

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

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March 9, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Kevin Farrell, GA EPD
Doug Baughman, CH2MHILL

SUBJECT: Council Meeting 10 Summary
Upper Oconee Water Planning Council Meeting

Georgia Comprehensive Statewide Water Management Plan Regional Water Planning

Council Meeting 10 Summary

Meeting Date: March 9, 2011
Location: Plaza Arts Center, Eatonton, GA

1) Welcome

Council Coordinator Doug Baughman welcomed the group and introduced Alan Foster and Vince Ciampa as local Putnam County Council members. The two welcomed the group back to Putnam County.

2) Meeting Overview and Announcements

Baughman then reviewed the agenda and the primary objectives council members would need to achieve at that meeting, specifically:

- Review 319 Grant and “Council Future” recommendations.
- Discuss the Final Draft of the Regional Water Plan (RWP), also known as the Water Development and Conservation Plan.

He then gave Council members a run-down of the agenda for the day, which included:

- Discussion of subcommittee and local government coordination activities:
 - 319 Grant recommendations

- “Council Future” recommendations
- Feedback from local government and utility sessions
- Discussion of Revised Draft of Regional Water Plan
- Wrap up and next steps

3) Discussion on Subcommittee and Local Government Coordination Activities

Baughman moved the discussion to the key topics under the first agenda item.

a) 319 Grant Subcommittee Recommendations

A subcommittee of council members formed at CM 9 including Jennifer Davis, Stuart Cofer, Hunter Bicknell, Larry Eley, Charlie Armentrout, Benjie Tarbutton, and Vince Ciampa held three conference calls in December and January to review potential projects and discuss the 319 Grant options. Baughman reminded the group that the Athens-Clarke County representatives suggested a septic tank education study as the Council’s grant project. As no other suggestions were submitted, the committee recommended the septic tank study. One of the subcommittee members noted that the application was submitted successfully before the January 31 deadline to EPD. The project is expected to be funded around Fall 2011.

Baughman noted that an email was sent to the entire Council regarding the recommendation, but that there was no time to arrange a meeting of the full group and still meet the deadline.

b) "Council Future" Subcommittee Recommendations

The same subcommittee also discussed the future of the council on the conference calls and made the following recommendations:

- Coordinate with the RCs (regional commissions) to serve as the clearinghouse and coordinator for ongoing Regional Water Plan planning activities
- Reappoint a minimum of 6-9 original council members to the next council to provide continuity between RWP updates
- Hold bi-annual council meetings to track implementation and address potential issues or questions regarding implementation or plan amendments.

Additionally, council members may request a full meeting of the council to address potential RWP amendments in the interim period between updates by contacting the acting council chairperson.

It was also noted that this Council’s appointments officially end in March 2012.

Baughman was asked about the planning contractors’ role at the end of the appointment. He noted that the contract actually expires at the end of 2011, so the Council would no longer have paid support, which was the thought behind the recommendation to rely on the RCs to help implement the Plan.

Another Council member asked Baughman to elaborate on the discussions with the RCs. He noted that they have had detailed discussions with Jim Dove, of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC). They were not very involved early in the development of our RWP, but have become engaged recently and also attended the local government outreach meetings held recently in Athens. NEGRC staff agreed that it makes sense to serve as the coordinating RC, working in conjunction with the other applicable RCs. NEGRC has 7 of the 13 counties in the

Upper Oconee region with the remaining six counties split among three different RCs. The RCs role would essentially be that of the planning contractors during the development of the WRP, i.e. coordinating meetings, maintaining communications, etc.

A Council member mentioned that he held a similar discussion with Dove and that he was agreeable and encouraged the RCs role as the WRP coordinator. Someone asked how other councils are handling this. Baughman stated that the Coosa-North Georgia WPC had chosen to work with its respective RC as well. EPD staff noted that some councils were undecided on this matter, but that RCs had been the most commonly mentioned way to proceed. However, funding constraints continue to be an issue.

This led to some general discussion about using the RCs. One member wanted to know if the RCs would call the council meetings. Baughman noted they would act in the same capacity as the planning contractors do currently. The Chair said it would be a good idea for all councils to use the RCs so that all RCs are on the same page in terms of gearing up to do the work and knowing what the situation is. Another council member commented that the affected RCs should agree to work together before the Upper Oconee WPC moves forward with this approach. The group agreed that they were okay with the Chair and planning contractors starting discussions with the RCs on how the groups can work together.

