

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

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June 17, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Doug Baughman, CH2MHILL
Kevin Farrell, GA EPD

SUBJECT: Meeting 2 Summary
Upper Oconee Water Planning Council Meeting

Georgia Comprehensive Statewide Water Management Plan Regional Water Planning

Council Meeting 2 Summary

Meeting Date: June 12, 2009
Location: Reynolds Landing

1) Introductions

Upper Oconee Chairman David Bennett provided introductions and then handed off the welcome to council member Rabun Neal from Reynolds Plantation. Neal discussed the various Reynolds' properties and the firm's efforts to create middle income housing opportunities and improve local schools. The Chairman asked that the Council do one last round of introductions for this meeting.

2) Introductions/Recap Council Meeting 1/Approve Agenda

Chairman Bennett asked for and received approval of the Council Meeting (CM) agenda.

Council Coordinator Doug Baughman briefly recapped CM1 and election of Leadership – David Bennett as Chair and Richard McSpadden as Vice Chair. He touched on the planning contractors' goal to post meeting presentations prior to council meetings once the web site for the Upper Oconee Water Planning Council goes live, and then reviewed the goals and agenda for CM2 as well as the schedule for the entire planning process.

3) Review Comments on MOA, Operating Procedures, and Rules for Meetings

EPD Assistant Branch Chief Kevin Farrell recapped the MOA (Memorandum of Agreement) discussion from CM1. He noted that the other Water Planning Councils went through a similar process and distributed a handout of summarized changes for the Upper Oconee Council. The EPD Director approved all changes to the operating procedures and rules for meetings except one and had signed a copy of the MOA. The one exception related to the Council's suggestion on meeting attendance; the Council had asked that if a member missed a certain number of meetings, then that person should be dismissed from the Council. Farrell stated that because members were executive appointees, they could not be removed, but the Council could ask that person to resign and have an alternate take the open position. The Council had several options regarding the MOA and related documents at CM2: suggest additional revisions, finalize as is, or sign.

At this point, Chairman Bennett informed the Council of a joint meeting among all the council chairs and vice chairs with EPD Director Dr. Carol Couch on July 13. The Chairman expressed his desire to delay finalizing the MOA until after that meeting but doing so prior to CM3.

The MOA was tabled for CM2 with the intention of voting on it at CM3.

Comment: If changes are made [to the MOA] after the July 13 meeting, please highlight these changes when the final is sent out.

Question: Can the Council see what the other Councils suggested and what was actually accepted?

Response: Summaries are available if Council members are interested – copy can be requested from council coordinator or facilitator.

4) Kevin Farrell – Big Picture Discussion

Farrell noted that every now and again in the process he wanted to “press pause” to provide overall context: What are existing conditions? What will we need for future conditions?

5) Overview of Population and Employment Forecast (Georgia Office of Planning and Budget and Carl Vinson Institute of Government (CVIOG))

This discussion was held via conference call with the following representatives:

David Tanner (OPB)
Kathy Kinsella (OPB)
Dr. Warren Brown (CVIOG)
Dr. Jeffery Dorfman (CVIOG)

OPB discussion:

- OPB has been charged with developing official projections. The last round was

completed in 2004.

- Official projections will be used for: certificate of need work, library funding, etc. OPB intends to maintain its contract with the CVIOG and anticipates updates to the projections on a 2-year cycle.
- An advisory board comprised of the state economist and representatives of DOT, ARC, North Georgia RDC, GMA, ACCG and others was used to review process.

CVIOG discussion:

- The CVIOG representatives explained how they used a demographic model from Texas (completed by the University of Texas) including net migration, which is one of the most important components in Georgia.
- The preliminary projections were shared with Regional Development Commissions (RDCs) and then were linked to employment projections being prepared by Dr. Dorfman. The ratio of population to employment was not realistic so they “dampened” the population based on regional employment.
- The projections included employment levels for 50+ industries. The information was developed on the regional level from aggregated County level data. Industry confidentiality prevented getting this information on the county level. A series of corrections related to the current recession (adjusted data for construction and real estate) for the Upper Oconee region projected it to be the fastest growing in the state for employment.

