

# Georgia Department of Natural Resources

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Kevin Farrell, GA EPD  
Doug Baughman, CH2MHILL

SUBJECT: Meeting 6 Summary  
Upper Oconee Water Planning Council Meeting

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## Georgia Comprehensive Statewide Water Management Plan Regional Water Planning

### Council Meeting 6 Summary

Meeting Date: June 16, 2010  
Location: Cuscowilla, Eatonton (Putnam County)

#### 1) Welcome and Meeting Overview

Chairman Richard Bentley called the Upper Oconee Water Planning Council (OUWPC) meeting to order and invited member Vince Ciampa to offer a few words about Putnam County since he was one of its local representatives.

Council Coordinate Doug Baughman then briefly reviewed the Vision and Goals of the UOWPC and explained the objectives for the day's meeting:

- Review Final Water Forecasts
- Discuss Updated Resource Assessment Modeling
- Review Initial Management Practices

Baughman directed the Council's attention to the additional guidance document issued by Environmental Protection Division Director Allen Barnes. The document advised that Councils should develop a Plan as specific as possible based on current information but keep it flexible so that adjustments can be made as new data becomes available. EPD Assistant Branch Chief Kevin Farrell elaborated on some of the points made in the guidance document, such as the importance of coordinating with local governments and neighboring councils. He also recommended that the councils should not let lack of data stop progress and management practice selection and development of the plans.

## **2) Final Water Demand Forecasts Update**

Planning contractor Brian Skeens spent the next part of the meeting reviewing the final water demand forecast numbers for municipal, industrial, agricultural, and energy. Skeens referred members to handouts with those forecasts noting that there had been revisions since the last Council meeting and subcommittee meetings. In the industrial sector, he pointed out that the kaolin industry had requested to be shifted from non-metallic minerals to mining.

**Council Comment:** Changes don't reflect earlier concerns raised about Putnam County and its intent to transition to surface water use through Piedmont Water. It completely underestimates demand, is off by a magnitude of 50 percent. The numbers should look similar to Greene County. Also question the methodology for generating demand numbers.

**Council Coordinator:** Will coordinate a meeting with Piedmont Water, Putnam County, and Council members from the area to resolve the issue.

After this discussion, Skeens told the group that the energy forecasts are expected to be ready late summer 2010.

## **3) Updated Resource Assessment Modeling Review**

Baughman then provided an update on the water availability [quantity] modeling and the water quality modeling.

Regarding quality, he noted that the modeling efforts are still under review by EPD. He also showed maps of various waterways in the basin and clarified that red stream segments did not necessarily indicate a violation, but that the area needs more detailed monitoring and analysis.

**Council Comment:** There are some issues with naturally occurring DO [dissolved oxygen] within the Lower subarea.

**Council Comment:** Some of the models on nitrogen and phosphorus can drive the management practices selection, but we should remember to adapt as conditions change over time.

**Coordinator Comment:** Additional monitoring would be a great recommendation to get more and better data to improve the plan each time it is updated.

Baughman also gave the group a brief overview of the quantity modeling, which focused on future results. He noted that the Georgia Power reservoir storage is already allocated for downstream flows and not available for use.

#### 4) Management Practice Guidance Update

The discussion then moved to providing guidance on management practices. Baughman again touched on the memo from EPD Director Allen Barnes and its emphasis on addressing existing and future gaps.

**Council Comment:** There doesn't seem to be a big difference in Barnes' message and the one we got at the start of this [under different EPD leadership].

**EPD Comment:** Keep moving forward even if data is lacking and coordinate with local governments.

**Council Comment:** What mechanism exists to integrate new data as it becomes available?

**Council Coordinator:** Will be integrated in the next Plan update however there could be situations where the recommended management practices need to be tweaked based on monitoring data.

Skeens shifted the discussion to a review of the newly passed Water Stewardship Act. Some specifics he pointed out included:

- Promotion of a culture of conservation
- Public Water System DNR Requirements
  - Outdoor irrigation restricted from 10 am to 4 pm
  - Exemption requests will be routed through the Director
- Agricultural permitting (active, inactive and unused) unused permits will expire after two years.

**Council Comment:** What are the differences among the categories of permits?

**Planning Contractor:** Active means used at least once in the last two years; inactive means not currently in use but the permit holder plans to use it; unused means just that.

Skeens continued the review, noting that submetering is specifically allowed and will be required of multi-family dwellings after 2010. Water conserving fixtures and heat removal from buildings are also part of the requirements.

Skeens explained that the goal of the conservation framework set by the law is not to prevent water use, but to maximize efficiency and the benefit from each gallon used and utilities must show progress. Therefore, conservation is a priority practice. EPD is developing guidance to assist the planning contractors in developing tiers of conservation practices, but there are still questions as to how to go from one tier to another. He pointed out that the water quality modeling framework will be used to consistently evaluate the management practices bases on the specific models.

