



Middle Chattahoochee Regional Water Council

Meeting Summary: May 9, 2014

Welcome, Introductions, Chairman's Discussion

Kristin Rowles (Georgia Water Planning and Policy Center) welcomed the council and other attendees and reviewed the agenda. She introduced Pages Estes, President of the LaGrange-Troup Chamber of Commerce, to welcome the Council to LaGrange. Council Chair Matt Windom also welcomed the group and thanked everyone for attending. He thanked Page for hosting the meeting and for providing refreshments. Council members and observers introduced themselves followed by an invocation led by Paul Chappell.

Governor's Water Supply Program: Status Update

Jason Bodwell (Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority) provided a briefing for the Council on the Governor's Water Supply Program. (Slides available on Council website). He provided an overview of financing programs administered by the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority (GEFA). He focused on water related financing programs, including two state programs (Georgia Fund, Georgia Reservoir and Water Supply Fund) and two federal programs (Clean Water State Revolving Fund, Drinking Water State Revolving Fund). He noted that there is a new incentive for projects that will finance water conservation initiatives. These projects will be eligible for a 1% interest rate reduction on loans. Jason noted that in the past six years, GEFA has provided more than \$80 million in low-interest loans to support projects related to water efficiency and conservation.

Jason discussed the Governor's Water Supply Program, which includes State Direct Investment projects, loan financing, and public-private partnerships to support water supply development. He discussed in detail the Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) pilot project in Baker County. This project is exploring the feasibility of this technology for use in Southwest Georgia. Doug Wilson (Georgia Water Planning and Policy Center) assisted Jason in answering some of the council members' questions about the ASR project.

The Water Stewardship Act of 2010 required submittal of water audits by water systems beginning in 2012 for large systems and 2013 for small systems. He said that water audits will be posted on-line. GEFA provided training for small water systems to prepare water audits and technical assistance to small water systems to support water efficiency efforts. In the technical assistance program, small water systems could receive support to conduct customer meter testing, finished water meter testing, or leak detection in distribution lines. The program was

successful in supporting many water systems across the state, and a second round of technical assistance is being conducted this year. Jack Dozier (Georgia Association of Water Professionals) commented on the importance of the water audits in supporting water efficiency in the state.

Jason said that the new GEFA conservation initiative, which will provide for a 1% reduction in loan interest rates for water efficiency projects, can support projects such as water pressure management, new water meters, leak detection, and distribution line rehabilitation and replacement. The conservation initiative will support energy and land related conservation projects, as well as water conservation projects.

Update from Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GAEPD): Regional Water Planning and Flint River Drought Protection Act

Gail Cowie (GAEPD) provided an update on the regional water planning budget, Council member appointments, Flint River Drought Protection Act, and upcoming water management related rule-making. (Slides available on Council website.)

She said that the Fiscal Year 2015 budget for regional water planning includes \$2.2 million for technical work (water demand and wastewater forecasting, resource assessments). Gail said that the councils' regional water plans will provide guidance to develop the scope of work for the technical work. She said that the budget also includes funds for Council support, but the budget direction that will determine the specific amount available has not yet been received.

Regarding council member appointments, Gail said that GAEPD is supporting the appointing authorities (Governor, Lt. Governor, and Speaker of the House) in making council appointments and re-appointments. She noted that there are 300 council members statewide. The appointing authorities will be working on appointments in sets of councils, and the Middle Chattahoochee Council is among the first half. She anticipates that this might be completed in the next few months. She said that for the future, the appointing authorities will establish these appointments on a rolling schedule and make them a part of the routine process of appointments that they consider regularly. She said that there is active and strong engagement by the appointing authorities in the appointment process. She asked council members to let her know if they did not complete the survey by GAEPD about their interest in continued service or if an alternate member wishes to be considered for appointment as a voting member.

Gail said that the amendments to the Flint River Drought Protection Act were adopted near the end of the 2014 legislative session. The main items that were revised by this legislation included:

- The irrigation suspension auction became optional.
- Definitions of "affected area" and "augmentation" were specified.
- Efficiency requirements were added for agricultural withdrawal permits.
- The authority of the GAEPD Director to protect augmented streamflows was clarified.

Gail said that GAEPD is proceeding with the process of developing rules (for adoption by the Board of Natural Resources) to implement the agricultural efficiency requirements and the streamflow augmentation provisions of the Flint River Drought Protection Act revisions. Rule-making is also underway regarding drought management and outdoor water use, with an

upcoming public meeting for that process on May 13. She said that comments will be accepted for that process through June 3, and there will be another public meeting in that process later in the summer. (Kristin Rowles sent Council members information on that process and the public meeting after the council meeting on May 9.)

Council members made several comments on Gail's presentation:

- One member noted that it appears that withdrawals smaller than 100,000 gallons per day could still withdraw from augmented streamflows.
- Another member suggested that a different type of drought response is needed for agriculture as compared to municipal and industrial water uses.
- It was clarified that the water efficiency provisions in the FRDPA are not contingent on a drought declaration.

Review of Regional Water Plan Implementation Assessment Report

Kristin Rowles (GWPPC) reviewed the draft Regional Water Plan Implementation Assessment Report. She reviewed the draft report section by section. The report highlights activities related to implementation of the regional water plan. She noted that the report is limited to nine pages and due to EPD by June 15. Kristin reviewed comments received on the draft report to date and asked council members for input. Discussion on the report was as follows:

- Chairman Windom asked that Council members provide Kristin comments on the draft report no later than May 16.
- The Council members noted their intent to submit a letter to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on the Water Control Manual update. This can be noted in the implementation report.
- Council members had questions and concerns about the resource assessment modeling assumption that estimates agricultural water use at 100% consumptive. Kristin said that this concern was shared by other councils. It is possible that this could be addressed in the resource assessment updates. Gail Cowie (GAEPD) said that a possible approach could be to perform a sensitivity analysis on varying assumptions about consumptive use for agricultural water use.

Council Discussion and Public Comment

There was no additional Council discussion. There was no public comment.

Wrap-Up/Adjournment

Matt Windom expressed his intention to resign as Chair. He suggested that the Council be prepared to elect a new Chair at its next meeting. He noted that he has appreciated the opportunity to lead the Council and that he will continue to remain active on the Council.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45am.

Council Members Attending 5-9-2014 Meeting:

Matt Windom
Jim Woods
Walter Rosso
Gordon Moss
Bill Gregory
Jimmy Thompson
Harry Lange
Paul Chappell
Gardiner Garrard
Philip Eidson
Steve Davis
Robert Watkins
Jimmy Knight
Don Watson
Aaron McWhorter
Robert York