Baughman presented additional information on population and employment looking at the historic pattern of regional trends.

This part of the agenda prompted much discussion from Council members and also RDC representatives attending the meeting at the invitation of Chairman Bennett. The Chair then opened the discussion to the public.

Question: Projections for Oconee County are at about 3% historically, but CVIOG’s numbers are quite low. Can someone shed light on how the numbers were calculated?

Response: Other projections were not used; demographers started with a time series data set. They were lower because other projections can include some wishful thinking and don’t reflect adjustments needed because of the recession. Dr. Brown noted that the migration trends for Clarke and Oconee Counties need to be re-examined.

Comment: Council member asked for clarification on statement from the Overview Methodology: “Extreme population events should be modified”. He noted that Jackson County’s numbers also need to be re-examined (current CVIOG estimates low); it is different from other counties and includes 22 miles of Interstate highway that carries growth coming from Atlanta. He cited Gwinnett County as an example, where an historical 11-fold increase has spilled over into Jackson. He pointed out the need to recognize the significant factors affecting individual counties.

Response: The methodology was part of the University of Texas study. For example, Hispanic

growth during in the 1990s will likely not continue to triple in the future. The demographers used 2008 Census estimates as the launching point for the projections, but if the Counties feel these are projections are too low, there is a process to challenge them with the Census.

Question: Council member commented that trying to project into 2050 made him nervous. How were the recent trends of a declining car industry, obsolete technologies, and shuttering of national chain stores integrated into forecasts?

Response: These projections will be updated on a 2-year cycle. Obsolete industries such as textiles are captured in his projections, i.e. demographers noted that many of these jobs go away in the future. To help obtain realistic projections, Council members were asked to share their local, specific knowledge with the group.

Question: Council member asked specifically about industry employment numbers for Wilkinson County.

Response: The information is confidential according to U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) policy.

Question: How do they account for the divergence in employment and population? How can region maintain population without jobs [i.e. job growth not projected to be as large as population growth]?

Response: The ratio of jobs to population is roughly the same even though the gap is larger. The lower ratio of population to jobs reflects the aging population and more baby boomers leaving the work force.

Comment: Putnam County has a serious problem allocating funds because many of their residents are second home residents. Council member expressed concerns regarding undercounting.

Response: People are counted by the Census based on their permanent location, but there is the realization that part-time residents can cause real trouble with demand for services. Projections could shift to housing unit approach but would be completely different.

Comment: What about the construction workforce and smaller businesses? Are they factored into the projections?

Response: Yes.

Question: Illegal workers still use water. How are they accounted for?

Response: Not counted in employment numbers if they don't pay taxes. The Census Bureau does include them in the population estimates.

RDC Comments:

NE Georgia RDC Question: What is the precedent for the adjustments being made by the

employment influencing population?

Response: Agrees that employment does not follow watersheds. It is on CVIOG's to do list to develop a labor-shed approach for the next round of projections.

NE Georgia RDC Question: Are the projections adjusted based on state total forecasts? What is the methodology?

Response: The methodology follows the Texas study. Population was adjusted by region using the employment and then allocated back to the corresponding counties. They are depending on RDCs to provide local feedback. They did adjust regional trends for each industry and state trends for the specific region.

Middle Georgia RDC Comment: Population numbers do not capture unique local characteristics, seasonal population and housing. Looking at population as a tool, ensuring that they are updated every two years and making sure they are being used to make the proper decisions.

Public Comments:

Question: Is there a problem that many families have multiple non-working family members.

Response: ARC has a model that will be considered for the next set of projections.

Comment: The State and Metro RDC [ARC] track closely, but other RDCs do not. For instance there is a discrepancy of 875,000 in the NE Georgia RDC's numbers. The employment forecasts do not account for growth over the past three decades.

Response: The models do show examples of the population radiating out from Metro and in some cases the employment growth of these adjacent counties is greater than in the Metro, but forecasters are not convinced that every industrial park / mall will be successful. The next ten years are expected to look a lot different (cost of gas, less commuting, and real estate collapse) than previous years.

Comment: Is there any evidence of this immigration into the Metro area due to lower cost housing? Is this a short-term trend?

