

Memorandum

To: Coastal Georgia Regional Water Planning Council

From: Rick Brown, Katherine Zitsch, and Danny Johnson, CDM

Date: 5/19/11

*Subject: Coastal Georgia Initial Recommended Regional Water Plan-
Local Government, Water Utility, and Interested Parties
Outreach Meeting Summary*

This memorandum provides the meeting summary of the Coastal Georgia Initial Recommended Water Plan Outreach Meeting held on May 16, 2011 at Richmond Hill City Center, Richmond Hill, Georgia.

1) Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Ben Thompson opened the meeting and welcomed the meeting attendees and introduced himself. Chairman Thompson noted that the completion of the Coastal Georgia Initial Recommended Regional Water Plan (Plan) and tonight's meeting mark a significant milestone in the Coastal regional water planning process. Chairman Thompson expressed his appreciation to the Council members and other Regional Water Plan contributors for the significant amount of work that was completed over the last 3 years. Chairman Thompson described the diversity of the Council which is composed of county and city government, business, and industrial representatives among others. Chairman Thompson then asked the Council members in attendance to introduce themselves, and then had Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) and Planning Contractor (PC) staff introduce themselves.

Chairman Thompson mentioned that the PC staff were charged with helping the Council develop the Initial Recommended Regional Water Plan and indicated that the PC would be facilitating the meeting tonight and asked the PC to proceed with meeting agenda.

The PC also welcomed visitors and described the planning documents and handouts that had been placed around the room. Copies of the Executive Summary of the Initial Recommended Regional Water Plan were provided to visitors along with a summary sheet that outlines instructions for providing comments on the Plan. The PC mentioned that copies of the entire Initial Recommended Regional Water Plan and Supplemental Materials for the Plan are available on the table at the back of the room and visitors are

welcome to look through these documents which are all available on the State Water Plan website.

The PC then provided an overview of the purpose of the meeting highlighting the following objectives:

- Improve your understanding of the Regional Water Planning process
- Help you understand how to get additional information
- Answer questions about the Planning process and how the Plan may affect you

The PC mentioned that the best way to get information about the planning process and the regional plans is by visiting the State Water Planning website at <http://www.gawaterplanning.org/>. Information for all the planning regions can be found at this website and it was noted that an overview of the website and the water plan comment collection tool would be provided later in the meeting.

The PC then provided a PowerPoint presentation which included the following information.

- A short overview of the Drivers for state water resource planning
- Summarized the major steps in the Regional Water Planning Process
- Presented the Vision statement developed by the Council
- Described the Resource Assessments noting that three assessments were completed by EPD; Surface Water Availability, Ground Water Availability, and Surface Water Quality. The PC noted that the resource assessments are analytical models that were developed to help evaluate the capacity of the resources to meet the current and future water resource needs of the region. The PC highlighted that for the Coastal region additional groundwater models have been developed to look more closely at issues associated with saltwater intrusion in the Savannah-Hilton Head area and portions of Glynn County.

The PC mentioned that another important input into the Coastal region's planning process is coordinating and incorporating ongoing work by other entities, especially the Bi-State coordination work regarding the Savannah River and Harbor Total Maximum Daily Load process and the Salt Water Intrusion Stakeholder process. The PC noted one of the biggest challenges in the region associated with meeting current and future needs is related to the use of groundwater from the Upper Floridan Aquifer.

Overall on a regional basis there are sufficient groundwater resources however there are some important exceptions in the following areas:

- Red Zone (Chatham County and southern Effingham County, T-shaped plume near Brunswick)
- Yellow Zone (Bryan and Liberty Counties)

It was noted that these areas are subject to the Coastal Georgia Water and Wastewater Permitting Plan for Managing Salt Water Intrusion (Permitting Plan) and there are ground water withdrawals restrictions/conditions in the Permitting Plan.

It was also noted that coordination with South Carolina was/is an important component of the Coastal planning process.

- The PC then describes the forecasting process that summarizes the regions forecasted water and wastewater needs over the next 40 years from 2010 to 2050. Forecasts were completed for the Agricultural, Municipal (includes commercial and self supplied), Thermoelectric Energy and Industrial sectors. It was noted that the region's population is projected to about double over the next 40 years growing from about 630,000 to 1.3 million people. Water use is forecasted to grow from about 265 to 365 million gallons per day (not including energy water use). Wastewater forecast information for the region was also highlighted.
- The PC then described the Council management practices selection process which was based upon documenting and building upon exiting planning and permitting activities that are currently underway. Council specific management practices to address resource needs were also developed and the PC noted some of these practices and mentioned that more information can be found in Section 6 of the Plan.
- The PC also mentioned that the Plan includes Council "Recommendations to the State" along with implementation considerations, timelines, possible funding sources, and benchmarks to assess water plan progress. The PC encouraged people to think about how information from that Plan may be applicable in their region or for their utility and to also think about recommendations that could be made to the state to help their community plan for their water resource future.
- The PC concluded by reminding the attendees how they can comment on the Plan noting that comments can be made through several avenues:

- Via the web at <http://www.gaepdcommentcenter.org/login.aspx>
- Via email at info@georgiawaterplanning.org
- Via fax at 404-651-5778
- Via direct mail to:

Arnetta Murphy
Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Environmental Protection Division
2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive
Suite 1152, East Tower
Atlanta, GA 30334

Chairman Thompson and the PC then solicited questions and discussion from the audience.