Skeens told the group that there had been a limited response so far regarding “existing plans” (for watershed or stormwater management, capital improvements, or master plans for water and wastewater infrastructure) with about a 15% response rate.

## **5) Management Practice Sub Committee Reports**

At this point, Council subcommittees provided reports on the issues for their particular areas.

### **Subcommittee Report for Upper Area (Jackson, Barrow, Walton, Oconee, Clarke)**

Hunter Bicknell detailed the subcommittee’s work of the previous months and their topics and recommendations.

- Water quality: Athens-Clarke County was recognized for its efforts to improve water quality where its discharges are located. Bicknell noted that the group also recognized that as populations increase, they will be required to increase nonpoint source control.
- Wastewater: The subcommittee proposed promoting higher levels of treatment and return flows through increased sewerage
- Demand Management: The subcommittee felt that the area already has some good practices in place, such as their drought management practices (e.g. Athens-Clarke County’s drought contingency plan appears to be more aggressive than portions of the Stewardship Act), and also expressed support of the Water Stewardship Act. Members are concerned about the financial implications for local utilities and businesses and do not want to create undue hardships on growth in the region.
- Supply: The subcommittee recognized that the upper portion of the region needs significant new water storage capacity. They did discuss interbasin transfers and even though they did not reach consensus on the issue, they did not want to remove that as an option.

**Council Comment:** We know that interbasin transfers are a volatile issue, but the plan should document existing ones. You can’t unscramble this egg. And the plan does need to be feasible from a cost perspective for utilities that are currently struggling financially.

**Council Comment:** There is a real need to document every project currently being planned not just those that have been presented to EPD. Also, we shouldn’t force or try to fit management practices for the entire region. For example some conservation rate structures might not be appropriate for the lower region.

**Council Comment:** There should be a mechanism for tracking septic tank maintenance including record keeping at the public health department. This might be more applicable in the upper portion of the basin. That could be a potential BMP (best management practice), have all health departments track implementation.

**Council Comment:** Some of the issues worked through in the Metro District [North Georgia Metropolitan Water Planning District] could be applicable for future development in rural areas.

**Subcommittee Report for Central Area (Morgan, Baldwin, Putnam, Greene, Hancock)**

Vince Ciampa presented on the efforts undertaken by the central area subcommittee and the issues facing the area. Highlights include:

- Recognition of the value of Georgia Power lakes [Oconee, Sinclair] in the central area in contributing to future growth when economy picks up
- Putnam and Baldwin Counties have economic development plans in place
- Water Quality: Better control over storm water is needed, erosion/sediment control improvement, particularly with agriculture
- Small package, centralized sewer systems are a potential solution for pockets of new development
- Groundwater wells are not a long term solution for central area
- Coordination with Georgia Power will ultimately be needed for additional use of the lakes

**Council Comment:** The lakes are the economic drivers for region, but they are trending towards being less desirable. There are issues with failing septic tanks (50%) and degradation of water quality in the [lake] coves and embayments.

**Council Comment:** Septic tank fees should cover the GPS mapping of the fields. There are groundwater issues related to volume and quality, such as uranium.

**Council Comment:** We're in the process of retrofitting some of the lake developments for sewer however there is an issue with the cost of doing so.

**Council Comment:** What nonpoint source pollutants are impacting the lakes?

**Council Comment:** UGA and KSU [Kennesaw State University] are looking into differentiating between the sources which will aid in selecting management practices.

**EPD Comment:** The highest concentrations are coming down the Oconee River.

**Council Comment:** We need to tie water and wastewater services together since water providers don't generally volunteer for wastewater.

**Council Comment:** Fertilizers are already being adjusted to lower phosphorus content.

**Council Comment:** WE shouldn't eliminate from consideration the possibility of constructing of new reservoirs.

**Subcommittee Report for Lower Area (Washington, Laurens, Wilkinson)**

Jennifer Davis provided an overview of the work done by the Lower Area subcommittee and the issues they identified.

- Recognition that area is currently good for water quantity but that planning will be needed for future demands
- Effectiveness noted as an important management practice selection criteria for the more rural counties
- Flat population growth would make aggressive stormwater controls inappropriate for the area overall, but some of the more densely populated areas could benefit
- Consideration of reuse water and the technologies available
- Septic tank education will need to be emphasized

- Water Supply: Continued use of ground water, but need to be cautious because of large industrial uses of the same water
- Appreciation that other portions of the Basin recognize more rural nature of lower area
- Focus needs to be on quality since quantity is not an issue
- In Hancock County, there are issues with dirt roads

**Council Comment:** There have been recent improvements in forestry BMPs [best management practices]. There is upwards of 90% compliance with forestry BMPs in the Oconee area.