The discussion turned to the timing on when council members would be reappointed and what the Council should recommend to the state. Baughman pointed out that the next round of appointments would not occur until 2017. One member suggested that after current appointments expired, at least 6-9 of the original group be reappointed immediately. That same group could also form a committee to the lead RC for implementation of the RWP. A motion for this decision was made, seconded and passed.

Someone then raised the question of who would coordinate bringing the group back together. Baughman asked the group if they would like to include a recommendation to the state as to when the next full council should be appointed. One member pointed out that with 10 councils statewide, there would need to be consistency to the process. Another member added that appointments should occur at least 12-18 months before the next RWP revision. Baughman commented that would essentially have the group of 6-9 working with the RC for three years (2012-2015). One member suggested having two representatives from each RC area, plus an alternate.

Another member stated that he would like to stay in communication with the RC even if not selected to be part of the smaller group. Baughman said that shouldn't be a problem since all the contacts would be the same for the RC until a new council was appointed. One member supported this, saying that everyone had put a lot of effort into the process and deserved to be kept up to date on the implementation. Baughman said the original thought was to let the governor and Lt. governor select the 6-9 members to be reappointed, but he wondered if the current group should go ahead and pick the 6-9 since they would be engaged with the RC. But a member said the idea was just to have a certain number of people who've already been through the learning process on board to help expedite the next revision. He did make a motion that the Council included a recommendation to the state for it to participate in funding the RCs specifically for implementation of the RWP. The motion was passed.

c) **Feedback From Local Government and Utility Sessions**

Following this discussion, Baughman reviewed the three local government meetings held February 8 and 10 in Athens, Milledgeville, and Dublin. The agenda for each meeting included an overview of the Regional Planning Process, the draft RWP, the recommended MPs, implementation responsibilities, as well as a question/comment period. He said the meetings were well attended and provided good feedback from local entities.

Comments/feedback from local governments and utilities on the draft RWP included:

- An education program component, i.e. MP, should be the number one priority for water conservation as well as the other water resources sectors
- Ensure terms such as “conservation rate structure” and “indirect potable reuse” are defined for consistent implementation within the Region
- Extensive discussion and suggestions regarding how to better track and encourage proper, proactive maintenance of septic tanks as well as their conversion to centralized sewer where appropriate
- In some cases, it is appropriate to have both the Regional Commissions and the Local Governments listed, not just one of them
- Suggestion from an Upper Oconee council member that in the first year the responsible parties should go through and determine what they need to do and when, i.e. create a local government / utility implementation plan worksheet.

Participants also provided insight into some of the potential implementation challenges, such as:

- Lack of awareness of the need for the Plan
- Funding
- Staying focused on the MPs during the initial years of implementation
- Future role of the Council and the RCs ability to implement due to state budget shortfalls.
- Foreclosed and abandoned properties

The council member who suggested the worksheet said it might be onerous at first, but that the Council put a lot of work into the Plan and the state is looking to it [the Plan] to manage water issues for the next 20-30 years. He added that it might take a little work in the beginning, but it would force local governments to read the Plan and figure out what needs to be implemented. Another council member commented that kind of effort would actually help them with future permitting. Baughman asked if this would be something the RCs could help the local government with. Council members said it should be recommended. A brief discussion on funding ensued with the agreement that the state should provide some funding to the RCs but with the realization that the level of funding would have to be defined. No formal action was taken.

4) “Wrapping Up” the First Round and Next Steps

Ted Hendrickx of EPD then gave a brief presentation in response to ongoing issues EPD was hearing about during the planning process. He noted that at CM3, the Upper Oconee WPC identified a deficiency of accessibility to data. He focused on EPD’s monitoring program and a coordinated database in development that will pull together a lot of the data and make it publicly accessible. He mentioned that the existing adopt a stream web site has been set up with the regional council boundaries so anyone can access the data collected in the various basins.

Regarding public education recommendations, he said it is important to leverage existing resources. EPD staff is planning to go through the plan and see which utilities or organizations already have materials that will fit into the goal of region-specific education. These materials would be provided to all the councils for distribution.

5) Council Discussion on Revised Draft Water Development and Conservation Plan (WDCP)

Planning contractor Brian Skeens provided a brief summary of the changes that were made in the latest version of the RWP (also known as the WDCP). He noted that the main changes were related to the tables on management practices; the table was split into separate tables by management practice category (water conservation, water supply, wastewater, and water quality). During a brief discussion after the introduction of the topic, Baughman noted that the Plan's language on implementation was edited to remove the "qualified local government" (QLG) status as defined by the Department of Community Affairs.

After the brief overview of the RWP, Council took each section and offered their comments. Most of the comments related to the sections covering management practices and implementation.

