



Georgia's State Water Plan

Public Involvement Plan

Middle Chattahoochee Water Planning Council

Public involvement is a primary element in the work of the Middle Chattahoochee Water Planning Council (herein referred to as the “Council”). This document describes the public involvement activities to be undertaken by the Council. The Council, assisted by its regional planning contractor, will follow this Public Involvement Plan to provide opportunities for meaningful input from key stakeholders, representatives of local government, and the general public. In general, it is at the discretion of the Chair of the Council to permit additional public comment or to adjust or adapt to specific meeting timelines and constraints, so long as the intent and expectations described below are followed.

Guiding principles

The Middle Chattahoochee Water Planning Council recognizes the benefit and importance of providing opportunities for diverse input throughout the regional water planning process. The principles of the public input process are:

- Stakeholders and regional water planning council members will treat each other with respect and dignity;
- All participants will have an open mind and participate openly and honestly;
- The regional water planning process will continue with concurrent public comment throughout;
- Georgia EPD will provide public notice and take public comment on draft regional water plans after they are submitted;
- Stakeholder comments will be pertinent to the topic of the meeting at which they are expressed; and
- Input from the public, key stakeholders, and local government representatives will be considered and incorporated in Council work products, and responses to public input will be provided where appropriate.

Key stakeholders

The key stakeholders for the Middle Chattahoochee Water Planning Region are identified below. All members of the public will have opportunities for input, even if not specifically identified in this section.

- Local government officials – cities and counties within the water planning region

- Neighboring regional water planning councils – water planning councils that share borders and/or water resources
- Regional Commissions – agencies supporting local and regional comprehensive planning
- Agriculture – includes water permit holders and non-permitted water users for agricultural applications
- Businesses – includes local businesses
- Industries – includes industrial water permit holders and municipally-supplied industrial facilities
- Energy – includes energy businesses, emerging power interests, and hydro-electric users
- Forestry – includes owners of managed forest lands and the forest products industry
- Institutions/educational/schools – includes public and private schools as well as institutions
- Tourism – includes public and private organizations related to local travel and tourism
- Recreation – includes citizens and industry related to recreational water uses
- Environment – includes citizens, agencies, and groups focused on environmental protection
- Water and Sewer Authorities, Utilities and Service Providers – includes public and private entities in the water planning region that provide water and wastewater services
- Public – any citizen interested in the regional water planning process
- Navigation – includes parties having interests in waterway navigation

Procedural criteria

Time will be provided at every Middle Chattahoochee Water Planning Council meeting for input from stakeholders and the public. The procedural criteria are intended to ensure the public respects the regional water planning council's schedule constraints and the regional water planning council respects the public's opportunity to present relevant and different opinions. To facilitate a fair and efficient process, the Council has adopted the following procedures for public comment.

- All Council meetings will be open meetings
- Stakeholders will be provided an opportunity to provide comments pertinent to the topic of the meeting in which they are expressed
- Time for public comments will be provided at all Council meetings
- Provisions for written comments will be made at all Council meetings

The Chair of the Council will use discretion to manage public comment under different circumstances in ways that enable the council to progress with its work and respect those who want to comment.

Meeting announcements

All Council meetings will be open meetings, including at least a 24-hour notice of any meetings. The following provisions will be made for all planning council meetings to inform the public of upcoming meetings.

- Posted on the Council website (<http://www.middlechattahoochee.org>) with a meeting agenda or summary of topics to be covered, meeting time, and meeting address
- Announced in a press release
- Posted at the meeting location with a meeting agenda or summary of topics to be covered, meeting time, and meeting address
- Meeting summaries will be posted on the Council website (<http://www.middlechattahoochee.org>)

Stakeholder and public comment opportunities

Specific opportunities during the regional water planning process for stakeholder and public input include but are not limited to the following.

- Meetings of the Middle Chattahoochee Water Planning Council
- Council website: <http://www.middlechattahoochee.org> (documents will be posted periodically with timeframes for comment and mechanisms for comment clearly stated)
- Letters may be mailed to Georgia EPD
- Emails to the regional water planning council and/or Georgia EPD
- Georgia EPD public notice period for the resource assessments
- Georgia EPD public notice period on the draft regional water plans

Georgia EPD and the planning contractor will share comments received that are relevant to the Council's work with the Council.

The Council, at the discretion of the Chair, may permit additional stakeholders and public comment opportunities, as deemed appropriate.

Local governments

Much of the implementation of the regional water plans is the responsibility of local governments; therefore, input will be sought from local government officials on the following specific topics:

- Regional population, economic and employment forecasts
- Fiscal implications of water management practices
- Draft regional water plan

The Council and local government officials should identify proper communication pathways. The following actions are intended to coordinate activities of the local government officials with the Council.

- Local government officials will be provided an opportunity at the Council meetings to comment on the regional water planning process and items on the meeting agenda
- Local government officials may provide written comments to the Council, as needed.

As appropriate, efforts will also be made by the Council to solicit input from other local entities with an interest in the Council's activities, including local water and wastewater utilities, water and wastewater authorities, and regional service providers.

Other regional water planning councils

In order to plan and coordinate the use and protection of shared water resources, the Middle Chattahoochee Water Planning Council will coordinate with adjacent and hydrologically-connected councils throughout the regional water planning process. EPD will convene some meetings to discuss shared water resources, such as on the current resource assessments. The regional water planning councils will use the following communication pathways to coordinate with adjacent regional water planning councils.

- Members of the Council will attend shared resource meetings and other joint meetings
- At the discretion of the Chair, an opportunity may be provided at Council meetings for announcements or progress reports from adjacent regional water planning councils

The Chair of the regional water planning councils may use their discretion to provide additional coordination with adjacent regional water planning councils, as deemed appropriate.

Review and consideration of public input

The objective of this process is to gather relevant and diverse input to improve the quality of the recommended regional water plans. Once public comments are received from the public and key stakeholders, the regional water planning council with the assistance of the regional planning contractor will consider and address these comments. Written comments and web comments will be summarized and provided to the Council. Verbal comments will be summarized and included in meeting summaries. As appropriate, responses from the Council to comments received will be recorded.