

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

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To: Coosa-North Georgia Water Planning Council
From: Becky Champion, Assistant Branch Chief, GA EPD
Rick Brownlow, CH2M HILL
Subject: Meeting Summary: Council Meeting 9 on February 23, 2011

Welcome and Introductions

Chairman John Bennett welcomed the group to the meeting and introduced John Weaver, Mayor of Jasper and Robert Jones, Pickens County Commission Chairman, to welcome the group to the meeting. They both discussed the importance of the council's work and encouraged the group to make the final push towards adoption later this year.

Overview

Rick Brownlow gave an overview of where the Council is in the schedule and highlighted that much of the meeting would be spent getting feedback on the plans and discussing the future of the council and the 319 grant subcommittees.

"Council Future" Subcommittee Report/Discussion with Regional Commissions (RCs)

Rick introduced Vice-chairman David Ashburn to report on the committee discussion on the future of the council. He provided the following recommendations from the committee:

- Align water planning with the RC boundaries and that the RCs play a role in leading implementation and future planning efforts
- Utilize the RC staff to provide support for implementation (may need local technical group to provide support)
- Develop a fee, similar to the approach for the Metro District, to help fund the RCs for implementation support.
- Recommend to the state that the councils be given legislative authority

He then discussed that they would like to redraw council boundaries to match the RC boundaries. However, if that recommendation was not taken, then they would use the two RCs that are in the CNG Region (Northwest Georgia RC and Georgia Mountains RC) to support the council. The reasoning is that they already have staff and infrastructure to do planning, although maybe not quite enough staff. He explained that the staff had participated in discussions with both RCs and that they agreed to provide whatever support they could. Danny Lewis, Georgia Mountains RC

Executive Director and Bill Steiner, Northwest Georgia RC Executive Director addressed the council. Bill recognized that the Northwest Georgia Regional Water Resources Partnership is a successful model and that they have worked with them to help bring federal funding to support them. He then discussed that DCA is cutting their funding for the next fiscal year (starting July 2011). However, he did agree that they would do what they could to support implementation of the water plan.

There was a question about how the Metro District is organized and funded. Rick Brownlow mentioned that it is staffed by the Atlanta Regional Commission, but there is a contract between the Metro District and the ARC for staffing support. They had a per capita dues assessment that has varied over the years, depending on the level of planning taking place in that particular year.

Mark Marlowe stressed that it is going to be important to identify a method for implementing the plan, so it doesn't just sit on a shelf. Mike Berg mentioned that the RC is going to provide base services, primarily education, and beyond that, there would need to be additional funding for specific planning efforts.

Is the RC&D dynamics going to change? The legislative authority we're asking for is just expanding their ability on water planning for regional reservoirs or wells, especially to get funding. Concern was mentioned about the enforcement component. Mr. Brownlow clarified that the State Water Plan is clear that EPD has enforcement responsibility.

The council observed how this is similar to the regional transportation plan and how the RCs offered to help and it made sense to do that. He recommends that for water planning support, this should be done using legislation. Also mentioned that they have regional plans they prepare and have environmental components. A motion was made to adopt the committee recommendations, seconded, and approved without opposition.

David then clarified that any legislation will be in the 2012 session, due to the timing issues with the General Assembly.

319 Grant Subcommittee Recommendation

David then summarized and discussed the 319 subcommittee actions and recommendations. They received two projects from the Partnership, but were hoping they would also have an opportunity to be funded through the competitive process. Then they identified a couple extra projects. However, the partnership projects were not funded competitively, so he would like those two projects be the first two for consideration and then Habersham and Limestone Valley projects. He recommended that the council approve the recommendations of the subcommittee and that the partnership work with EPD to finalize the workplans.

The motion was made to adopt the recommendations, seconded, and approved without opposition.

Council Discussion on Development of Water Development and Conservation Plan

Mr. Brownlow then introduced that the rest of the meeting will cover the latest version of the plan, have some group discussions, and vote to recommend the plan (with any minor corrections).

The group discussed whether having breakout sessions would be helpful and agreed to review the draft plan in a single full council session.

Mr. Brownlow went through some slides that detailed specific changes to this version of the plan, both in Sections 1-5, as well as Section 6, 7, and 8. Chairman Bennett wanted to walk through each section at a time.

Section 1 discussion: mostly typographical changes.

Section 2 discussion: Carters Lake is not in Whitfield County.

A comment was made about the lack of information related to agriculture water use by county. Mr. Baughman clarified that Section 3 identifies current agriculture use for the region. Then the future uses are in Section 4. There was a comment that we shouldn't just refer to other websites. There was a comment that we need forecasts for non-crop irrigation water use. That should be included as a recommendation to the state in Section 7-9. There was further discussion on the accuracy of the agricultural forecasts, even the crop demand.

A comment was made that the resource assessment used the agricultural demand, not the permitted amount. That could be a flaw that needs to be addressed in the future. However, the starting point of the demand forecasts is so underestimated, that the future modeling is missing a large quantity of the agricultural demand. It was reiterated that running the model using permitted capacities would allow for a level of safety and would also allow for an extra check on the resource limitations. Chairman Bennett then reiterated concern that agricultural permits could be so large, that it may get in the way of municipal and industrial permitting, because they have all the capacity. He agreed with the need to include a recommendation to the state in the plan for getting and using better agriculture water use and forecast numbers. In addition, we need measurement of existing use, especially those using under 100,000 gallons per day. Ms. Champion mentioned that agriculture water use has been an issue for all councils, and really goes back to the EPD rules and regulations that set up agriculture water use with the current framework. She recognized the need for better information. There is an observation that irrigation is the biggest user in the state, but in our council, we have many other non-crop agriculture uses that need to be recognized. Kenneth said these small users of non-crop agriculture, including "locally grown" trends are going to drive the water use to a significant amount. Vice chairman David Ashburn mentioned that our council did have conference calls to discuss this non-permitted agriculture issue last year. He agreed that a "worst-case scenario" should be run.

