



Upper Flint Regional Water Council

Meeting Summary: November 6, 2013

Welcome, Introductions, Chairman's Discussion

Chairman Donald Chase called the meeting to order at 9:30am. He welcomed the Council back and commented on the importance of the Council's work. He offered an invocation. Next, Chuck Brasfeld, Scout Executive for the Flint River Council of the Boy Scouts of America, welcomed the Council to the Lawhorn Scouting Base. He described plans to improve the facilities at the base, which includes Camp Thunder and the Flint River Adventure Center. He also described the water resources of the Base, including numerous springs, Flint River access, and many creeks on the property.

Next, the Council members and observers introduced themselves.

Welcome and Comments from Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GAEPD)

Bennett Weinstein provided a report from GAEPD on the agency's plans to support the Regional Water Councils this year. He said that the Council's regional plan will be updated in 2015-2016. He said that GAEPD is continuing technical work to support planning by the councils, including updating of demand forecasts and resource assessments.

The Coming Year: Regional Water Council Activities and Implementation Assessment

Kristin Rowles gave a report on anticipated deliverables on Council work in 2013-14, including two Council meetings and an assessment of implementation to date. Her slides are available on the Council website. She also provided a GAEPD document on planning guidance for the Council. Kristin said that the GWPPC will be working with the Council to develop the Implementation Assessment report. The report will highlight regional activities that implement the Council's plan and identify opportunities for near term implementation activities. A more thorough evaluation against the council's benchmarks and goals will be reserved for the plan update process in 2015-2016. The Council agreed with the general Implementation Action Categories framework presented by Kristin as a starting outline. Additionally, water quality was suggested as a category given recent regulatory efforts focused on nutrients. With regard to data and information needs, a member commented on the need for research to improve the current

consumptive use calculations used in the planning process. These assumptions put consumptive use at 100% for agriculture, septic tanks, and land application systems.

There will be future opportunities for review and comment by the Council. Kristin will coordinate with the Council via email to identify specific Implementation Activities.

The Council will have two meetings in this fiscal year. The second meeting will be in the spring, and at that time the Council will review the draft Implementation Assessment, which is targeted for completion at the end of June 2014. Kristin will contact Council members to identify a meeting date after the first of the year.

Some council members had questions about appointments to the council. Some emphasized that they believe that alternate members who have been very involved in the Council's work should be appointed as voting members. GAEPD reported that the appointment process is currently being discussed by the appointing authorities. Changes to the appointment process and new appointments are not expected this calendar year, but may be forthcoming.

Some council members noted that the bylaws call for a re-election of the chairman annually. A quorum was not present to vote on this matter, but the Council members present affirmed unanimously their support for Donald Chase as Chairman and Dick Morrow as Vice-Chairman.

In other comments, Council members asked for more information on the Governor's Water Supply Program, emphasized the importance of giving credit for conservation that is already in place, and asked that the Implementation Report list projects in the region that have received federal/state funding.

Report on ACF Stakeholders Sustainable Water Management Planning Process

Tim Thoms, Governing Board member for ACF Stakeholders, Inc. (ACFS), provided an overview of that organization. Gordon Rogers, also a member of the Governing Board, provided an update on the ACFS sustainable water management planning process. Their slides are available on the Council website. In developing a sustainable water management plan for the ACF System, ACFS is using similar datasets and modeling techniques to those used by the regional water councils in their planning processes. ACFS is also working on a hydrodynamic model for salinity in Apalachicola Bay based on freshwater inflows. Additionally, ACFS is working with university researchers to evaluate institutional options for water resource management in the ACF System. ACFS hopes that the planning process will result in consensus on recommendations for the future management of the ACF System.

The following is a summary of the council's discussion of their presentation:

- Brant Keller emphasized that there has not yet been work by the ACFS or others on how to finance implementation of water management plans in the ACF. He asked how we will pay for implementation. He said that Griffin has already invested heavily in its water and wastewater system and is concerned about bearing additional substantial costs for

implementation. Rogers agreed that this is an important issue that the plan should address.

- Some members expressed concern that ACFS cannot currently share information on the modeling work due to concerns over disclosure by parties involved. Thoms noted that ACFS is doing what it can to keep the dialogue as open as possible. Limits on disclosure relate to on-going litigation over tri-state water allocation, and current limits on disclosure are intended to create protections that will keep all parties at the table.
- A council member noted that Texas recently invested \$2 billion in water projects. Gail Cowie (GAEPD) said that this funding was an outcome of two rounds of regional water planning in that state.
- A council member noted the importance of engagement by the Corps of Engineers with the results of the ACFS planning process and providing timely comments on the revisions to the water control manual for the ACF.
- A council member asked how the regional water councils and ACFS can coordinate their planning efforts. Thoms and Rogers noted the importance of providing input into each others' planning processes and confirmed the need for dialogue.

