

MINUTES OF PEE DEE RIVER BASIN COUNCIL (RBC) MEETING (HYBRID FORMAT) HELD ON August 23rd, 2022, AT CLASSROOM #240, 2200 POCKET ROAD FLORENCE, SC.

RBC Members Present: Charlie Gray, John Crutchfield, Doug Newton, Frances McClary, Bob Perry, Jason Gamble, Brandon Durant, Walter Beard, Bill Wiegand, Megan Hyman, Michael Bankert, Michael Hemingway, Lindsay Privette, Cricket Adams, John Rivers, Everett Allen, Buddy Richardson, Cara Schildtknecht, Jeff Steinmetz, Cynthia Walters, Eric Krueger, Christy Everett & Hughes Page

Absent: Jeff Parkey, Cliff Chamblee (Michael Steele, alternate, present)

Planning Team Present: JD Solomon, Scott Harder, Brooke Czwartacki, Andy Wachob, Joe Gellici, Joe Koon, Leigh Anne Monroe, Pam Miller, Jeff Allen, Tom Walker & Chikezie Isiguzo.

Total Attendance: 52

1. CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

J. D Solomon (the Facilitator) called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM and welcomed members. He highlighted the main items on the agenda, including three presentations from the South Carolina Office of Resilience, Yadkin-Pee Dee Water Management Group, and the North Carolina Department of Environment Quality. He requested members to come early to meetings for networking and bonding with other members. He noted that although there was an option to attend the meeting virtually, members are encouraged to attend meetings physically as that would foster stakeholder interaction. He clarified that the Covid-19 mandates have changed and welcomed those that chose to wear masks and called for respect for people's preferences.

2. REVIEW OF THE MEETING OBJECTIVES AND APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was unanimously approved. Bob Perry – 1st made a motion to approve minutes and summary documents which was seconded by Brandon Durant – 2nd and unanimously approved.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments or agency comments.

4. PLANNING FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW – Conceptual Schedule

J. D. Solomon introduced a tentative conceptual schedule of the planning process. The first six months that run from the first meeting of the Pee Dee RBC to November 2022 focus on background introductions. Subsequently, the RBC meetings will focus on models and strategy sessions - to prepare members for the report writing sessions. He presented a six-month preview with tentative topics and presenters.

5. SOUTH CAROLINA OFFICE OF RESILIENCE (Alex Butler)

Alex Butler (Resilience Planning Director) introduced the South Carolina Office of Resilience (SCOR) and his involvement in South Carolina water planning efforts. He explained the SCOR mission – “to lessen the impact of disasters on communities and citizens of South Carolina by planning and coordination statewide resilience, long-term recovery, and hazard mitigation.” He presented a brief history of SCOR, its objectives, and some interventions (Federal and State funded) it has managed. The programs cover disaster recovery and mitigation mainly in flood-prone coastal areas in South Carolina. Alex Butler

further discussed the Strategic Statewide Resilience and Risk Reduction Plan being developed by the SCOR with a revised target of July 1, 2023. The Plan is intended to serve as a framework to guide state investment in flood mitigation projects. He explained the SCOR Floodwater Commission Principles showing the importance of stakeholder participation, watershed boundaries as a basis, nature-based solutions, reliance on high-quality, shared, and integrated hydrologic data, and hydrographic models. He outlined some assumptions the SCOR made in its planning process and the adaptive management approach utilized for its resilience planning.

Question: In most big cities, sanitary, sewer, and storm stores use the same pipes. And when there is a flood that overruns the treatment plant, all the water goes into the rivers, which in many cases is where our drinking water comes from. So, is the SCOR working on anything to start duplicate systems to stop this practice?

Alex B responded that one of the things the SCOR is looking at is to identify funding streams to get the kind of maintenance that would help prevent the kind of scenario described. Also, the Rural Water Authority has about \$900 million for infrastructure improvements, so they are engaged in stormwater projects for the benefit of interested communities.

Question: Why can't we work towards building the flood diversion canal at the Waccamaw to solve the problem of using the river?

Alex B responded that the flood diverting canal as a project had been considered over the years. Getting a canal of the magnitude needed will take decades.