**Public Comment:** The Georgia Forestry Commission relies on 14 staff members and an airplane for enforcement. Georgia Power has also contributed to forestry BMPs. [from Georgia Forestry representative]

At this point, representative from the Georgia Forestry Commission provided a brief overview of steps that have been taken to mitigate forestry's impact on watersheds. Council agreed to listen after the GFC staffer John Colberg made the request. Colberg listed the following changes that have been made to forestry activities since the 90s, including:

- Establishing a Sustainable Forestry Initiative
- Creating the Master Timber Harvesting Program, which credential loggers and gives sawmills the power to reject foresters that do not comply with the Program

## **6) Initial Management Practices Review and Discussion**

Following the subcommittee reports, the full Council was engaged in an activity to start selecting management practices. Baughman and Council facilitator Marci Davis led this effort with support from Skeens.

Baughman supplied the Council with multiple handouts containing tables of management practices to address water quality, water quantity, demand management (conservation), and wastewater. Since the group had not been given the management practice portfolios prior to the meeting, Davis explained that members would be given a few minutes to quickly review the list. The planning contractors would then go around the room and let members suggest practices to eliminate from consideration. Baughman emphasized that this would be a preliminary cut and that no decisions would be final.

This exercise generated much discussion and the Council was only able to go through water quality MPs and the demand management MPs, both of which presented the most options respectively.

Part of the initial discussion focused on defining what would be a requirement, or a "shall," and what would be a recommendation, or a "should." Some practices were categorized as a "maybe."

### **Water Quality MPs**

The first four MPs related to agricultural practices were categorized as “shalls” because some Council members pointed out that they are already promoted through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS – part of USDA) and that people do participate when cost sharing is provided. The Council agreed to keep the items in the list as recommendation but not to require them because of the cost.

**Council Comment:** What about additional information on the cost to implement these management practices?

**Council Coordinator:** Those numbers will come later.

**Council Comment:** When it comes to shall versus should, what mechanism will EPD use to implement the shall?

**EPD Comment:** It would likely be integrated into the permit conditions.

**Council Comment:** It’s very difficult to fence cows out of the creeks on large farms. It costs a lot of money.

**Council Comment:** The cost is relative. It might be a lot to a farmer, but not so much to a local utility. The discussion also touched on the concept of water quality credit trading and members asked that that be added to the MPs. Baughman pointed out that the Statewide Water Plan does specifically note credit trading, so there would not need to be additional rule making to have that happen.

Council agreed that MPs for erosion/sediment control were a given but decided to eliminate flood plain protection MPs because they are addressed in other ways and can be cost prohibitive.

Under the land use planning MPs, the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) representative encouraged the Council to adopt the Part V Environmental Planning Criteria. Other suggestions under this category related to open space planning and zoning were categorized as “shoulds” by the Council. MPs related to monitoring triggered more discussion.

**Council Comment:** Who is responsible for long term trend monitoring? The local government? Utilities?

**Council Comment:** Funding is a big issue for comprehensive monitoring.

Council agreed to make these items “shoulds.”

Several MPs under natural resource protection and source water protection were consolidated to fit with DCA’s Part V Environmental Planning.

**Council Comment:** The item on tree protection should be a maybe. Athens-Clarke County has been fairly successful with its implementation. And there are multiple benefits, especially in urban areas. But “protection” is too broad. It should be replaced with something more specific such as “tree conservation.”

The Council agreed that MPs related to level of service and capital improvement programs were also maybes. They eliminated the concept of using GIS to track customer complaints and rolled an item on compliance and enforcement into the erosion/sediment control MP. Sewer and septic planning were categorized as a “maybe.”

An MP related to total maximum daily load (TMDL) management was seen as a given as many communities already participate and are in compliance with the program. An item on adaptive management, particular to the development of a monitoring program for the effectiveness of a watershed program was struck from the list. Additional stream buffer protection was listed as maybe.

**Council Comment:** Athens has 75 – 150 feet on some urban streams.

**Council Comment:** We should include recommendation on locations where wider stream buffers are appropriate.

**Council Comment:** We need to denote items that are already governed by existing state or federal regulations.

On site design MPs, Council wanted to make low impact design a maybe and add the language to “remove barriers” so that would be seen as recommendation and not a requirement.

Council agreed to link many of the stormwater MPs, since they are already required for [EPA designated] MS4 communities. Some did express concerns over costs related to stormwater planning and management, but others noted that implementation had not caused the loss of major new developments to date. The group decided that stormwater MPs are likely more appropriate for the upper part of the basin.

