

Location:

October 20, 2021

9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Clemson Edisto REC, Blackville, SC and

Zoom Virtual Hybrid Meeting

Action Items:

- 1. RBC members should consider possible management strategies for evaluation.**
- 2. Rob Devlin to confirm if the Edisto RBC can send a member to sit in and observe the Surface Water Regulation Stakeholder Group permit review meetings.**
- 3. Public Comments for call-ins at the RBC meeting are to be sent to Tom Walker tcwalke@clermson.edu**

Meeting:

- Review of Meeting Objectives
- Surface Water Regulation Stakeholder Workgroup
- Groundwater Management Strategies of the Trident, Low Country, and Western Capacity Use Area
- Overview of Water Management Strategies
- Surface Water Discussion
 - Comparison of Scenario Flows to Calculated 20/30/40 Flows
 - Surface Water Subcommittee Recommendations and Discussion
- Upcoming RBC Agenda and Schedule

Meeting Summary

The Edisto RBC Chairman, Hank Stallworth, called the 16th meeting of the Edisto RBC held on October 20, 2021, to order at 9:05 AM. The meeting was held in-person at the Clemson Edisto Research and Education Center (REC) in Blackville, SC and via Zoom virtual meeting platform. A total of 56 people, including the Edisto RBC members and planning team were present at this RBC meeting in-person and online. The meeting began with the Edisto RBC Chairman welcomed the meeting attendees and noted the meeting objectives: to learn about groundwater management strategies of DHEC capacity use areas in the Edisto river basin; review water management strategies; compare surface water scenario flows to calculated 20/30/40 flows; discuss and consider surface water subcommittee recommendations. Thereafter, the Chairman invited the members of the RBC to consider a revision of the agenda to include a presentation on the Permit Review Process as required by the Surface Water Act. The Edisto RBC members approved the revision of the agenda to include the additional item introduced by the Chairman.

Rob Devlin, SCDHEC, presented on the surface water permit review process that is currently underway. DHEC has convened a stakeholder group to identify issues and work towards solutions to improve regulations and management of surface water in South Carolina. The primary focus is the discussion and potential ways to improve the surface water withdrawal, permitting, use and reporting regulation (R.61-119). Rob covered existing, new, and agricultural withdrawers in the context of the regulation. Some observations include: only 6% are subject to minimum instream flow requirements, existing permits are over-permitted when compared to historic use records, reasonableness criteria only exists for new permits, and several inconsistencies exist with permit duration. Several unintended consequences were also highlighted, that: overallocation limits availability, flow standards do not apply to the majority of permits and registrations, and basin planning activities and regulatory framework are not working together for effective implementation. Currently the process has released a notice of drafting in the state register and is engaging stakeholders to solicit input on the regulation through December.

At the previous meeting, the Edisto RBC members requested a presentation on the Groundwater Management Plans that are within the Edisto river basin. Leigh Anne Monroe, SCDHEC, presented information about the three capacity use areas (CUA) that are within the Edisto river basin: Western CUA, Lowcountry CUA, and Trident CUA. Groundwater management plans have been completed for each of the three CUAs and draft evaluations for the Trident and the Lowcountry CUA have been completed. The CUA groundwater management plans incorporate several strategies: reduction of groundwater withdrawals in concentrated pumping areas, review of permit applications based on reasonable use, a monitoring program, establish a conservation education plan for the public and groundwater withdrawers, and regulations and planning and issuing permits according to the plans. Water use and groundwater maps were reviewed for each of the three CUAs in the Edisto river basin. Recommendations from the Lowcountry and Trident draft evaluations were also presented.

John Boyer, CDM Smith, presented an overview of basin-wide water management strategies. The presentation focused on the development of potential management strategies the Edisto RBC might consider thereby creating a portfolio of strategies from both demand and supply sides. Demand side strategies included: municipal conservation, irrigation conservation, industrial conservation, and thermoelectric conservation measures. Supply side strategies included: new or increased storage, water reclamation, conjunctive use, conveyance, and desalination. Criteria to evaluate water management strategies and existing water management strategies in the Edisto river basin were also reviewed. Current existing drought management plans were also highlighted.

John Boyer also started the surface water discussion component of the meeting by presenting on minimum instream flows as defined in the SC Surface Water Withdrawal, Permitting, Use, and Reporting Act. Minimum instream flow data was presented using the strategic nodes under each planning scenario. The presentation then shifted to the proposed low flow strategy and basin-wide percent reduction in surface water withdrawals and associated impacts.

Jason Thompson, RBC member and Surface Water Subcommittee Chair, updated the RBC on progress of the surface water subcommittee. The subcommittee met twice between the Edisto RBC meetings to discuss operational resiliency, surface water conditions, and a low flow management strategy. While the subcommittee made progress on the points of discussion, more time is required. The subcommittee will continue to meet to discuss recommendations to the larger river basin council.

The next meeting of the Edisto River Basin Council is November 17th at the Clemson Edisto Research and Education Center from 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM.

The meeting concluded at 1:12 PM.

Summary: Chikezie Isiguzo and Tom Walker

Approved: November 17, 2021