6. Water Supply Planning in North Carolina (Linwood Peele, Supervisor Water Supply Planning Branch, Division of Water Resources, North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality)

Linwood Peele described the water supply planning process in North Carolina. He explained the mission of the organization's water planning process, which is to ensure the availability of adequate supplies of good quality water to protect public health and support economic growth. He noted that water supply planning and management requires an understanding of both available water resources and demands on those resources, hence the reliance on high-quality data. He explained that North Carolina does not have a statewide water use permitting program. However, there is limited regional permitting and statewide water use registration. Using the Central Coastal Plan, he explained an example of the limited regional permitting in North Carolina. He also explained the Local Water Supply Planning law established in 1989 that requires all qualifying units of local governments and large community water systems to prepare a Local Water Supply Plan (LWSP), and the Water Withdrawal Registration Program law established in 1991 which requires qualifying agricultural and non-agricultural users to report water usage. The state also has a law for administering the Agricultural Water Use Survey, providing aggregated data on water use.

North Carolina regulations require the development of Basin-wide Hydrologic Models. One of the model's limitations is that it does not include water quality or groundwater systems. The planning process also covers drought planning. The drought planning established minimum standards and practices for water shortage response planning, water use reporting (including new water use reporting), water conservation, and water reuse during droughts and water emergencies. He discussed some challenges to North Carolina's water supply planning, including that it is a riparian rights state

without a comprehensive statewide plan for water quantity management, no permitting program, and no federal requirement for water quantity management.

Question: Water supply in the Pee Dee passes through North Carolina with the vast majority of that governed by licensing agreements on the six lakes. Setting aside the Little Pee Dee for a moment, what is your interpretation of what the water coming into the system is? I would understand from the South Carolina viewpoint that is largely Piedmont water, so largely surface water. However, how much of the water that comes into the hydropower system is primarily surface water, or is there a lot of groundwater use upstream of that?

Linwood Peele responded that surface water is the primary source compared to groundwater use.

Question: How much of the Little Pee Dee in South Carolina is surface water compared to groundwater?

Linwood Peele noted that from the top of the Lumber river to the Waccamaw river is majority groundwater and the surface water being put in it is coming out from the Cape Fear.

Question: In the 50-year window we are looking at if everybody were to maximize their use in the Pee Dee, how much does that impact what's flowing through the system?

Linwood Peele responded that he would feel better about the Yadkin than most basins in North Carolina because a lot of their consumption is surface water and will be put back in.

7. Yadkin-Pee Dee Water Management Group Overview (Aubrey Lofton, YPD-WMG Chair)

Aubrey Lofton presented an overview of the YPD-WMG formed in 2016 by an MOU signed by stakeholders to jointly plan sustainable use of the water in the basin. It focuses only on surface water resources and comprises 18 members, including water utilities, governments, and reservoir operators. The MOU has been extended to 2026. She described some of the group's activities and financing model, noting that because the group is not incorporated as a non-profit, there are some grants it can't pursue. Therefore, the group is in the process of registering as a non-profit. She also mentioned that there is another group, the Yadkin Pee Dee River Basin Association (YPDRBA), that was formed in 1998 and focused on water quality in the basin. Many organizations are members of both YPD-WMG and YPDRBA, and the two groups have had joint meetings. She noted that YPD-WMG is open to sharing its data and modeling results and is interested in collaboration and continued attendance of Pee Dee RBC meetings. She invited the Pee Dee RBC to send a representative to YPD-WMG meetings.

Question: How compatible are the models used by the YPD-WMG and the outputs with those used by Pee-Dee RBC? The scenarios may also be different, so there may be a need to figure out how to make them interface.

J. D. Solomon noted that the underlying concepts are the same but that collaboration between the two groups will help resolve the technical details of compatibility. There may be results from each group's study that will serve as a learning opportunity.

Question: Was the 1998 -2002 Drought recommendation of a joint South Carolina and North Carolina agreement on reservoir releases done?

There was a general response that the issue had been resolved. There is a four-step drought management plan in place and the Facilitator may consider including it as one of the presentations to the Pee Dee RBC.

Question: Was the legal case between South Carolina and North Carolina regarding the decision of North Carolina to allow the interbasin transfer of water from the Catawba river basin to the Pee Dee river basin resolved?

Yes, it has been resolved, and the states have a system of mutual reporting of transfers from the basins.

Question: How does the YPD-WMG address quality?

Aubrey described the group's monitoring process and the reliance on scientific data and models. It is recommended that South Carolina participates in North Carolina's basin planning processes as a stakeholder, especially for knowledge, resource planning, and contributing to the recommendations from those planning processes.