Response: This could be a new trend based on the increase of foreclosure sales. Have to be sure that counties add up to a reasonable regional total and then a reasonable state total. Rate of growth can't keep going in the same direction.

After the Q & A on population and forecasting, the Chairman summarized the discussion as follows:

- Need to take a closer look at Clarke/Oconee and Jackson/Walton growth
- Need to account for the impacts of seasonal/part-time residents
- Need to adjust job / population ratio
- Need to consider retirement trends

- CVIOG will be receiving comments until mid July and then will have a month to make necessary adjustments. The final set of numbers is expected in late August.
- Reminded Council and public that June 30th is the deadline for commenting on these to the State. See http://www.gawaterplanning.org/pages/forecasting/population_and_employment/june_30_deadline_for_input.php

Baughman reminded Council members and the public to that they could also submit comments through the website or by mail.

5) Introduction to Modeling and Resource Assessments

Baughman gave a presentation with an introduction to modeling (ground water, water quality and quantity)

Question: Who will be QC'ing [performing quality control] the contractors' work?

Response: EPD will review information/land use every five years including the modeling. There may be gaps in current effort but these will be identified and uncertainties discussed during the development of the WDCPs.

Question: Not many USGS [U.S. Geological Service] flow monitoring stations in state? Will any be added to these? Will other data be used?

Response: No, this is a gap. EPD is not likely to use other data because the other sources don't have adequate period of record.

6) Introduction to Agriculture Water Demand Forecasts

Cliff Lewis of EPD gave a presentation on agricultural water demand forecasts via conference call. He expressed his willingness to attend the next Council meeting if necessary, or he could answer questions submitted to him on the topic. Lewis noted that the poultry industry is included in the M&I [Manufacturing and Industrial] projections. Specialty crops, such as blueberries, are not included because of a lack of data. However, to the extent that a region is growing in specialty crop production, adjustments will need to be made.

Comment: The 2008 irrigation amounts on handout represent average numbers; need a total number to gauge delivery during the driest conditions.

Response: The depth and detail of the actual forecasts will be presented in CM3.

Question: Will agriculture water use meter data be reported annually?

Response: Reports will soon be adjusted to provide a date range.

Chairman Comment: Make sure to include green industry in projections.

7) Introduction to Resource Assessments

Baughman gave an introduction to the resource assessments. Then Council held discussion.

Comment: The numbers related to irrigation in the presentation are primarily related to agricultural irrigation. This needs to be footnoted in the future so that it is clear to the public. .

EPD Comment: The definition of unacceptable impacts to groundwater yields is not in the regulations yet. EPD is currently working on this and that will be addressed in future meetings. While the agency is not revisiting in-stream flow guidance, it is revisiting what the targeted flows should be at certain “nodes” throughout the state.

Question: How were nodes picked?

Response: Manageable data sets as well as the location of the USGS gauging stations, i.e. data availability.

Question: Who sets the waste load allocations? Who monitors to ensure compliance?

Response: EPD sets allocations. Industry does self-reporting via Discharge Monitoring Report (DMR). EPD also does random audits.

8) Public Involvement Plan

Council facilitator Marci Davis spoke briefly about the Public Involvement Plan (PIP) for the Council, providing a broad overview of what it will be. She noted that EPD is preparing the PIP that will be finalized by the Council. Key points of the Plan are as follows:

- Providing an opportunity for stakeholder participation, including the local government advisory body, other regional water planning councils, and the public during the planning process
- Being open to public participation
- Incorporating input from stakeholder groups into the planning process

Davis also noted that Council information was currently being posted to the main website www.georgiawaterplanning.org, and that each Council would have its own website that would come off of the main one and also have its own unique name.

Chairman Comment: People wanting to receive meeting notices and agendas should let Davis know so they could be added to the list. He also stated that he would like to see the basin specific website soon as it would be important to the public involvement process.

9) Visioning

The goal of Visioning was to set something specific to the Upper Oconee Basin through 2050. Prior to the meeting, Vice Chair McSpadden developed a draft statement. It was presented to Council members at the meeting to gauge their response.