Thoms and Rogers encouraged Council members to join and get involved in ACFS.

Report from American Rivers on Upper Flint Working Group

Ben Emmanuel, American Rivers, described to the Council a report on flows in the Upper Flint prepared by his organization, in partnership with the Flint Riverkeeper. The report is entitled "Running Dry: Challenges and Opportunities in Restoring Healthy Flows in Georgia's Upper Flint River Basin". It is available on-line at:

<http://www.americanrivers.org/newsroom/resources/running-dry-restoring-upper-flint-river-basin/>

Emmanuel noted that the report findings include that flows in the Upper Flint River are lower for longer periods of time in the summer. He said that American Rivers is interested in developing drought resilience in the basin. They are looking for opportunities to restore healthy flows in the river. To support that objective, they have created the Upper Flint Working Group. This group includes representatives of all types of water stakeholders in the upper basin, including large and small water utilities, environmental groups, and recreational interests. The goal of the group is to support collaboration and information sharing related to flows issues in the Upper Flint. On November 14, the working group has a workshop with the Alliance for Water Efficiency on the financial challenges currently faced by water utilities. Emmanuel said that they welcome additional participation in the working group. His slides are available on the Council website.

The following is a summary of the council's discussion of their presentation:

- Look closely at the financial issues. Griffin has made a big financial commitment to its water system, and change is costly for us.
- Utilities are feeling a financial crunch. Our only option is to increase rates to cover costs, and everything comes at a cost.

- We are all stewards of our water resources.

Report on Recent Activities of Georgia Water Planning and Policy Center (GWPPC)
related to plan implementation

Kristin Rowles said that the GWPPC was very happy to be working again with the Council. She noted that because the Council meeting was running overtime, she would skip her slides, and instead briefly summarize three current activities of the GWPPC that relate to implementation of the regional water plans in the Flint and Chattahoochee:

1. Baseline mapping of conservation measures in use by agricultural irrigators in the Lower Flint River watersheds: The GWPPC is updating irrigation system mapping and adding information about conservation measures in place on these systems. This information will support analysis of conservation opportunities and provide a baseline conservation assessment for agricultural water use in the region. She noted that in this work the GWPPC has observed several recent conversions to groundwater use by some users that previously relied primarily on surface water.
2. Habitat Conservation Planning for Rare Freshwater Mussels: The GWPPC is working with stakeholders and technical experts to explore options for alternative approaches offered for rare species management under the Endangered Species Act. The objective is to determine whether there are options that will support protection for rare species while providing greater certainty to water users over water access.
3. Flow Augmentation in Freshwater Mussel Habitat: The GWPPC has worked with GAEPD, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Golden Triangle Resource Conservation and Development Council to establish a pilot trial to augment stream flow in Spring Creek near an assemblage of rare freshwater mussels listed under the Endangered Species Act. The project put in two new wells that support flow augmentation when surface water flows are very low. The project is in place, and its effect on flows and mussels is being evaluated.

Additionally, the GWPPC has submitted a proposal to the GAEPD seed grant program for Council plan implementation, for which the chairmen of the Upper Flint, Middle Chattahoochee, and Lower Flint-Ochlockonee Councils provided letters of support. The proposed project would evaluate alternatives to surface water for water supply for agricultural water users in the Ichawaynochaway Basin, which includes a small portion of the Upper Flint region.

Kristin will provide slides to the Council website that will provide more details on these projects. While most of these nominally address the Lower Flint region, some actively include areas in the planning regions for the Upper Flint and Middle Chattahoochee Councils (in addition to the Lower Flint-Ochlockonee Council), and they have system-wide water resource management

implications that concern the interests of all three councils. She said that the GWPPC has considered the Councils' plans carefully as they select the work that the Center pursues.

Elected Official and Public Comment

Brant Keller commented that the possible upcoming revisions to the Flint River Drought Protection Act during the legislative session and the lawsuit filed in the Supreme Court by Florida against Georgia over water allocation in the ACF have important implications for the Council. He also commented on the need for better data before the Flint River Drought Protection Act is revised.

Cliff Arnett announced that he is retiring from Columbus Water Works in January, and he will be moving out of state. He commented on his appreciation for the opportunity to work with the Upper Flint Council.

The meeting adjourned at 11:40am.

Council Members Attending 11-6-2013 Meeting:

Donald Chase
Dick Morrow
Brant Keller
Eddie Freeman
Jack Holbrook
Gary Powell
Cliff Arnett
Lamar Perlis
Terrell Hudson
Randall Starling
D. Raines Jordan
Harold Fallin
Beth English
Frank Keller
Buddy Leger
Joel Wood