

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Environmental Protection Division • Watershed Protection Branch

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Judson H. Turner, Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

From: Kristi Harpst, Middle Georgia Regional Commission

Subject: Upper Oconee Water Planning Council Meeting

Upper Oconee Water Planning Council Meeting

Meeting Date: November 20, 2013

Location: Legislative Chambers at Georgia Military College, Milledgeville, Georgia

1. Welcome and Meeting Overview

Chairman Richard Bentley, Mayor of Milledgeville, called the meeting to order and welcomed the Council and other attendees. Chairman Bentley then explained the Council had decided to have the Regional Commission facilitate the meeting. Kristi Harpst from the Middle Georgia Regional Commission (MGRC) was then introduced.

Chairman Bentley then introduced Doug Baughman, a consultant with CH2M Hill which assisted with development of the Upper Oconee Regional Water Plan. Baughman had been asked by the Chairman to attend the meeting and to provide Council with a review of the Regional Water Plan.

Lebone Moeti of the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) was introduced and spoke briefly to the Council.

Each Council member then introduced themselves and gave a brief description of their background and past involvement with the Council.

The Agenda included the following items:

- Brief Review of Regional Water Plan
- Discussion on Next Steps for Implementation
- Regional Assessment of Implementation Status Overview
- Review Process and Next Steps

2. Brief Review of Regional Water Plan

Baughman's presentation included an overview of the Plan, the adoption timeline, and some of the key management recommendations. The Council was created in 2009, the Plan was completed in 2011, and Plan was approved by the EPD in 2012.

Baughman stated the Water Plan had seven sections with a specific focus on the basin. Baughman mentioned, due to the diversity of water users and land uses across the basin, the Council decided that a

“one size fits all” approach would not be appropriate. The Council recommendations, given the diversity in the region, were more of a menu of the activities to reflect future changes in land use and population density.

Water Demand, Energy, and Capacity

Baughman provided the Council with a review of the future demand for municipal water supply and the forecast for municipal wastewater between 2010-2050. Baughman mentioned the next round of updates would include changes reflecting updates of population projections. Baughman then discussed energy; more specifically, the majority of water use related to energy required for cooling which is not a consumptive use.

The three nodes used for modeling water availability were discussed. The only issues were in the upper portion, or the “Penfield” planning node in the upper portion of the basin. The remaining nodes included the “Milledgeville” node in the middle portion of the basin encompassing Lakes Oconee and Sinclair, and the “Mount Vernon” node at the extreme lower end of the basin. The issue with the Penfield node was the future gap of 42 MGD in 2050. This would be occurring at 0.1 percent of the time, and Baughman noted 99 percent of time the in-stream flow requirement would be met. Nevertheless, drought management or water supply would be required to meet the .1 percent of demand in 2050. Baughman also discussed future wastewater capacity and the availability of existing permitted wastewater capacity in the Region.

Management Practices

Baughman discussed how the management practices were focused on four areas including Water Conservation, Water Supply, Wastewater, and Water Quality. Conservation had the largest number of recommendation with a total of 12 management practices. In 2011, before the recommendations were finalized, the State released a document with the common water conservation recommendations. Baughman mentioned some those items were incorporated into the Water Plan management recommendations. Baughman then provided Council with a review of the top two implementation management recommendations and corresponding implementation steps for each of the four focus areas.

3. Discussion on Next Steps for Implementation

Council Appointments

Kristi Harpst briefly discussed the Council members appointment terms, stating that although Council members’ terms technically expired in 2012, for continuity purposes all appointments were considered to be standing until EPD and the Governor make new appointments.

EPD Expectations/Plans

Lebone Moeti of EPD then gave a brief presentation about the role of EPD, Regional Commission and informed the Council that going forward there would be State funds made available to support the Council. Moeti mentioned there were efforts underway to have all the Councils involved in the permitting process.

4. Regional Assessment of Implementation Status Overview

Moeti then provided the Council with a review of the guidance document which would provide the framework for the Regional Water Planning Council activities from July 2013-June 2014. Council was informed about the Expected Activities, Roles, and Responsibilities listed in the document. Moeti went on

to discuss how implementation efforts throughout the region would be summarized in the Regional Assessment of Implementation Status. Moeti also provided Council with a review of all the sections included in the document.

Harpst stated the importance of the Council in setting the framework for the Regional Assessment of Implementation Status Report document. This document would serve as the starting point for the five-year revision of the Plan. Harpst said the Regional Commission would need the Council's assistance in the development of the document and identifying projects in the region to highlight.

Harpst provided the Council with an example of an implementation project that could be included in the Regional Assessment of Implementation Status Report document. Harpst also provided an update about the 319 Grant awarded to Athens-Clarke County for the development a Septic System Maintenance Education and Inventory Program, which is set for completion in March 2014. Harpst then asked the Council about any data needed to assist the Council with the decision-making process.

The identified data gaps include:

- The Resource Assessment on groundwater aquifers for the lower part of the basin was limited.
- Issues with the population numbers.
- Surface water quality monitoring and number of stations (3 Nodes).
- Issues with point and non-point contamination of the creeks. According to Baughman this is due to an issue of scale. Specifically, how previously data and monitoring information came from larger Watersheds. There is a concern from a council member that small tributaries could receive contamination, thus it was an issue of public concern for Wilkinson County.