Mr. Brownlow summarized the two recommendations: 1. Section 7 recommendation to the state for better accounting of non-crop agriculture use, 2. Fix the footnote on Table 4-4, that zeros just mean "information not available". It was also mentioned that in the intro of Section 4, we should insert a qualifying statement on the accuracy of ALL of the projections, including the population and water demands. Lee Mulkey said they should make the connection between industrial poultry processing and non-crop poultry livestock growth. He wants that correlation drawn. Irwin stated that he wants a sentence in Section 4.3 saying the council tried to fix the numbers, but it was not done.

Section 3 discussion: It was suggested that the council insert a note in 3.2.3 about the "no issues were identified" be applied to current conditions only. It was also suggested to remove discussion of HCP in Section 3 and just move it to the "review of other plans" section.

Section 4 discussion: Add a note on Table 4-1 that it does not include 2010 census. It was mentioned that we need a note about transient population and how that may change. Add a note in Table 4-2 that it does not include publicly supplied industries. Various comments noted in plan, as well as a comment needed in the energy section to address future water needs for energy uses.

Section 5 discussion: Why is there no figure for the Crystalline rock aquifer like Figure 5-1? Perhaps delete Figure 5-1. Also add a note at the end of Section 5-1 about the yield limitations, not that there is “adequate supply”. Also some footnotes are needed on Figure 5-4 to explain that the 2050 line includes reduced point discharge limits on Phosphorus of 1.0 mg/L. Table 5-4 explain why Dawson and Union have flows greater than their current permit as a note.

Section 6 discussion: Table 6-1, would like to edit WC-4 and WC-6 to remove requirements. Add “consider” to WC-4. Edit the title of WC-6 to include “residential and urban irrigation”. Edit WC-12 to remove “infiltration”. Edit WS-3 to add “or local entities” to work with GAEPD. Edit WS-8, second bullet to be “recommend adoption of”. Add “Consider” to WW-2 and WW-5. Edit WQ-8 to add “and stream restoration” to title.

Section 7 discussion: The council made some specific suggestions for 7.1.1 on page 7-2. WC-3 – Agriculture Permits, check language to match SB 370. Be consistent with “consider” and “encourage” terminology. Question about “qualified local government” terminology used in WQ-10. Section 7.3, page 7-37 there was some discussion on the Tennessee River and the role of regional reservoirs.

Discussion by Mike Berg of the legislation currently in consideration related to public-private-partnerships. He is supportive of the bill, with its current language.

General discussion of reservoir benefits to downstream flows during low flow times and for assimilative capacity.

Add policy/programmatic recommendation to the state in Table 7-9 about evaluating Aquifer-Storage and Recovery (ASR).

There was a motion to make the changes noted and go to public comment, there was a second, and the motion passed unanimously.

Elected Official and Public Comments

Comment: If there is a public meeting, please make sure that the notice is published in the local organ, and paid for to be sure it is paid.

Wrap Up/Council Meeting Evaluation

The formal public comment period will be 45 days after the plans are uploaded on May 9, 2011 to the GA EPD website. Michelle mentioned that other councils are meeting with local governments to show them the plan and answer questions.

The council discussed holding the next meeting in or around Blue Ridge in late July timeframe.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

Coosa – North Georgia Water Planning Council, February 23, 2011 CM#9

Members Present

1. David Ashburn
2. Irwin Bagwell
3. Kenneth Beasley
4. John Bennett
5. Mike Berg
6. Tim Bowden
7. Keith Coffey (alternate)
8. Kelly Cornwell
9. Pat Gober
10. Jerry Jennings
11. Haynes Johnson (alternate)
12. Anne Kaiser
13. Sherry Loudermilk
14. Mark Marlowe (on behalf of Don Cope)
15. Tim Mercier
16. Lee Mulkey (on behalf of Gerald Dunham)

17. Tom O'Bryant
18. Lamar Paris
19. Sam Payne
20. Todd Pealock
21. Frank Riley
22. Denise Wood (on behalf of David Pennington)

Members Not Present:

1. Doug Anderton
2. Charlie Bethel
3. Katie Dempsey (ex officio)
4. Stephen Gray
5. Dick Martin
6. Chip Pearson (ex officio)
7. Jimmy Petty
8. David Westmoreland

Elected Officials

1. Robert Jones, Pickens County
2. John Weaver, City of Jasper

Partnering & Other State Agencies

1. John Damer, GA DNR
2. Lydia Doyle, Department of Community Affairs (<http://www.dca.state.ga.us/>)
3. John Loughridge, Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission

GA Environmental Protection Division

1. Becky Champion, Assistant Branch Chief for Coosa-Tallapoosa-Tennessee Basins
2. Michelle Vincent

CH2M HILL

1. Doug Baughman
2. Rick Brownlow
3. Brian Skeens