Draft Vision Statement:

Create a community unified around managing water as a critical resource vital to our health, economic, social and environmental well being. Build trusting partnerships with neighboring regions and develop an educated and engaged citizenry that embraces sound water management.

Supporting statements elaborating on the elements of the statement were also presented, but as the Council chose to focus the discussion on crafting the Vision Statement, those points are not included here. A member did suggest addressing those points at the next meeting.

Comments on Draft Vision Statement:

- Clarification on opening sentence: The Council can create the plan but doesn't actually have the power to do the items listed. Text should be changed to "Create a regional plan..."
- Further clarification was suggested as follows: "Create a regional plan that focuses on managing water as a critical resource..."

Initial motion to accept the draft Vision statement (with the first suggested clarification) was made. The motion was seconded and opened for discussion. Upon discussion of the Vision statement and supporting elements, the motion was retracted.

Public Comment: Add goal that would put more emphasis on protecting the natural resources unique to the State of Georgia.

Motion made to adopt revised statement (with both clarifications), seconded, and unanimously approved. Adopted Vision Statement reads as follows:

Create a regional plan that focuses on managing water as a critical resource vital to our health, economic, social and environmental well being. Build trusting partnerships with neighboring regions and develop an educated and engaged citizenry that embraces sound water management.

10) Local Elected Official Comment

None

11) Public Comment

None

Senator Cowsert Comment – Sees value in being part of the process and expects that there may be the need for additional legislation to keep things moving.

12) Wrap up/Next Meeting(s)

Chairman Bennett ended with a request for other Council members:

- Asked that participants communicate meeting shortcomings to Chair so they could be adjusted
- Reminded Council of July 13th meeting with Dr. Couch and encouraged members to

communicate thoughts regarding the process, etc. to Chair or Vice Chair so they can share this information with the State.

- **Request:** Please note the water quality issues on Lakes Oconee and Sinclair – blue green algae bloom, want to see a thorough investigation to prevent future outbreaks.

Council set next meeting dates:

- CM3 – Tuesday, September 15
- CM4 – Wednesday, November 18

Locations for the next meetings have yet to be determined, but options are being explored.

Council members then completed two evaluation sheets: one on the meeting itself and one on their level of knowledge regarding water planning issues.

Meeting Attendees

Council Members Present

- James Andrews
- Charles S. Armentrout
- David Bennett, Chair
- Richard Bentley
- Hunter Bicknell
- Stuart A. Cofer
- Melvin Davis
- Roger L. Folsom
- Alan Foster
- Linda S. Gantt
- Pat Graham
- Dana M. Heil
- Allen M. Hodges
- Danny Hogan
- Dennis W. Holder
- Charles H. Jordan

- Kevin Little
- Drew Marczak
- Richard McSpadden, Vice Chair
- Rabun Neal
- Bill Ross
- Rep. Terry England
- Sen. Bill Cowsert

Council Members Absent

- David Allen
- Vincent Ciampa
- Jennifer Davis
- Larry J. Eley
- Pat Hardy
- Benjamin R. Tarbutton
- Greg Thompson

Planning Consultants

- Doug Baughman, CH2MHill
- Heather Dyke, CH2MHill
- Marci Davis, JJG

Partnering Agencies

- W.D. Moneyhun, Northeast Georgia RDC

- Bob Rychel, Middle Georgia RDC
- Bob Ragdale, Georgia Farm Bureau
- T.J. O'Neal , Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission
- Joe Krewer, Department of Community Affairs
- Bryant Bowen, Georgia DNR (Fisheries)

General Public

- Bryan Tolar, Georgia Agribusiness
- Casey Hill
- Scott Cole, Carlton Fields
- Todd Edwards, ACCG
- Keith Fielder, UGA Extension
- Scott Schimmel, UGA Extension
- Bettie Sleeth, Home Builders Association of Georgia
- Ethan Armentrout, Armentrout Roebuck Matheny Consulting Group
- Rufus Adair, Eatonton Messenger
- Amanda Marshall, Georgia Conservancy

CC: David Ashley, JJG
Marci Davis, JJG
Tai-Yi Su, JJG
Heather Dyke, CH2M Hill

Attachment
Evaluation Results