A council member suggested adding a footnote to Figure 5-5 about current condition. Another member said a footnote should also be added to Figure 5-6 to denote future conditions. Skeens highlighted the new table, 5-7, that summarizes the gaps and shortages by county. A couple of council members suggested including the abridged versions of the tables from the meeting presentation into the document. Baughman said this would be included in the executive summary. Skeens suggested including Table 5-7 that shows the gaps as well. EPD staff commented that the footnote for Table 5-7 should refer to "permitted" rather than "future permitted" in addressing capacity.

Additional suggestions included removing "encourage" from water conservation MP 8 referring to the installation of rain sensors on irrigation systems, when it should read mandatory. Skeens agreed that would be removed. Planning contractors also agreed to add a reference to a specific MP in Table 5-7 that would help address the groundwater gap in Laurens County. EPD staff pointed out that contractors need to clarify the potential gap for the combined coastal aquifer since the region is within the potential range of sustainable yield. Members requested that a couple of charts be made larger (6-4, legend on 1-2) and noticed that Table 7-5 had an incorrect reference. Skeens and Baughman said they would check the references for each table in section 6 and 7.

There was a question about where the data came from to support the cost tables. Skeens responded that EPD provided a guidance document on costs that were used by all the contractors. Another member asked if there was once a table that had all the MPs, implementation responsibilities, and costs combined. Skeens said costs have always been broken out separately in the document, but that it was discussed in previous MP committee meetings. She suggested adding a supplemental document or table that has all the information in one table. Someone else asked about the costs for Water Supply MP 1 and 2 in and whether this included storage and treatment. A question was also raised about Water Quality MP 1 and whether or not it should include "zoning". Baughman noted that the Council had discussed removing it, but that it was overlooked; it would be taken off for the draft. The term QLG was also removed from Table 7-1.

A council member brought up the annual survey listed in Section 8 of the RWP. She suggested the council should set up a subcommittee to develop the survey to make sure that it meets EPD's needs. Skeens noted that the subcommittee talked about having the RCs help support in this effort. Another

member said that that the group of 6-9 who would support implementation could work with the RCs to develop the survey. The member who made the suggestion said it would help local governments to know what the survey will look like and also help them understand their responsibilities; having it online would also make it easier to implement. The Chair suggested that the planning contractors coordinate getting volunteers to work on the survey after the meeting with the RCs.

The council voted to approve the draft RWP plan with the discussed changes.

Baughman then reminded the group of the key milestones for completions of the final RWP:

- Generate final RWP for GA EPD review and distribution for public comment no later than May 2, 2011.
- Post public notice for the comment period for the final RWP no later than May 9, 2011 (GA EPD to undertake)
- Review final RWP at CM11 in September
- Generate final RWP for GA EPD adoption no later than September 30, 2011

6) Elected Official and Public Comments

Comments from elected officials and the public were solicited throughout the meeting and then also at the end. There were no public comments

7) Wrap Up and Next Steps

A date for the next council meeting was tentatively set for September 14. The purpose will be to review and approve any public comments to the Plan.

8) Written Comments Submitted to Council

No written comments were submitted to Council.

Meeting Attendees

Council Members Present

- James Andrews
- Charles S. Armentrout
- Richard Bentley, Chair
- Hunter Bicknell
- Vincent Ciampa
- Jennifer Davis
- Melvin Davis
- Alan Foster
- Roger Folsom
- Linda Gantt
- Pat Graham
- Allen Hodges
- Danny Hogan
- Dennis W. Holder, Vice Chair
- Charles H. Jordan
- Kevin Little
- Benjamin R. Tarbutton

Council Members Absent

- Stuart A. Cofer (alternate)
- Larry Eley
- Pat Hardy
- Dana Heil
- Jim Luke (alternate)
- Drew Marczak
- Richard McSpadden
- Rabun Neal
- Bill Ross
- Greg Thompson
- Rep. Terry England (ex-officio)
- Sen. Bill Cowsert (ex-officio)

Staff and Planning Contractors

- Kevin Ferrell, EPD
- Ted Hendrickx
- Doug Baughman, CH2MHill
- Brian Skeens, CH2M Hill
- Marci Davis, Jacobs

Partnering Agencies

- Patti Lanford, Department of Natural Resources – Fisheries
- Joe Krewer, Department of Community Affairs
- Harold West, Georgia Forestry Commission
- John Colberg, Georgia Forestry Commission

General Public

- Herbie Johnson, Georgia Power
- Sandra Hudson, Georgia Power
- Wes Lewis, Georgia Power
- Ben Emanuel, Altamaha Riverkeeper
- Gary Duck, Athens-Clarke County