Question: Did I understand that between now and 2050 the population doubles, but not the water use. Is this due to water conservation?

Answer: Water conservation accounts for some demand reduction but this does not account for the difference. The difference between growth rate and water demand growth can be explained by looking at the demand sectors. You will notice that the major water use in the demand figure is industrial water use and this demand sector is not growing at the rate of population growth.

Question: From a local government perspective should we look at the Plan for implementation considerations now or wait for the final recommended Plan to be produced?

Answer: Early planning is always a good idea so familiarizing yourself with the Plan's content now is probably appropriate. However, keep in mind we won't know how the Plan might change over the next few months following public comment and EPD review. There have been several internal EPD reviews so I think the Council is expecting minor changes rather than major overhauling measures.

For example in regard to water quality management practices associated with stormwater management these recommendations will likely not change significantly. I suggest you follow the comment process and see how the Plan is received. It is important to also keep in mind that the Council was very conscious about not imposing mandates to local governments and water providers/users. Rather, Council expressed that they want the

Plan to be considered a “toolbox” and that local entities should review the trends and findings in the Plan. Local governments and entities should review how these trends and findings may affect them and incorporate this information into their local planning process. For example, we know that the Brunswick Harbor is at or near assimilative capacity so future discharges are likely to need high levels of treatment at higher costs. This information can be useful for local planning when considering discharge locations and adjusting rate structures to meet future needs.

Question: In regard to resource documents that could be used by local governments I did not hear any mention of the Coastal Stormwater Supplement?

Answer: The Coastal Regional Water Plan does include reference to the Coastal Stormwater Supplement and several additional reference/resource documents. Please see Table 6-1 for more detailed information on different management practices for both quantity and quality.

Question: From the discussion so far it sounds like local governments are being encouraged to do what is necessary via “carrots/incentives”. If there are communities that don’t do what is recommended in the Plan, is there a “stick side” that lays out specific requirements?

Answer: The primary method for seeking Plan implementation is through the EPD permitting process and through the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority funding process. The details for how these two agencies will use the Plans in permitting and funding decisions is still being fleshed out but it seems logical that at a minimum when an entity seeks a new or renewed permit EPD can ask: “what are you doing to satisfy the water quality and water quantity issues identified in the region”?

Question: What about areas without public water or wastewater systems? How would water quality issues come into play?

Answer: The Plan does identify non-point source management practices to help address water quality challenges. The Plan mentions that water quality standard for nutrients, such as Phosphorus and Nitrogen, are likely. If you are a municipal wastewater system it may be difficult and costly to further reduce nutrient sources, especially if there are significant non-point sources. In such cases it might be wise for communities/local governments to consider nutrient management practices to help improve water quality for both point and non-point sources and there may be opportunities for incentives as well as point source permitting considerations.

Question: In helping smaller communities and the coastal region overall, has there been talk of incentives for smaller communities? It’s fine to recommend that communities

implement management practices, but is there incentive for them to do it at both the state and federal level? Similar to how federal energy conservation programs function.

Answer: Currently the Plan does include some sources of funding and your suggestion of providing additional incentives is something you may want to include in your comments.

Question: If the state is going to adopt the water plan I would like to see them put in an incentive to loan money/grant money to help address stormwater management and improve wastewater treatment. This would help smaller governments improve their treatment programs.

Answer: Currently the primary discussion regarding funding have been mostly focused on development of additional water storage. Several of the Councils have suggested that it may be worthwhile to use money for more than building new storage. If you would like to see more flexibility in the use of some of these funds it would be a good idea to let your political representatives know more about your need for funding.

Council Member: So maybe we should work together more on the political side of these discussions?

Answer: It makes sense to at least let your opinion be known.

Question: I think a lot of good work has gone into the Plan. Are there recommendations in the Plan as to what the state can do? For example, have the state require ultra low flow plumbing. Are there other things that need to be recommended?

Answer: Yes, there are some recommendations to the state. At the same time the Council really thought carefully about whether the water plan should be used to impose requirements on local water users/rate payers. They recognized that this has the benefit of helping the local government not always be the "bad guy". The Council tried to strike a balance - the Plan doesn't mandate things but does identify specific items that should be considered for implementation. Also, in regard to low flow fixtures, Senate Bill 370 already establishes some requirements for these types of conservation practices.

Question: In regard to the Governor's task force on water. How is that merging with the state water plan and will one affect the other?

