

Memorandum

To: Upper Oconee Regional Water Planning Council

From: Zakiya Seymour, Jacobs

Date: June 26, 2017

*Subject: Upper Oconee Council Meeting 5
Regional Water Development and Conservation Plan Adoption Meeting Summary*

This memorandum provides the meeting summary of the Upper Oconee Regional Water Planning Council Meeting held on June 22, 2017 at The Plaza Arts Center in Eatonton, Georgia. This memorandum provides a summary of the items discussed at the Council Meeting that was held from approximately 10 AM to 11:45 AM.

1) Welcome and introductions/Approve Agenda

Vice Chairman Pat Graham called the meeting to order and welcomed members as well as the public to the meeting. She explained that Chairman Melvin Davis was traveling and could not attend the meeting. She turned the meeting over to the Planning Contractor who asked all present to introduce themselves. The minutes from the March 2, 2017 Council Meeting were approved following a motion by Vice Chairman Graham that was seconded by Council Member Bicknell.

2) Overview of Past Council Meetings

The first Council Meeting was held in March 2016. The next two meetings were joint meetings with other regional councils (RC). There have been 5 Council Meetings, office hour sessions, and subcommittee meetings since the Regional Water Plan (RWP) review began.

3) Review of Public Comments from Public Comment Period

The public comment period lasted 45 days and ended on May 19, 2017. The Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District (MNGWPD) sent a letter to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GAEPD) dated May 19, 2017 which recognized and applauded the Region's update to the RWP and coordination with the MNGWPD's Water Resource Management Plan.

Mr. David Huff (Nutter and Associates) provided comments to all 10 RCs. There were two major concerns:

- Rates of returns from land application systems (LAS) and septic systems
- Middle Oconee river stream gage analysis – evapotranspiration has been observed

The Planning Contractor reviewed the comments from Mr. Huff and well as feedback provided by the Consultant who completed the Surface Water Availability Resource Assessment. The Consultant concluded that:

- The most appropriate statistical tool was not used due to the non-normality of the data
- There may be confounding of the direct discharge flows into the Middle Oconee river stream dependent on the upstream drainage area and magnitude of its contribution in comparison to the magnitude of local flows

Ms. Welte (GAEPD) mentioned that the comment provided by Mr. Huff came after the comment period. She further explained the concern was about resource water assessments to determine potential gaps in specific planning nodes. The GAEPD has assumed LAS and septic systems are 100% consumptive and several United States Geological Survey (USGS) studies corroborate the GAEPD's assumptions. The Planning Contractor also mentioned that the Middle Chattahoochee Regional Water Planning Council included a recommendation to the State to conduct further studies of returns from LASs.

Council Member Armentrout mentioned he is familiar with the location referred to in Mr. Huff's comment. He added that the aforementioned LAS never functioned effectively as it discharged overtly to the Middle Oconee River and was always overloaded. He stated that the point LAS and septic systems were in fact not 100% consumptive. Council Member Bicknell agreed with Council Member Armentrout's comments predicated on his past experience with the Jackson Water Utility. Vice Chairman Graham asked if Council Member Armentrout will make any changes to the Council's plan based on the comments. Council Member Cofer mentioned the RWP's goal is to have clean water discharged from the LAS. There was no desire to change the plan based on the comments from Mr. Huff.

The Planning Contractor highlighted the several formatting changes/corrections that were made to each section of the RWP (punctuation, typos, spacing, etc.) after the public comment period.

4) Public Comment Period

Review of RWP Adoption Timeline

Council Member Davis asked for the timeline within which the RWP will be adopted.

Ms. Welte (GAEPD) gave the following breakdown:

- The Council will send the final version of the RWP to the GAEPD by next week.
- The GAEPD Director will move quickly, as he has been alerted of the RWP changes.
- The GAEPD will ensure there are no contradictions between Councils concerning shared resources.
- The RWP will be adopted in the beginning of July.

- Promotional materials (fact sheets and presentations) for the RWP will be provided for public distribution by September.

Population projections in the RWP

Mr. Foster thanked the Council Members and the Planning Contractor for their dedication towards the RWP update. He expressed concern with the population forecasting in the Plan and asked if an acknowledgment could be inserted into the Plan regarding the part time, seasonal, and understated/exceeded populations in several areas in the Region. Mr. Foster closed by saying that an understatement of population projections can impact county applications for state or federal grants. Council Member Bicknell mentioned that population projections in the last Plan were overly optimistic.

Vice Chairman Graham commented that the decennial census provides the most accurate population census and will be conducted in 2020. She asked when the next update to the Plan will take place. Ms. Welte (GAEPD) replied that it will be in 2021 to be aligned with the Atlanta Regional Council (ARC).

Ms. Welte (GAEPD) suggested that text or a footnote could be included in section 4.1 of the RWP concerning municipal forecasts; she cautioned that the Council to not include prior projections as no other RCs had done so in their respective RWPs.

Based upon the comments provided, the following suggested language was developed to be included in the Plan:

“Since the completion of the updated population projections in 2015, a very robust rebound in development has occurred within the Council’s region. While recognizing that the population projections will be updated before the next Plan update process, the Council also notes that in some areas, the future population projections are probably understated.”