Council Implementation Actions

Harpst then explained the purpose of the implementation action categories and mentioned the required Water Demand Management category. Harpst also provided Council with examples of categories selected by other councils.

Harpst ask the Council for feedback on potential categories for the Regional Assessment of Implementation Status Report. Each category would be used to highlight related projects implemented in the region. In addition, to the EPD-required category of Water Demand Management, optional categories include:

- Water Supply
- Wastewater
- Water Quality
- Stormwater, including non-point source pollution
- Data and Information Needs

Lebone mentioned the Water Audits being conducted statewide. Lebone also mentioned activities in water conservation, and EPD water conservation document recently released.

Harpst then asked the Council for information on activities in the region related to

- Outreach and Implementation;
- EPD Water Permits;
- Federal, State, or Private Sector Grants/Loans Received; and

- Local funds Raised/Expended.

Council member Alan Foster mentioned the report would be limited to a minimum of three categories, thus the categories would be critical.

Moeti said that EPD would collect data regarding the GEFA loans and grants received in the area. Chairman Bentley stated an interest in having additional data, specifically information from GEFA or other organizations.

Moeti stated that the Council did not have to decide on anything at the meeting, but an area interest would be public education. Moeti also stated the Council decisions and input would inform the next five year plan. Moeti went on to state the purpose of the meeting was to provide council with a review or refresher on the plan.

Harpst mentioned the Council could expect an outline of the Regional Assessment of Implementation Status Report in the December/January timeframe. A draft of the Report would require significantly more input from the Council and local communities.

Council member Pat Graham asked about the rollout of the population projection from the Governor's office. Kristi explained that updated population projections will be part of the five-year plan update.

Council member Hunter Bicknell mentioned a number of improvements to utilities surrounding the basin had been made, and asked if the Regional Assessment document would act as a measurement of the Council's accomplishments related to the priorities listed in the Regional Plan.

Moeti stated the Council accomplishments or activities would be reviewed in the five-year plan. This is more of a review or assessment of current implementation successes. Harpst then provided some examples in Byron and Macon which was followed by a discussion of underway and completed projects in the Upper Oconee Water Council Planning Region:

- The City of Athens was completing a major wastewater treatment plant, and Jackson County Water & Sewerage Authority also had similar project underway. Bicknell stated Wastewater should be one of the 3-5 categories.
- Council member Charles Armentrout stated that Athens recently completed three wastewater plants which should improve water quality in the region.
- Foster discussed issues with system leakage, wastewater improvements and a financial shortfall to address these in Putnam County and the City of Eatonton.
- Council member Linda Gantt mentioned the Hard Labor Creek Reservoir had been permitted, and construction was underway. This project will help to address identified gaps in the Plan.
- Graham mentioned that a small city in Barrow County is building a reservoir with the assistance of GEFA planning loan and applied for second loan to fund construction of the reservoir but were not included in the most recent round of funding. The City of Winder water project involving Fort Yargo Lake.
- Bicknell discussed a reservoir project in the City of Jefferson's nearing completion.

Graham mentioned how the areas surrounding the basin and the region represented three unique areas. It was determined that the best approach for the Regional Assessment of Implementation Status Report to reflect the three distinct areas represented in the region.

Moeti also mentioned the need to review the agricultural permits that have been issued within the Region.

5. Next Steps

Harpst stated she would be contacting each Council member individually for input since the Council would only be meeting twice. Harpst will be assembling data and information for the Council's review which should be provided in January 2014. The next Council meeting would occur sometime in March.

6. Public Comments

Meeting attendees from the public were then provided the opportunity to provide comments and input.

Kyle McKay of the Upper Oconee Watershed Network provided brief comments and discussed how the Upper Oconee Plan highlights the need for additional planning. He mentioned the UGA River Basin Center and Landscape Architecture Design Studio as potential resources to fulfill planning needs of the Council. He also mentioned the opportunities that exist to leverage Public-Private Partnerships (P3's).

No written comments were submitted to the Council.

The meeting was closed with a thank you to Doug Baughman for attending and sharing his expertise, the Chairman Bentley for arranging the meeting location as well as to the Council members for their time. The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 am.

Meeting Attendees

Council Members Present

- James Andrews
- Charles S. Armentrout
- Richard Bentley
- Hunter Bicknell
- Jennifer Davis
- Larry Eley
- Roger L. Folsom
- Alan Foster
- Linda S. Gantt
- Pat Graham
- W. Rabun Neal

Staff and Planning Contractors

- Lebone Moeti, EPD
- Doug Baughman, CH2M Hill
- Kristi Harpst, MGRC
- Denise Brookins, MGRC

Partnering Agencies/General Public

- Keegan Malone, Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission
- Tas Smith, Georgia Farm Bureau
- Chris Manganiello, Georgia River Network
- Kyle McKay, Upper Oconee Watershed Network
- Bryce Jaeck, City of Madison
- Marilyn Hall, Athens-Clark County
- Christine McCauley, Madison-Morgan Conservancy
- Harold West, Georgia Forestry Commission
- Debbie Gordon, USGS
- Dave Bass, Georgia Forestry Commission
- Jed Evans, Georgia Farm Bureau
- Erin Harris, Nutter & Associates