At this point, Baughman suggested revising the agenda to just review the water demand (conservation) MPs and allow Council to review the other MP portfolios (water supply, wastewater) independently and provide feedback.

### **Water Demand (Conservation) MPs**

Skeens led the discussion on conservation practices and the first item, which suggested irrigation meter pricing to be at 200% of the first tier rate, yielded a strong response from some Council members.

**Council Comment:** We need to remove the irrigation reference. There is no incentive to conserve if people are penalized from the get-go.

**Council Comment:** The target should be the most efficient use of water.

**Council Comment:** In Jackson County, the irrigation meter is the same as the domestic meter, so there is a savings on sewer. But there is no one size fits all strategy. It varies greatly by entity and we should look at it on a basin by basin basis.

Council agreed to add new MPs related to irrigation – specifically, to encourage efficient outdoor watering practices and to encourage certification of irrigation specialists. They also wanted to make sure that MPs related to replacing inefficient plumbing fixtures and requiring rain-sensor shutoff switches on new irrigation systems applied to both commercial and residential customers.

An MP encouraging the use of recycled water at car washes led to a discussion on mobile carwashes and the need to regulate them. One Council member noted that this is usually regulated by the local government through an ordinance or business license. The remaining items were reviewed with little to no discussion.



Baughman reminded the Council to review the water and wastewater practices after the meeting and provide him with their input.

### **7) Development of Water Development and Conservation Plans Discussion**

Baughman moved the discussion to the Plan outline and told the group there was now a push to create a smaller document, perhaps in the 40-page range. This led to a discussion on how to provide supplemental supporting document.

**Council Comment:** There could be legal implications in having them separate.

**EPD Comment:** Be sure to include all essential plans and projects are in the 40 page Plan.

**Council Comment:** Is this a legal document or not?

**EPD Comment:** The intent of smaller plan is not to hide information but to make it less intimidating. Digital supplements might be a compromise solution.

**Council Comment:** We should make the appendices and supplements part of the main Report.

Several other members agreed with the idea of including supplemental materials with the Plan.

### **8) Schedule Discussion**

In a final piece of business, Council members agreed it was better to accelerate the meeting schedule now than be crunched for time at the end. Therefore they agreed to move the next meeting date up to August 11 with the location to be determined, but likely somewhere in the middle of the basin.

### **9) Elected Official and Public Comment**

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

### **10) Wrap up/Council Meeting 6 Evaluation**

Davis encouraged the group to complete the meeting evaluations before leaving.

### **11) Written Comments Submitted to Council**

No written comments were submitted to the Council at the meeting.

### **Meeting Attendees**

#### **Council Members Present**

- David Allen
- James Andrews
- Charles S. Armentrout

- Richard Bentley, Chair
- Hunter Bicknell
- Vincent Ciampa
- Stuart A. Cofer (alternate)
- Jennifer Davis
- Melvin Davis
- Larry J. Eley
- Alan Foster
- Pat Graham
- Dana M. Heil
- Allen M. Hodges
- Danny Hogan
- Dennis W. Holder, Vice Chair
- Herbie Johnson (in place of Linda Gantt)
- Charles H. Jordan
- Kevin Little
- Rabun Neal
- Benjamin R. Tarbutton

#### Council Members Absent

- Roger L. Folsom
- Linda S. Gantt (sent substitute)
- Pat Hardy
- Jim Luke (alternate)
- Drew Marczak
- Richard McSpadden
- Bill Ross
- Greg Thompson
- Rep. Terry England (ex-officio)
- Sen. Bill Cowser (ex-officio)

#### Staff and Planning Contractors

- Kevin Ferrell, EPD
- Ted Hendrickx, EPD
- Doug Baughman, CH2MHill
- Heather Dyke, CH2MHill
- Marci Davis, Jacobs JGG
- Brian Skeens, CH2M HILL

#### Partnering Agencies

- Harold West, Georgia Forestry Commission
- Joe Krewer, Department of Community Affairs
- Keegan Malone, Soil and Water Conservation Commission
- Tas Smith, Georgia Farm Bureau
- John Colberg, Georgia Forestry Commission
- Chris Martin, Department of Natural Resources
- Kevin Kelly, Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority

#### General Public

- Joey Witcher, Sinclair Water Authority
- David Word, Joe Tanner & Associates
- Bob Rychel, Middle Georgia Regional Commission
- Gary Duck, Athens-Clarke County Public Utilities Department
- Bob Snipes, Athens-Clarke County Public Utilities Department
- Ben Emanuel, Altamaha Riverkeeper
- Chris Butts, Georgia Green Industry Association
- Ethan Armentrout, Armentrout Roebuck Matheny Consulting Group