Council Member Bicknell initiated the motion to include the addition to the Plan while Council Member Cofer seconded the motion. The motion to include the additional text carried with unison support. The Council agreed to include the statement after the first sentence in the second paragraph in section 4.1 of the RWP. Council Member Bicknell initiated the motion while Council Member Cofer seconded the motion. The motion of where to include the addition carried with unison support.

Upper Oconee Watershed Network

Ms. Lord representing the Upper Oconee Watershed Network (UOWN) made the following comment:

“UOWN stands in agreement with the Georgia State Water Plan. We recognize the need to conserve ground and surface water while expanding usage of such resources. UOWN believes these conservation efforts can be accomplished through regulation, citizen education, and agriculture

sector expansion. We believe the water resources of the Upper Oconee Basin and Altamaha Watershed, as a whole, can be further protected through increased monitoring and analysis of surface waters and wastewater discharges. These are all issues addressed by the State Water Plan and we thank the Council for their continued work and due diligence. In the future, we look forward to the development and implementation of nitrogen and phosphorus criteria under the Georgia Water Quality Standards."

5) Council Vote for adoption of RWP

Council Member Armentrout initiated a motion to submit the Plan with amendments as approved. Council Member Bicknell seconded the motion. The motion to submit the Plan with amendments as approved carried with unanimous support.

6) 319(h) Grant Update

Rahn Milligan of Pine County RC&D gave an update on the 319(h) grant for the development of the nine-element Watershed Management Plan on the Ochwalkee Creek-Oconee River Watershed.

- He mentioned that seven potential sampling sites for water quality monitoring have been identified.
- The sampling period will span six consecutive months of sampling.
- The watershed has been listed for impaired sediment/habitat degradation and poor dissolved oxygen (DO) which though not verified could be due to the natural flows in the River. Parameters that will be tested include DO and Total Suspended Solids (TSS) and will be sampled upstream. The Lower Oconee Watershed will also be sampled for fecal matter.
- The watershed advisory committee will convene prior to the sampling events and hold public meetings prior to and during the sampling period.
- The project is scheduled to conclude in June 2018.
- The GAEPD has historical data and TMDLs from 2005 and 2007. This data will be included in the final report.
- Land use will be identified and the included in the final report. Aerial photography, as well as documents from the United States Department of Agriculture Georgia Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Georgia Forestry Commission, and relevant county commissions will be used to capture land use. The data analysis will go back 10 years for comparison.
- A draft of the report will be presented in May 2018, and the final plan, including the generated best management practices, will be submitted in June 2018.

Council Members Armentrout and Cofer requested that the sampling period be modified to occur from August through January to cover seasonal changes.

7) Next Steps for the Council

Ms. Welte stated that FY2018 funds have been appropriated to support all the Councils. She spoke of going from plan finalization to plan implementation. The GAEPD will focus on:

- Fact sheets will be updated more of a focus to the content and implementation of the Plan
- Subsequent Council Meetings and coordination of topics to be discussed.

She concluded saying the GAEPD appreciates the Council Members' time and commitment and service to the Council and will discuss with Chairman and Vice Chairman regarding the Council appointment processes.

Vice Chairman Graham asked about the Council's website which is yet to be updated. Ms. Welte replied stating that Georgia Technology Authority (GTA) is working on a website that covers all the Councils and water planning processes and that all council websites will be redirected to this site. The Plan will be hosted on the Council's website and the overall site GTA is working on. When the GAEPD director approves the Plan, it will be made available to the State legislature.

The Planning Contractor reiterated the agreed coordination recommendations with the Council Chair:

- Six to Nine current Council Members be reappointed for the next Plan and vacancy levels to be advertised
- Council to meet a minimum of once a year to track implementation
- Contractor and EPD will discuss with chair and vice chair on potential topics

Council Member Cofer suggested that the Council reconvene during the draft review period of the Watershed Management Plan being developed for the Ochwalkee Creek-Oconee River Watershed. (May 2018). Council Member Eley suggested that the Council reconvene before the next legislative session. Mr. Foster suggested that a representative from the Georgia Department of Transportation come to address the Council with regards to environmental site processes and sedimentation and erosion control.

8) Meeting Adjournment

The Planning Contractor thanked the Council for their assistance through the RWP's update and adjourned the meeting at 11:35 AM for lunch.

9) Meeting Attendance

Upper Oconee Regional Water Council Members in attendance:

- Pat Graham (Vice Chairman); Hunter Bicknell; Stuart Cofer; Charles Armentrout; Jennifer Davis; Larry Eley; Danny Hogan; Bill Ross

Georgia EPD Representative in attendance:

- Jennifer Welte

Agency Attendees:

- Bryant Bowen (Georgia Department of Natural Resources)
- Matt Davis (Georgia Forestry Commission)
- Gary Hawkins (University of Georgia College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences)
- Rahn Milligan (Pine County Resource Conservation & Development)

Public Attendees:

- Bryce Jaeck (representing the City of Madison)
- Alan Foster (representing Putnam County)
- Cassidy Lord (Upper Oconee Watershed Network)
- Diane Windham (Upper Oconee Watershed Network)
- William Tietjen (Lake Oconee Water Watch)
- Lex Hembree (representing LanzaTech)