Answer: We have not been following the task forces efforts closely, but as we understand it, the task force is looking at developing a process for funding needed water supply projects. Many of the task force members are aware of the state water planning. If you have strong opinions on this topic it would be good to convey your thought to EPD and Georgia Environmental Finance Authority.

PC: If there are not anymore comments/questions right now let's take a few minutes to show you the State Water Plan website and the comment collection tool. The PC then showed the audience how to access water plan documents and the linkages to the water plan comment tool.

Question: Are you envisioning that there will be a process similar to the Metro North Georgia Planning District's plan?

Answer: I believe the thinking on exactly how the regional Plan is implemented is still evolving. The Metro North Metro Georgia plan is one template you could use. So far for the regional plans there's a mixture of encouragement and some permitting ideas for those areas with resource shortfalls. There is also some specific benchmarking that can be used to assess progress and provide a feedback loop. Whether there is specific auditing is still being thought about and your input is welcome.

One other point we should make is in regard to where we are in the Plan review process. There are really two review processes underway. First, the public comment period that is currently underway. Second, is the review process by the EPD Director Allen Barnes. The EPD review is focusing on determining if the Plans meet the requirements established in the state water plan and other planning guidance.

The logic next steps moving forward are that the EPD Director's review will be integrated with public comment. This information will be provided to Councils and the Council will likely meet one more time to revise the Plan, if needed. The next meeting of Council will likely be in July and then any revisions to the Plan need to be submitted to EPD by September 30, 2011. Director Barnes will either (1) adopt the Plan as submitted, (2) adopt the Plan with conditions, or (3) EPD can write their own plan.

Question: I am a little confused because you have indicated that the region has adequate water through 2050. But there are hot spots within region that will take brunt of population increases and some of these regions also have some resource limitations. What has the council done to address this?

Answer: You are correct that there are some areas where current and/or future uses may be exceeding available resources. In the case of groundwater and salt water intrusion the Council has laid out some options and is also recommending supporting the efforts of the Salt Water Intrusion Bi-state Stakeholder process. In regard to surface water, for example on the Ogeechee River, the Council has identified some specific practices including water conservation measures and encourage sustainable groundwater during surface water low flow conditions among others.

Question: Are there specific items like this for groundwater?

Answer: Yes, in the Red and Yellow Zones, where there may be limitations on current or additional withdrawals, the Council has identified a range of options and also recognizes that the Bi-state stakeholder group is working on some specific recommendations. The Council's recommendations include the potential for engineered solutions, treatment of water, alternate sources (supplementing groundwater with surface water where available) and additional water conservation among others. There are about 8-9 potential strategies that have been discussed.

Council Member: Yes we worked hard to try to be specific about management practices and make sure it is complementary to the Bi-state stakeholder process. Please look at Sections 5, 6, 7, and 8 for more detail on the Council identified management practices.

Question: What is the timeline for the Bi-state stakeholder group's recommendations?

Answer: So far it has been a very productive year and we should see some results in the near future. The recommendation will go to the Governors of both Georgia and South Carolina. Right now it is a very dynamic process and they are focusing on a significant amount of technical information.

Question: One of the messages I am getting is that all of this is going to cost money and that it is important that we make sure our political leaders and decision makers appreciate that while we in south Georgia understand the focus on reservoirs in northern Georgia they need to also look at our area. Who do we need to contact to communicate some of funding needs and to help get some of the funding to South Georgia?

Answer: It would seem to make sense to contact you're key legislative representatives as well as the Department of Community Affairs and Georgia Environmental Finance Authority. These agencies and the legislature communicate with/report to the Governor.

PC: If there are no additional questions we want to thank you for coming and we will be around for about 30 more minutes if you would like to have some additional discussion.

**Coastal Georgia Regional Water Council
Council Members Attendance List**

Coastal Georgia Council Members		5/16/2011
1	Chris Blocker	X
2	John F. Godbee	X
3	Michelle L. Liotta	X
4	John D. McIver	X
5	Michael J. Melton	X
6	Phil Odom	X
7	Tom Ratcliffe	X
8	James Thomas	X
9	Benjamin Thompson	X

Total 9

**Coastal Georgia Regional Water Council
 Public Attendance List**

Public Attendee		5/16/2011	Representing
1	Paul Wolff	X	Tybee City Council
2	Tressa Rutland	X	Fort Stewart HAAF
3	Emily Markesteyn	X	Ogeechee Riverkeeper
4	Phil Jones	X	Bryan County
5	Stan Thomas	X	Fort Stewart
6	Brent Rabon	X	Fort Stewart
7	Billy Edwards	X	City of Hinesville
8	Denise Grabowski	X	Simbioscity
9	Dennis Hutton	X	CCSOUH MDC
10	Bill Garbett	X	Tybee
11	Courtney Reich	X	EPG
12	John Sawyer	X	City of Savannah
13	Deatre Denion	X	DCA
14	Bill Lovett	X	HGBD
15	Jeff Larson	X	GA EPD
16	Bennett Weinstein	X	GA EPD

Total **16**