Question: How does North Carolina delineate its Drought management districts? Do they match River basin districts – is it county by county, do they go with political boundaries?

North Carolina has a Drought Management Advisory Council at the state level, and licensing requirements discussions about droughts at the basin level with DHEC and other stakeholders.

8. RBC Process Metrics

Two areas to measure performance are the process and the outcome. J. D. Solomon presented 10 process metrics and explained the relevant metrics and how to operationalize them in all RBC meetings.

The members of the RBC unanimously moved to adopt the process metrics as presented by the Facilitator. Frances McClary – 1st made a motion to approve the process metrics which was seconded by Megan Hyman - 2nd.

9. RBC Vision and Goals

Proposed Pee Dee RBC mission: Proposed – To develop, implement, monitor, and periodically revise a river basin plan for the surface and groundwater resources in the Pee Dee River Basin.

Proposed Pee Dee RBC Vision options:

Option 1: Working together to develop and maintain an actionable Pee Dee River Basin Plan balancing economic, environmental and social needs of our region for generations to come

Option 2: To make sure water is available for all in the Pee Dee River Basin

Option 3: Working together to develop and maintain an actionable Pee Dee River Basin Plan balancing resiliency, economic, environmental, and social needs of our region for generations to come.

Option 4: Agriculture, local governments, utilities, industries, recreation, environmental, and other water-based interests working together to develop and maintain an actionable Pee Dee Basin Plan balancing basic shared needs of our region for generations to come.

Proposed Pee Dee RBC Goals options

Option 1:

- i. Develop & implement River Basin Plan using the guidelines Planning Framework
- ii. Review and update the River Basin Plan at least once every five years or amend it.
- iii. Communicate with stakeholders throughout the river basin.
- iv. Identify needs for policy, legislative, regulatory, or process changes.

Option 2:

- a. Develop and implement the river basin plan by June 1, 2024.
- b. Review and update the plan at least every five years or amend as needed.
- c. Communicate with stakeholders throughout and adjacent to the river basin.
- d. Identify needs for policy, legislative, regulatory, or process recommendations.

Option 3:

1. Develop and implement the River Basin Plan by June 1, 2024.
2. Review and update the River Basin Plan at least once every five years or amend it.
3. Regularly communicate with stakeholders throughout the river basin.
4. Recommend policy, legislative, regulatory or process changes.

Discussion and Questions

Question: There are eight RBCs across the state; why don't they all have the same missions and goals?

J. D. Solomon responded that each basin could consider the visions and goals most suitable for their circumstances. Ultimately the mission still goes with the state framework pretty closely.

Question: Why do we have "implement" in the goals when we can only recommend and not implement?

The "implement" refers to the plan and not making or implementing regulations or policies.

Scott Harder directed the members to note that the Framework has a section on the implementation plan. The members resolved to replace the word "implement" with "approve" in the statement of Goals.

COMMENTS

Some members expressed their preference for Option 3 of the vision, with a member desiring to see "agriculture" included in the wording of the vision statement. However, it was agreed that the vision statement was not the best place to list the stakeholders. Other members preferred Option 2 for its simplicity and high-level coverage. One of the challenges with Option 2 of the vision is that it does not cover water quality.

ADOPTION

The Pee Dee RBC members unanimously adopted the proposed Mission, Option 2 of the proposed vision, and the amended Option 3 of the proposed Goals. Michael Hemingway – 1st made a motion to approve which was seconded by Bob Perry – 2nd

- **Mission:** To develop, implement, monitor, and periodically revise a river basin plan for the surface and groundwater resources in the Pee Dee River Basin.

- **Vision:** To make sure water is available for all in the Pee Dee River Basin.

- The amended Statement of **Goals:**

1. Develop and approve the River Basin Plan by June 1, 2024.
2. Review and update the River Basin Plan at least once every five years or amend it as needed.
3. Regularly communicate with stakeholders throughout the river basin.
4. Recommend policy, legislative, regulatory, or process changes.

10. UPCOMING MEETING SCHEDULE

J. D. Solomon noted the need for a field trip before the end of the year. Tom Walker will send out a poll to members to provide preferences for RBC meetings during the holiday season. The next meeting will be held on September 27th, 2022 and will feature some useful presentations that will help prepare all the members for the planning process. The meeting concluded at 11:56 AM.

Minutes by: Chikezie Isiguzo and Tom Walker

Approved: September 27, 2022