives to encourage the installation and use of variable rate irrigation systems by a certified irrigation professional.**

The Council agreed to keep this recommendation.

## B. Coordination

- **Coordinate with DCA and the RCs to serve as the clearing house and coordinator for ongoing Regional Water Plan planning activities.**  
The Council agreed to keep this recommendation.
- **To provide continuity between Regional Water Plan updates, a minimum of six to nine Members of the original Council should be re-appointed.**  
The Council agreed to keep this recommendation.
- **The Council should meet bi-annually to track implementation and address potential issues or questions regarding implementation or plan amendments.**  
The Council agreed to edit this recommendation to meet minimum annually or as directed by Chairman. The Council also agreed to include needing contractor support. Additionally, the Council agreed to reaching out to zoning, land use, and permitting agencies for implementation.
- **Work with existing organizations, such as ACCG, GMA and GAWP to develop templates and materials that each Regional Council, with the assistance of DCA or the RCs noted in Section 2.3, can adapt for regional / local implementation.**  
The Council agreed to keep this recommendation.
- **Work with existing organizations such as the GSWCC and the State's University System to develop regional watering, nutrient management, cropland management guidelines for the major crops grown in the Region.**  
The Council agreed to edit this recommendation to include the Department of Agriculture.
- **Coordinate with State and local Public Health Departments to:**
  - **Develop consistent, minimum design standards that anticipate future centralized sewer connections where appropriate.**
  - **Develop example policies for connections to public sewer.**
  - **Develop regional recommendations and a model ordinance for decentralized sewer systems.**The Council agreed to keep this recommendation.
- **Coordinate with GEMA on development of a model flood damage prevention ordinance.**  
The Council agreed to keep this recommendation.

## C. Policy/Programmatic

- **Develop and implement a consistent program to meter and report agricultural water withdrawals greater than 100,000 gallons per day.**  
The Council agreed to delete this recommendation.

- **Consider modifying (limiting) the extent of exemptions found in O.C.G.A. § 12-7-17 regarding the Erosion and Sedimentation Control Act.**  
The Council agreed to edit this recommendation to open up some dialogue with the USDA to regulate timber conversions.
- **Revisit DO criteria for South Georgia, and the Region in particular, to consider naturally low background levels found in the Region.**  
The Council agreed to keep this recommendation.
- **Develop regulatory framework and guidelines for water quality credit trading in Georgia.**  
The Council agreed to delete this recommendation.
- **Build on existing GAEPD monitoring program to develop a regional long-term ambient trend monitoring network for the Region.**  
The Council agreed to keep this recommendation.

D. **Next 5-Year Update**

- **Refine Resource Assessment models to allow presentation of results at a finer resolution.**  
The Council agreed to keep this recommendation.
- **Conduct further study on the Cretaceous aquifer in Washington, Wilkinson, and Laurens Counties to clarify sustainable yields.**  
The Council agreed to delete this recommendation.
- **Collect and monitor withdrawal and discharge data from the kaolin industry to refine the water balance and wastewater return ratio assumptions.**  
The Council agreed to edit this recommendation to include other industries.
- **Support the evaluation of the current in-stream flow policy to determine whether revisions are needed to protect aquatic resources.**  
The Council agreed to keep this recommendation.

**6) Wrap Up/ Next Steps/ Council Meeting 5 Preview**

*319(h) Grant update Summary by Ms. Voudy*

The GAEPD 319(h) Nonpoint Source Implementation Grant Funding was awarded for the development of a nine-element Watershed Management Plan on the Ochwalkee Creek-Oconee River Watershed. The Grant was awarded to Pine Country RC&D; Ron Milligan serves at the primary point of contact of this Watershed Management Plan. Pine Country received the signed contract from EPD in January 2017 and is currently working to convene a watershed advisory committee. Pine Country RC&D plans to solicit some Council Members (particularly people located in Laurens County) to be on the advisory committee. However, any Council Member interested in

being on the advisory committee would be welcome. The expiration date of this project is June 30, 2018; the Watershed Management Plan must be completed by then.

Next Steps/ Council Meeting 5 Preview

Chairman Davis mentioned the notice for the next/last Council meeting request will be sent out. The location will remain the same at the Reynolds Plantation.

Mr. Jones thanked the Council for their active participation.

**7) Public Comments/Local Elected Official Comments**

Chairman Davis appreciated everyone and thanked them for their input, then opened the floor for comments.

Greg Boike (Middle Georgia Regional Commission) stated that it would be beneficial if the EPD could partner with agencies to work on the development of model ordinances/policies. He added that there needs to be a partnership between the EPD and local governments in the implementation of these management practices. He implored all present to reach out to absent counterparts when the Plan is released for the public comment period.

Mr. Jaeck thanked the Council for inviting the public to this and previous meetings.

Chairman Davis requested that the Planning Contractor develop a press release that will be distributed to all jurisdictions to inform them of the public comment period. Council Member Cofer added that the Planning Contractor should also ensure the Council website is updated.

**8) Meeting Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned by the Council chairman at 2:29 pm.

**9) Meeting Attendance**

Upper Oconee Regional Water Council Members in attendance:

- Melvin Davis (Chair); Pat Graham (Vice-Chair); Hunter Bicknell; Jim Luke; Linda S. Gantt; Stuart Cofer; Rabun Neal

Georgia EPD Representative in attendance:

- Christine Voudy

Regional Water Council Planning Contractors in attendance:

- Dale Jones, Zakiya Seymour, Oyin Familoni (representing Jacobs)

Agency Attendees:

- Greg Boike (representing Middle Georgia Regional Commission)
- Scott Thackston (representing Georgia Forestry Commission)

- Harold West (representing Georgia Forestry Commission)
- Marcus Zokan (representing Georgia Department of Natural Resources-Wildlife Resources Division)

Public Attendees:

- BJ Hunt (Max Pumping)
- Chad Pentair (representing Pentair)
- John Ford (representing Georgia Onsite Wastewater Association)
- Bryce Jaeck (representing the City of Madison)
- Wayne Haynie (Director of the Oconee County Utility Department)